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## Interaction Style® Trainer Background Booklet

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### Purpose:

- For trainers and users to understand the Interaction Style model
- To ensure consistency in delivery of material/model

### Contents:

- Reasoning for use of the Interaction Styles® Model
- Background on model's purpose and use
- Components of the model
- Common misconceptions
- What would constitute "misuse" of Interaction Styles®
- Validation information

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## Why use Interaction Styles®?

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As leaders and team members, we must effectively handle interactions with people who have a variety of styles. While we may wish for commonality and consistency in the way we deal with others, this is not the case. Seventy-five percent of the people we deal with are different than ourselves. When we can spot cues and subtle differences in the way others interact, we are advantaged. We more effectively deal with team members, employees, peers and customers. We have flexibility to tailor our speech, body language, and approach, so that others more readily listen and accept our ideas. As flexible individuals, we can capitalize on interactions with others, especially in critical business situations—when selling, problem solving, working on a team, and providing outstanding customer service.

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## Background Information

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Differences between people are a major source of friction. Fortunately, it's possible to manage such differences so work relationships are enhanced, productivity is increased, and there's more richness and spice to life. You can make these differences work for, not against, you. (People Styles, ix.)

The number and variety of differences between people is overwhelming. It's not possible for human being to adapt to all the individual characteristics of all the people they meet in the course of a typical day. Carl Jung describes four types of people in his book, *Psychological Types*: Thinkers, Feelers, Intuiters, and Sensors. To oversimplify a bit, if a person you are working with is a Thinker and you are a Feeler, then you can determine what you can do to make it more

comfortable for him or her to work with you. A problem with Jung's model is that as a psychological model it was about people's *inner states*, rather than their *outer behaviors*, making it difficult to identify another person's style. (People Styles, x.)

Dr. David Merrill, an industrial psychologist, developed an approach that focused on differences between people's *outer behaviors* rather than on differences in their inner states. Merrill used the newly available computer technology and a recently developed statistical technique to group people into four styles. Merrill's model was very practical since it was based on behaviors that are directly observable. What this meant was that with a little instruction, the average person could objectively identify another person's style. It created a very useful way of "reading" other people and relating to them more effectively. (People Styles, x.)

Interaction Styles® rely primarily on Merrill's work, although there are some differences. For now let's note a few points:

- There are four styles of people, none of which is better or worse than any of the other styles
- Each style has characteristic strengths and weaknesses not shared by the other styles
- Each person has a dominant style that tend to trigger stress in the other three styles
- To create optimum working relationships, it's necessary to get in sync with the style-based behavioral patterns of the people you are working with

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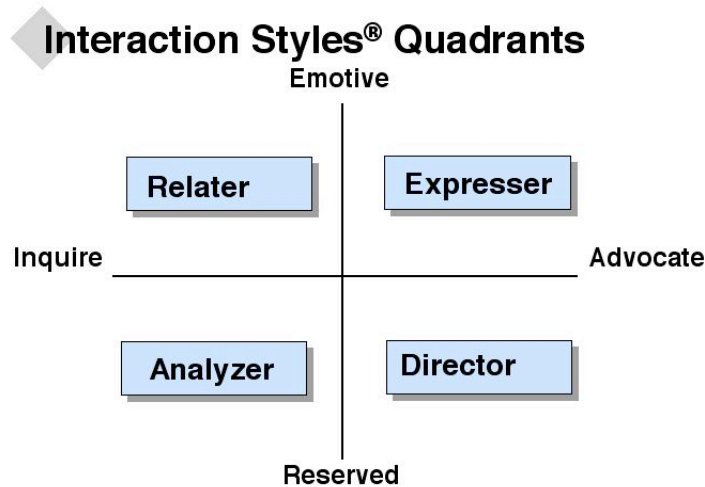
### **Components of Interaction Styles® Model**

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Whenever people interact with one another, their Interaction Styles® will be operative. You will behave in certain ways that can tip off the keen observer of your style. The great thing about having an Interaction Style and behaving out of that style is that there is a certain amount of predictability about your style. We use this knowledge about each other's style to understand and appreciate each other's uniqueness. So, if you have a friend or a colleague who tends to want center stage, speaks a little more loudly than most and is more emotionally demonstrative, you know you can count on that being your friend's or colleague's usual behavior. You know what to expect.

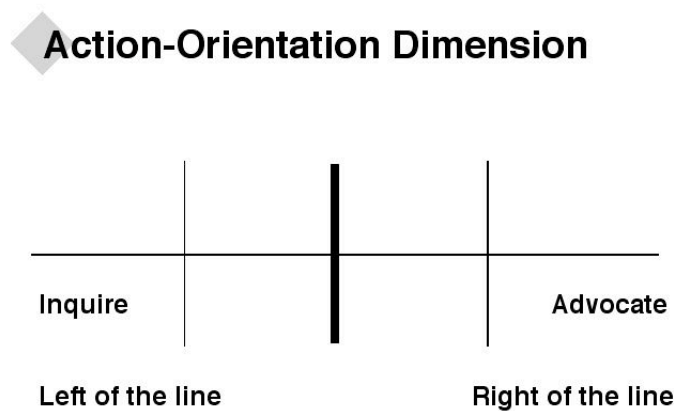
Most people regularly behave out of their propensity of a style. They also enjoy being treated as they behave. In other words, if you are with a person who is less emotion-oriented, they like you to be less emotive also. If you are with a person who is more action oriented, they like you to be that way too. Tony Alessandra, author of *The Platinum Rule*, calls this the Platinum Rule: people behave as they want to be treated. The Golden Rule says, "do unto others as you would like done to you." The Platinum Rule says, "do unto others as they would like done to them."

There are basically four different styles. What that means is that three-quarters of the population is different from you. Interaction Styles® divide into about 25% of the population, so all of us are always in the minority when it comes to style. The four styles are:



There are two axes that make up the four quadrants of the Interaction Styles®. The horizontal axis is called the “Action-Orientation Dimension.” The vertical axis is called the “Emotion-Orientation Dimension.”

### Action-Orientation Dimension



The people who live toward the left of this dimension tend to get things done through the inquiry process. They ask questions to find out what is going on. They inquire to clarify and to gather data to make decisions. These people are

slower to make decisions and judgments. They will speak more softly and more slowly. They have strong opinions just as everyone else, but you will probably have to wait a while for them to speak their own opinion, they will be more interested in what others have to say, therefore they will ask you about your opinion instead of giving their own first. They are usually good conversationalists, because they show interest in others.

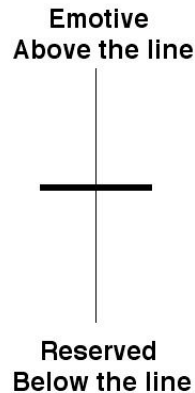
People who live to the right of the line are different in that they will be more tell-oriented, more action oriented than the people to the left of the line. They will not hesitate to give you their point of view. They will be louder, faster, more declarative. They advocate rather than inquire. They are quick to decide, make decisions and act. They like people to react as quickly as they do. They are first with their hands up, first to get things moving. Sometimes they are quick to judge and infer. You can recognize this dimension with several behaviors:

## Recognizing Inquiry or Advocacy

INQUIRE/ask (left of the line)		ADVOCATE/tell (right of the line)	
← Softer	Volume of speech	Louder →	
← Slower	Pacing of speech	Faster →	
← Less	Expressing opinions	More →	
← Back	Body posture	Toward →	
← Less	Directive gestures	More →	
← Less	Eye contact	More →	

## Emotion-Orientation Dimension

### Emotion-Orientation Dimension



The second axis is the emotion-orientation dimension. All people have emotions; some people just show more emotion than others. The people who live above the line are known as more emotive than those who live below the line. What this means is that when you look at someone who lives above the line you can “read” (usually in their faces) what they are feeling. You can see the anger, the frustration, the anxiety, the love, the happiness, the sadness, the anticipation, and the fear. If you are astute enough, you will be able to see and hear the feeling they are experiencing. There are three ways that people show their emotions: through their voice, their words and their body language. The people above the line will incorporate all three to demonstrate their feelings.

People who live below the line are the ones who are harder to “read.” You can’t always tell what they are feeling by looking at their faces, their body language or listening to the intonation of their voices. Their voices don’t have the highs and lows, their gestures are not as dramatic, and they are content to keep their feelings to themselves. They are more reserved in their relationships and selective about whom they share feelings with. They experience feelings as intensely as others; they just don’t show them. They are called more reserved, rather than emotive.

When you put the two axes together you get the four quadrants of the model. Each of the Interaction Styles<sup>®</sup> has strengths, weaknesses and preferences. Many times when they overuse their strengths, they turn into weaknesses. In the next few pages we will describe each of the styles.

You can recognize this dimension with several behaviors:





- ◆ Self knowledge
- ◆ Self control
- ◆ Knowledge of others
- ◆ Doing something for others
  - Relaters
  - Analyzers
  - Directors
  - Expressers

When people interact with each other they either “get it on” or not. When you meet someone, it doesn’t take you very long to decide on whether you want to continue with the relationship. We either create tension in each other’s lives or we lessen the tension. Those who have a more keenly developed sense and skill of Interpersonal Acumen will create more social endorsement and a greater willingness in others to cooperate with them to get results.

We create less tension in many ways. Some of them are:

1. You are appealing to the eye and appropriate to the situation. If you are unkempt, people will notice. They will notice shoes that don’t shine, hair that is out of place, makeup that is overdone and clothes that don’t fit in. Your appearance can create or diminish social endorsement.
2. You are also appealing to the ear. You have ways that you present your ideas. If you are logical, concise, picturesque and have a command of the language, people will pay attention to you and you will not cause tension in their lives.
3. Others respond to your sense of accomplishment and confidence. People want to be around those demonstrating competency and confidence. They notice your interpersonal competency and your technical competence. If you listen more than speak, if you ask insightful questions, if you are self-aware, if you honor others’ emotions, if you know your own feelings and how they motivate you, if you are sincerely curious about others, you will be seen as emotionally intelligent.
4. Others want to be around and enjoy being with you when you demonstrate your willingness to receive feedback. They notice that you hear the feedback and then make changes in your approach because of what you have heard. People notice that you don’t get defensive when they give you feedback. You take it as information and decide how to incorporate it into your life. You are able to read situations and adjust accordingly. They also

appreciate a willingness to give feedback that is helpful and constructive to the growth of others.

If you rated yourself Low on the Interpersonal Acumen scale, you are essentially saying to yourself that you have not spent much time learning about social and emotional skills. You probably are a person who says things such as, “this is who I am, take me or leave me.” You have not developed the self-awareness of how your behavior affects other people, creates tension in their lives and makes it difficult to work with you. You probably find yourself in conflict over your ideas and if you have enough power you will push your ideas instead of inquiring into other avenues. You need to learn more about the different Interaction Styles® so that when you are called on to flex to them you are not only motivated to flex but you also know how to meet their preferences.

If you rated yourself Medium in Interpersonal Acumen you are essentially saying to yourself that you have begun the process of becoming more socially and emotional intelligent. You have recognized that people need to be treated differently; we are not all alike in how we like to be influenced. People have taken the time to give you feedback and you have begun to incorporate it into your life. You realize that there are times when you need to listen rather than take your turn. Your sensitivity to your own feelings and the effect that they have on you are emerging. The more you incorporate interpersonal skills in your life, the more feedback you are getting about why people enjoy working with you and what you can do to improve.

If you rated yourself High in Interpersonal Acumen you are essentially saying to yourself that you have not only developed interpersonal skills, but also that you apply them appropriately in your day-to-day interactions. People seldom feel tension in your presence because you have full knowledge of your range of emotions and know when and how to express your emotions. Your self-knowledge is also evident in how you ask questions. You are sincerely curious about other people’s points of view. When you need to take a stand, you do so firmly and fairly. You manage difficult conversations in a way that protects or enhances the self-esteem of others. People seek to work and relate with you.

### **Common Misconceptions of Interaction Styles®**

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*I can't have one style when I behave differently in different situations*

- A person’s style is a way of behaving among a variety of situations, it is spread throughout
- Although some behaviors do change depending on the situation, a person’s dominant style remains consistent
- No one conforms completely to one type, but have one style that is predominant and used most frequently

*Social style ignores the uniqueness of individuals*

- Yes, it does to a degree. Please remember, each person is:
  - Like all other people
  - Like no other person
  - More like some people than others

*You cannot assume outer behavior matches a person's inner behavior*

- We do not make this assumption, style is actually based on the fact that there is often a difference between the outer response and inner reaction
  - In response to a situation an Analytical may experience as much emotional intensity as an Expresser. The Expresser's behavior, however, will demonstrate more feeling

*A person is likely to change his or her style*

- Social style is an enduring pattern of interpersonal behavior; that is, once established, one's dominant style remains dominant throughout life
- Research by Robert and Dorothy Grover Bolton demonstrated that among the normal population, there is no one in history whose social style has changed

*A person's style is not:*

- A measurement of a person's intelligence
- An indicator of a person's values
  - Right and wrong have nothing to do with their style. Interaction Style will illustrate how they approach other people, problems, and their pace
- A measurement of education and training

**What would constitute misuse of Interaction Styles®?**

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Although Interaction Styles® are a great instrument for assessing style and improving interpersonal skills, it can be misused. Here are a few examples of how it can be used incorrectly:

1. As a pre-employment selection tool
2. As a promotion test
3. To manipulate people
4. Each of the Interaction Styles® has strengths, weaknesses and preferences. Many times when they overuse their strengths, they turn into weaknesses.

We know that one style is not necessarily better than another, and since using it as a pre-employment or promotion test would rely on this premise, we would consider these to be misuse of the model. Using the model to manipulate another person would be considered unethical; it should be used to promote communication and relationships.

### **Interaction Styles® Validation Information**

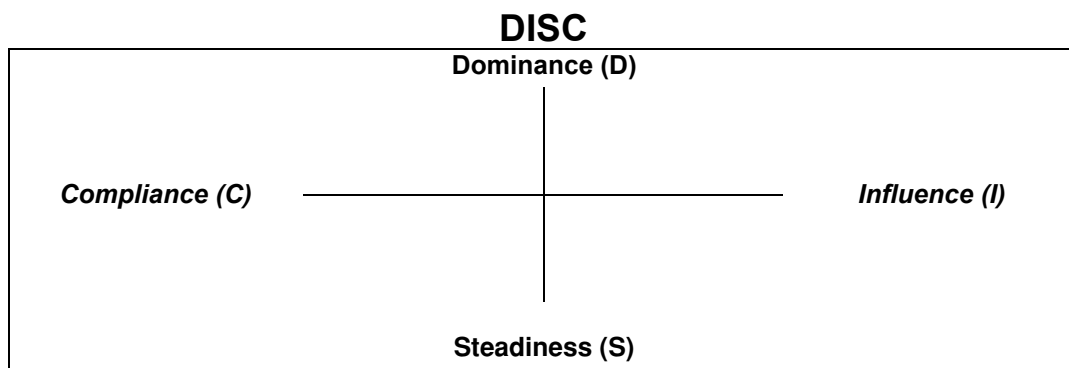
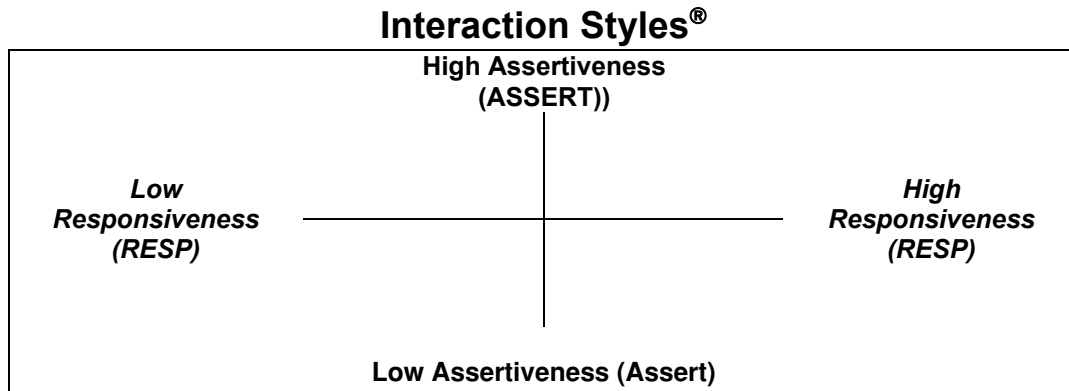
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Relying on the information received in a report such as Interaction Styles® is important. We cannot change styles, or encourage the use of such an instrument if we have no reason to believe it is valid information. Because of this we contracted with C3 Statistical Solutions to study whether Interaction Styles® is a valid tool. The following is a report written by them, that has supporting results:

The Interaction Styles® instrument is a derivative of Dr. David Merrill and Dr. Roger Reid's *behavioral* styles model of categorizing personality traits. It defines two constructs "Responsiveness" and "Assertiveness," that when plotted orthogonally define four basic personality types. In building a case for validity for Interaction Styles®, it is necessary to find instruments that measure similar constructs with known psychometric properties. We chose as comparator the DISC model. The DISC instrument is a progenitor of Merrill and Reid's theory, but is known as a "psycho-lexical" model because it uses adjective and attitudes as a metric rather than behavior.

Like the Interaction Styles® the DISC categorizes participants into quadrants that are used to define and predict characteristics of their interactions with others. One advantage of the DISC as a component of our validity study is that it measures four factors, rather than the two used in Interaction Style. The D and S measurements are obliquely oriented as are the I and C scales. This gives an opportunity to measure "convergent validity", that is strong positive correlations, between the two instrument and "divergent validity", strong negative correlations at the same time.

The following diagrams reflect the psychological constructs and orientation of the two instruments.



### Hypothesis

Given the above structure, hypothesis tests for this validation study are as follows:

- H(0): Assertiveness measure of the Interaction Styles® will be positively correlated with the Dominance Measure of the DISC
- H(0): Responsiveness measure of the Interaction Styles® will be positively correlated with the Influence Measure of the DISC
- H(0): Assertiveness measure of the Interaction Styles® will be negatively correlated with the Steadiness Measure of the DISC
- H(0): Responsiveness measure of the Interaction Styles® will be negatively correlated with the Compliance Measure of the DISC

### Subjects:

41 adults were selected to take both the DISC (Management Version) and the Interaction Styles®. Participation was voluntary and uncompensated. The instruments were administered online using an Internet web browser and location

of the subject's choice. Randomization was used to place the subjects into two groups. \_ of the subjects took the Interaction Styles® first, the DISC second. The other group took the DISC first and the Interaction Styles second. Complete data was collected from 39 subjects.

**Analysis:**

Because of the differing nature of the item structure between the two instruments, it was decided to test validity at the scale level rather than the item level. Both instruments have scales already proven reliable (**ASSERT**  $r = .76$  **RESP**  $r = .81$  **D**  $r = .91$  **I**  $r = .90$  **S**  $r = .92$  **C**  $r = .89$ ). The DISC generates two scales for each participant, a 'Natural Style' and an 'Adaptive Style.' For our a-priori hypothesis tests we choose to use the Adaptive measure, since as one researcher writes this value "demonstrates the real self...or the intensity of each factor... while the individual is unable to mask behavior."

We encountered one limitation in using the DISC for this study. The four scale scores each use a different and non-linear scoring algorithm. This makes analysis and comparisons between the raw scale score problematic, and could impact the magnitude (but not the direction) of correlations seen. For this reason we choose to use a percentile ranking of the participant's raw score.

Because of this decision a series of Spearman's test of Correlations of Ranked Data (Spearman's rho) was run between the mean scale scores for the Interactions Styles (ASSERT and RESP) and the DISC (D I S C) measures. The following correlation table was generated.

DISC Scales	Interaction Styles®	
	ASSERT	RESP
<b>D</b>	<b>.62671</b> <b>&lt;.0001</b>	-0.16918 0.3032
<b>I</b>	0.34035 0.0340	<b>0.45076</b> <b>0.0040</b>
<b>S</b>	<b>-0.71260</b> <b>&lt;.0001</b>	-0.05058 0.7598
<b>C</b>	0.34971 0.0291	<b>-0.31837</b> <b>0.0482</b>

The first numbers in each cell of the table is the Spearman rho correlation coefficient, the second is the probability the correlation is significant.

**Conclusion:**

The statistics from highlighted cells in the correlation table fails to reject all four hypotheses and confirms claims of both convergent and divergent validity.

## Works Cited

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## Works Consulted

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Bonnstetter, Bill J., Suiter, Judy I., Widrick, Randy J. *The Universal Language DISC*. Scottsdale, Arizona: Target Training International, Ltd., 1993.