Communicating with Purpose

Why What You Said Isn't Always What They Heard



Session Overview

What We'll Cover Today

Communication is shaped by our experiences, preferences, and personality — and the way others receive our message is influenced by theirs. In this session, we'll explore how communication styles impact workplace interactions and how DISC helps us understand ourselves and others.

Recognize

How your communication style impacts others

Identify

Communication preferences in others

Adjust

Your approach without compromising authenticity

Improve

Conversations during conflict, feedback, coaching, and collaboration

The Communication Gap

Why Does Communication Break Down?

Opening Questions

- Have you ever left a conversation thinking it went well — only to find out the other person felt completely differently?
- Have you ever sent an email that seemed perfectly clear to you, only to have someone misunderstand it completely?

The Core Reason

Most communication problems don't happen because people are trying to be difficult.

They happen because **people process information differently.**

Intent vs. Impact

A manager says: *"I need this done by noon."* Four people hear four completely different things.

"Got it."

No problem — clear and actionable

"Why noon?"

Needs context before committing

"Is something wrong?!"

Reads tone as a warning signal

"What project?"

Needs more detail to proceed

Directness can feel efficient to one person and rude to another. Thoroughness can feel helpful or overwhelming. Enthusiasm can feel engaging or distracting. **Same words. Different interpretations.**



Communication Filters

Everyone hears messages through filters that shape how they interpret what's said. The same message might land as an opportunity, a problem, coaching, recognition, or a threat — depending entirely on the listener.



Personality

Natural tendencies and behavioral preferences



Prior Experiences

Past interactions with the sender or similar situations



Current Stress Level

Emotional bandwidth available in the moment



Workload & Assumptions

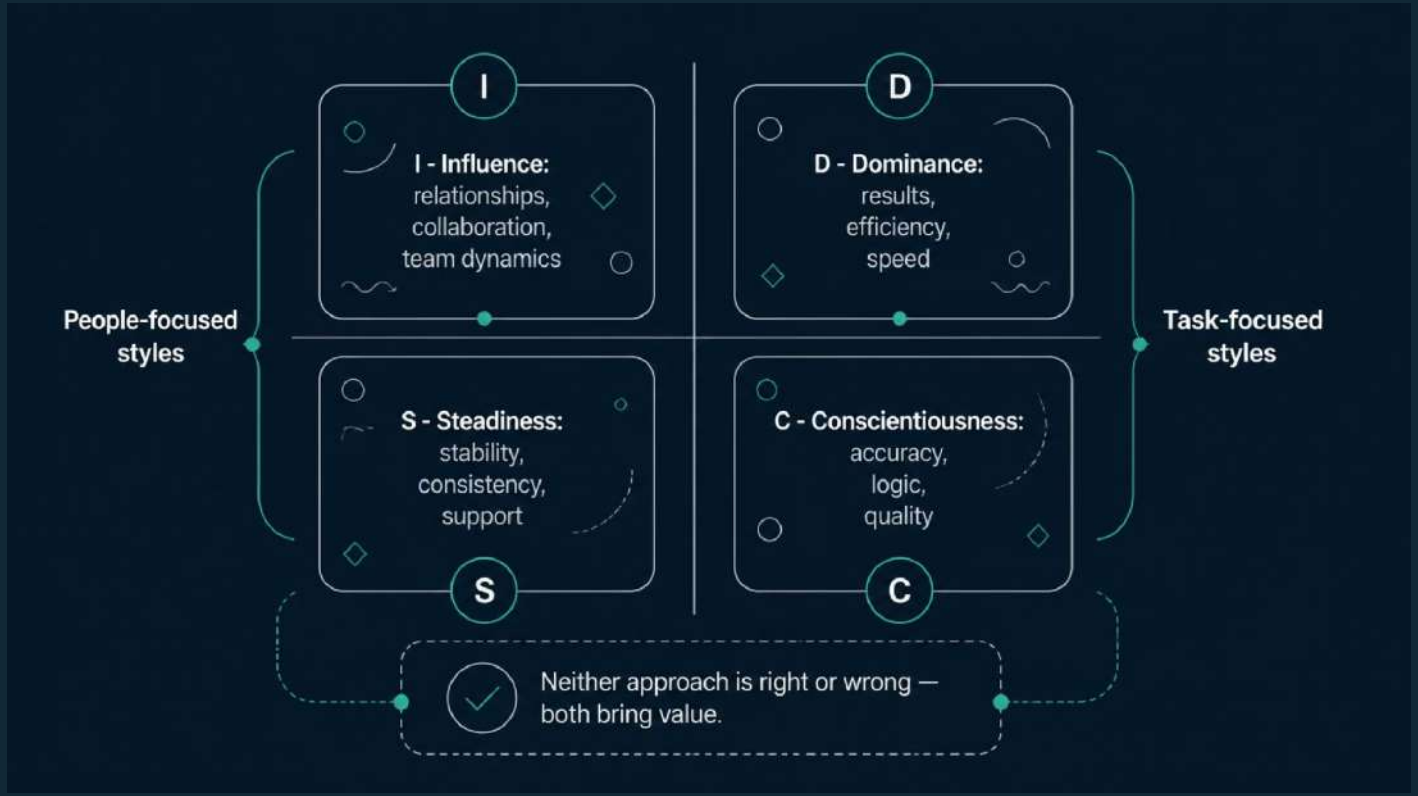
Expectations and current mental load

Key Message: Communication isn't measured by what we say. It's measured by what the other person hears.

Section 2: DISC Refresher

A Common Language, Not a Label

Most of us have taken DISC before. This is not a test review — we're simply creating a common language so we can talk about communication. DISC doesn't put people in boxes. It helps explain why different people approach communication differently.



People vs. Task Orientation

When pressure increases, do you naturally focus more on the **people involved** or the **task that needs to be completed?**

People-Focused Ask...

- How will this affect others?
- Who needs support?
- How is the team doing?

Task-Focused Ask...

- What's the goal?
- What's the deadline?
- What's the solution?

Neither approach is right or wrong. Both bring real value to a team — and understanding which lens you default to is the first step toward better communication.

The Elevator Story

Imagine four people waiting for an elevator. Each one reveals their style before saying a word.

D Style

Pushes the button repeatedly — surely that will make it come faster.

I Style

Loves the elevator — it's a captive audience and a chance to make new friends.

S Style

Holds the door for everyone and makes sure nobody gets left behind.

C Style

Reads the weight limit and starts calculating whether everyone can safely fit.

Which person annoys you the most? Which one are you? Which version of yourself shows up when you're overloaded?



Understanding DISC

How Each Style Communicates

D – Dominance

Focuses on: Results, speed, efficiency. **Preference:** Be brief. Get to the point. Focus on outcomes. **Under stress:** Becomes more controlling.

I – Influence

Focuses on: Relationships, enthusiasm, collaboration. **Preference:** Build rapport. Be conversational. Allow discussion. **Under stress:** Becomes emotional or impulsive.

S – Steadiness

Motivated by: Stability, relationships, consistency. **Preference:** Context, patience, collaboration. **Under stress:** Withdraws or avoids.

C – Conscientiousness

Focuses on: Accuracy, logic, quality. **Preference:** Provide details. Be organized. Answer questions thoroughly. **Under stress:** Overanalyzes.



The Trash Can Story

You walk into the office and notice the trash can is overflowing. What's your first thought?

1. **D**
   "Someone should empty that."
2. **I**
   "Wonder whose turn it is."
3. **S**
   "I'll take care of it."
4. **C**
   "Why is the process broken?"

Notice how each reaction — if said out loud — would sound completely different to coworkers. That's communication style at work before a single formal conversation even starts.

Intent vs. Impact

What we intend and what others experience can be very different — even when we believe we're being helpful.

I Think I'm Being...	They Hear...
Efficient (D)	Rude
Friendly (I)	Getting off track
Keeping the peace (S)	Avoiding the issue
Preventing mistakes (C)	Being negative

⚠ Many workplace conflicts are **preference clashes** — not performance problems. Which of these have you experienced?

From Awareness to Action

We Communicate for Ourselves — Not Our Audience

Have you ever explained something exactly how *you* would want it explained, only to have the other person still not get it? We often default to our own style.

Scenario: Your manager asks, "Can you give me an update on that project?"

D

A 20-second summary — what's done, what's next.

I

Context, stories, sidebar conversations about the team.

S

Emphasis on how the team is working together.

C

Detailed background, supporting information, caveats.

Everyone answered the same question differently — and all thought they were being helpful. **Self-awareness is helpful. Adaptability is powerful.**

Conversation Skill #1

One Sentence Can Change Everything

> "Please stop by my office when you have a minute."

How might each DISC style interpret this message?

Style	First Thought
D	"What do you need?" — focused, practical
I	"Am I in trouble?" — social anxiety
S	"Did I let someone down?" — relational worry
C	"What did I miss?" — analytical review

The Fix: "Please stop by my office when you have a minute. *Nothing is wrong — I just want your input on something.*" One sentence. Four very different emotional reactions — prevented.

Conversation Skills #2 & #3

Seek Understanding Before You Lead

Skill #2: Seek Understanding

When a coworker sends a short, clipped email, the immediate assumption is often: they're upset.

Better question: What evidence do I actually have? Ask: "What am I missing? What do I know to be true?"

Skill #3: Match Before You Lead

Before persuading someone, understand how they process information. The same job can be presented four ways:

- **D:** Pay, hours, start date
- **I:** Culture, team, environment
- **S:** Stability, schedule, expectations
- **C:** Responsibilities, training, details

Conversation Skill #4

Translate Before You Communicate

Before delivering a message, ask: *How would this person prefer to receive this information?*
Example: "We're implementing a new process next month."

Style	What They Want to Know
D	What's changing? What's expected? When does it start?
I	Who's involved? How does this affect the team?
S	How will this impact me? What support will be available?
C	What's the process? What are the details? What could go wrong?

The same message, translated four ways — each one more likely to land with its intended audience.

Conversation Skill #5

Ask Better Questions

Instead of:

"Do you understand?"

Try:

"What questions come to mind?" or "What concerns do you have?"

These create dialogue rather than yes/no answers and signal that you welcome different perspectives — especially important for C and S styles.

With D

Be concise. Focus on results. Respect their time.

With I

Build rapport. Be engaging. Allow discussion.

With S

Be patient. Provide reassurance. Give time to process.

With C

Bring facts. Explain details. Be prepared for questions.

Self-Reflection

Looking Inward

Take a moment to complete these three statements — written or spoken:

1

People communicate best with me when...

Think about what conditions help you feel heard and understood.

2

I tend to struggle when people...

Identify the communication behaviors that create friction for you.

3

One thing I'm going to practice this week is...

Choose one concrete adaptation to try in your next conversation.



Different Doesn't Mean Difficult

Our Emotional Intelligence training challenged us to pause before we react. DISC reminds us that not everyone communicates, processes information, or makes decisions the same way.

DISC Isn't About Who Is Right

It's about recognizing that different approaches all have value.

Meet People Where They Are

The strongest communicators learn to adapt to others' needs.

DISC Is the Vehicle

Better conversations are the destination.



Wrap-Up

Key Takeaways

Communication is measured by what the other person hears

Not by what you intended to say.

Everyone filters messages through their own lens

Personality, experience, stress, and assumptions all shape reception.

Small adjustments prevent big misunderstandings

One sentence. One question. One moment of awareness.

The best DISC style is the one that adapts

Recognize, appreciate, and flex to the styles of others — without losing yourself.

Questions? The goal isn't to change who you are — it's to meet people where they are.