

# **Communication Styles Summary for OGE Faculty Mentoring Workshop Series**

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of one framework for describing communication preferences and styles. We recognize that communication styles tests are an oversimplification and that you might not feel there is a perfect fit from the available styles described here. However, our goal is not to find a single description of your style or type, but instead to learn something about different communication dimensions and to apply what you learn to your mentoring practice.

You may be wondering why we don't ask you to take a communication style test. We have found that no matter what test we use, the focus turns quickly to how artificial the questions are and how imperfect the 'score' is. Participants spend class time talking about how they feel like they are being put in a box that doesn't fit them.

Since the point of the exercise is not to determine one style, but to learning about different styles and how to communicate effectively across different types we have chosen to eliminate the test component. However, we still feel it's valuable to learn about communication preferences so we have provided this overview for your reference. Feel free to look at other communication styles instruments you may find on the web or draw from what you already know from past assessments/experiences if that is more useful for you.

Before coming to class identify two things:

1. Identify your preferred communication style. You can choose one or several different descriptions, or pick and choose different elements. Whatever is helpful for you. Focus mainly on your communication style at work, since how we communicate at home and at work can be very different.
2. Identify a style or styles that are challenging for you. Think about times when you've had communication difficulties with someone – does one of these descriptions fit that individual? Perhaps certain elements of some of the descriptions stand out to you as being difficult for you.

## **4 Dominant Communication Styles**

*By Marcia Reynolds, PhD*

(online assessment at <http://outsmartyourbrain.com/4-dominant-communication-styles/>)

### **The two styles most focused on task:**

**DOERS** like to be in control. They like quick action and they like to see results. They like to get to the point with little formalities. They don't care for details and love finding shortcuts. Otherwise, they get bored easily. They like autonomy, freedom and taking risks. They are self-starters, innovators and love to expend physical energy. They like public recognition, especially for putting what they most value into action and for creating results that make a difference in the world (or at least in world they see and act in every day).

**Doers** tend to be high achievers and leaders and drive necessary results. They also tend to be impatient and insensitive to others.

When communicating with a DOER style:

- Be clear, specific, brief and to the point.
- Stick to business.
- Be prepared to support your ideas and work.

Factors that will create tension or dissatisfaction:

- Talking about things that are not relevant to the task or issue.
- Being unprepared or incomplete. Avoiding or beating around the bush.
- Appearing unsure or disorganized, but not asking for help.

**THINKERS** love to gather information. They enjoy reading and presenting their findings in detail. However, they need to mentally rehearse before they present, and take time to evaluate and wind down after the show. They take their time making decisions, but stand by what they decide once they do. They don't care to talk about personal issues, but enjoy discussing hobbies and issues. They desire clear expectations, specific goals, deadlines and structure. They live by a sense of order, methodologies and personal responsibility. Thinkers love to win, and will compete with themselves if no one is available. They will jump into the game with no coaxing if they perceive they have a fighting chance. They are proud of their good work. They like acknowledgment but won't ask for it.

**Thinkers** tend to excel when they like their work and can think through all angles and contingencies. They can appear to be combative, critical and sarcastic.

When communicating with a THINKER style:

- Prepare your "case" in advance. Be prepared for a debate.
- Stick to business.
- Be accurate and realistic.

Factors that will create tension or dissatisfaction:

- Being giddy, casual, informal, emotional or loud.
- Pushing too hard for results or being unrealistic with deadlines.
- Being disorganized or messy.

## **The two styles most focused on relationship:**

**INFLUENCERS** like to verbally process their thoughts so they welcome situations where they can “think out loud” with others. They like to interrupt others, especially when they are excited about the topic. They view this as conversation, not a disruption. They enjoy people, desire approval and tend to be friendly, creative and persuasive. However, they may need some help staying on track and following through on tasks. They desire social interaction, acknowledgment and chances to be creative and have fun. They often see the bright side and can be very amusing, dramatic and passionate about work. They help others get through difficult times and can build rapport and support. They genuinely like people. However, they might find themselves caught up in a lot of drama since they are quick to want to help fix things and people. Teasing is one of their favorite pastimes.

**Influencers** can lighten up even the darkest of moments. They can be inspirational, understanding and encouraging. They can also be wishy-washy in their decision-making and= seem impractical. They are often late on assignments they do not like.

When communicating with an INFLUENCER style:

- Provide a warm and friendly environment. Do little things to show your care.
- Don’t deal with a lot of details (put them in writing).
- Ask “feeling” questions to draw their opinions or comments.

Factors that will create tension or dissatisfaction:

- Being curt or cold. Cutting them off if they have something to say.
- Controlling the conversation. Not allowing them to talk and express.
- Focusing on facts and figures.

**CONNECTORS** count on others to set the tone and determine direction. They are consistent and reliable once given their responsibilities. They like to work with others instead of alone but take their time trusting and allowing new people to join their established groups. They do not readily give opinions, but this does not mean they don’t have any. Because they are diligent and dependable, they often know the most about how work is getting done. They like to be asked what they know and they appreciate personal recognition (done privately, not in front of others). They desire consistency, social bonds and acknowledgment for effort as well as results. Although they may appear stubborn, they can be very flexible and adaptable if they understand why the changes are being made and how they will benefit themselves and others. They seek to reduce stress and promote harmony.

**Connectors** are reliable team players who look after everyone in their “tribe.” They are consistent and caring. They can also be stubborn and non-supportive of pushy people and what they judge to be impulsive ideas.

When communicating with a CONNECTOR style:

- Begin with a personal comment--break the ice.
- Present your case smoothly, non-threateningly.
- Ask “how?” questions to draw their opinions.

Factors that will create tension or dissatisfaction:

- Rushing headlong into business. Creating tension.
- Being domineering or demanding.
- Forcing them to respond quickly to your ideas. Demanding change