

Fast vs. Slow: A Leader Adapts to Others

Whether it's interacting with co-workers, family members or kids or being part of a committee, we find ourselves in situations where we must communicate and work with others. And, most of us have probably realized that sometimes communication goes smoothly, and sometimes it does not.

What's the reason for this variation? Largely it's because people have different behavioral styles and preferences, says Sally Amtmann. "Some people's behavior favors a fast pace," she says, and gives the example of those people that want you to "be brief, be brilliant and be gone." Conversely, other behavior styles may prefer a slower pace to allow for analyzing and making decisions, she explains.

Amtmann, who has worked in sales for much of her career, says recognizing and understanding behavioral styles can help improve work productivity, teamwork and communication. Now with Zoetis, she often conducts presentations and trainings utilizing the DiSC personal assessment tool to help people identify and discuss behavioral differences.

The four DiSC behavioral styles are Dominance, Influencing, Steadiness and Conscientiousness. Amtmann notes that we all have some of each behavior, and she emphasizes that no one behavior is "better" than another. Rather, she says it is important to focus on learning about each of the behaviors and then using that information to better understand yourself as well as adapting your behavior to work more productively with others.

"I like to remind people of the Platinum Rule: Treat others the way they want to be treated, which means you may have to adjust," she states.

Determine the pace

Amtmann notes that one of the first differences in behavior styles is pace. Some individuals prefer a faster

pace — they like to get information quickly — and often make decisions quickly. They are often more willing to take risks. The Dominance and Influencing behaviors typically reflect this preference for a "fast pace."

"These individuals are task oriented; they want to get to the bottom line," Amtmann summarizes. She does note that Influencing behaviors do prefer more socializing than Dominant.

On the other end of the spectrum, Steadiness and Conscientiousness behaviors prefer a slower pace and are more reserved at first. They typically like to listen, gather information and then make decisions. "These individuals tend to put people before the task; they want to make sure everyone is comfortable and understands," Amtmann says.

To help in identifying each of the four behavioral styles, Amtmann shares the favorite question that each likes to ask:

Dominance behaviors ask "What?"

Influencing behaviors ask "Who?"

Steadiness behaviors ask "How?"

Conscientiousness behaviors ask "Why?"

Find ways to "flex"

By recognizing these differences, Amtmann says you can then learn to "flex" or adapt to the behavior of the person you are communicating with. For instance, if someone is a Dominant behavior, you would want to be on time, be energetic and fast-paced, get to business quickly to use time efficiently, and, from beginning to end, focus on results.

If you are communicating with an Influencer, you would also want to be energetic and fast-paced, but people with this behavior also like some socializing and having fun while achieving the objective, Amtmann explains. Thus, you'd want to talk a

little about social topics of interest to them, while still staying cognizant of time and the task at hand.

When communicating with someone who has a Steady behavior, it is important to be genuine and not to hurry. "Their preference is person-to-person contact over emails or texts. They also want to be listened to without having their ideas judged," Amtmann explains. Rather than being told what to change or do, the Steady behavior prefers to come to a mutual agreement on decisions and likes assurances that decisions will have minimal risk.

"This behavior style may need more ongoing contact and communication than the other three styles," Amtmann says. She also notes that in agriculture there tends to be a lot of individuals with this behavior. "They are caretakers; they put people [and land and livestock] first. They are the calm in the storm."

Finally, for the Conscientious behavior Amtmann says, "Be prepared to provide information and the 'why' questions. This behavior likes systematic, factual, logical and exact, but also needs a human touch."

People with this behavior like to follow procedure and protocol. They are focused on quality and things being done right. She adds that Conscientious individuals are turned off by exaggeration and overstatements.

With that insight, Amtmann says it becomes easier to start understanding people and situations — why they may not be comfortable with a proposed change or why conflict is occurring. As you develop the ability to respond and communicate with people's different behavior styles, you can move closer to improving that relationship and helping all involved work together more effectively.

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