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# PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

## Effective Use of Personality Profiles

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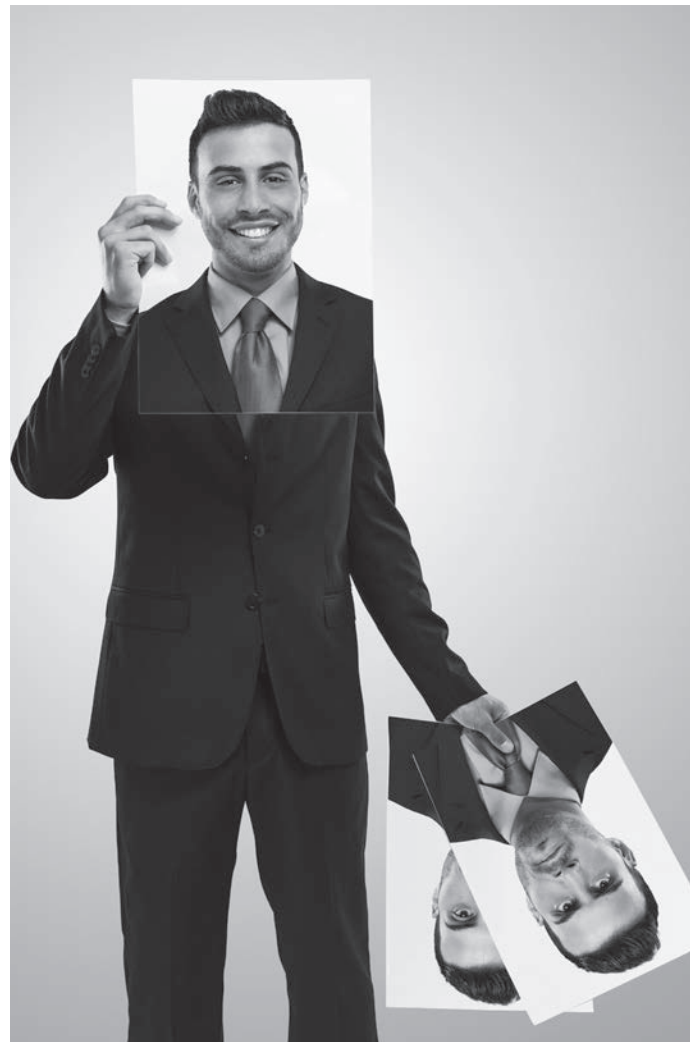
**Y**ou are not a box, a number, a letter nor a description. You are an individual, with many characteristics, actions/reactions and likes/dislikes. You are uniquely you, different from the other people around you. How is that for an introduction to a discussion of personality tests? Read on to find out why you should use a personality profile in your personal and professional life.

Recently, I had a group at work complete a DISC profile as part of staff development.<sup>1</sup> If you're not familiar with DISC, here is a brief summary. It is a personality profile that places individuals into four behavior categories (or combinations of them). The categories are defined by two axes: people-task oriented vs. active-passive spectrum. The four quadrants that form the DISC acronym are:

- D (directing, demanding, determined, decisive)—active, task-oriented;
- I (inspiring, influencing, interactive)—active, people-oriented;
- S (steady, stable, submissive, specialist)—passive, people-oriented; and
- C (cautious, competent, calculating, contemplative)—passive, task-oriented.

The majority of the people won't just have one category, so if you think about yourself, you may find you're a blend of two or more of these types.

A key note is that none of these categories is preferred; none is better than another. An effective leader can be in any category. Similarly, you can't "blame" your personality profile for your poor behavior; your profile doesn't control how you treat others, you do.



With the personality profile in hand, I find several ways it can be of use:

- understanding yourself;
- understanding coworkers, family members, others in your life; and
- understanding your manager and those you manage.

### UNDERSTANDING YOURSELF

Reviewing your profile will allow you to see some of your tendencies, of which you may or may not be aware. You could discover that you are very steady, dependable and giving. Or that you are not very gentle, humble and compassionate. The DISC analysis will provide you with insight into the weaker areas of your personality type you may need to develop (for example, be

more positive or be more sensitive). You can then create a plan to improve your relationships with others.

### UNDERSTANDING COWORKERS, FAMILY MEMBERS, OTHERS IN YOUR LIFE

Have you ever wondered why you get along great with some people and struggle with others? Understanding of your personality, along with others' personalities, provides insight into why that can occur. For example:

- I's can have a tendency to talk over each other. Both may want attention, and both could be emotional. When dealing with another I, consciously decide to take turns talking. You may even want to record what is being said so you can agree upon it later. Work on listening, since your tendency is to talk.
- When a D works with an S, the D will want to tell the S what to do (and the S would tend to agree to do that). The D needs to agree to direct, but not dominate the situation. The S needs to be more willing to let the D know when they have overstepped a boundary, when the other is out of control.

Having insight into personality tendencies will allow you to better understand how your personality may influence another, as well as what the other personality type needs to do to be effective.

### UNDERSTANDING YOUR MANAGER AND THOSE YOU MANAGE

If you are a manager, the profile can provide you with key information on how best to work with an employee. You will be better prepared for their particular learning style, and you will have

insights into their leadership strengths and development areas. Work assignments and objectives can be more effectively presented to them in the way in which they will be most receptive. In working with your own manager, the insights will allow you to present information in the other's learning style. This should make communication clearer and more tailored, increasing your own influence.

What is key in all of these areas is transparency and honesty. To be the most effective in the workplace (and home life), you need to be vulnerable, allowing the other to better understand what you need. Instead of just assuming the other person "knows" what you need, be willing to share what does and doesn't work for you.

It is important to better understand yourself and other individuals. However, it is more important to see them as people, not as D's or S's. We are all unique and meant to be ourselves, not what others are telling us to be. Viewed from a perspective that this is just another (but powerful) tool, a DISC profile can be valuable in continuing your personal development. ■



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#### ENDNOTE

1 Many DISC assessments are now available. See, for example, DISC Overview. *DISCprofile.com*, <https://www.discprofile.com/what-is-disc/overview/> (accessed September 10, 2019).