

WORKING STYLES

The use of Working Styles and Drivers provides a useful way to help individuals understand how differences in behaviour can help or hinder their leadership style.

Drivers are subconscious attempts by us to behave in ways that will gain us the recognition we need from others. They have simple names that are descriptive of their characteristics.

Working Styles are described by Julie Hay (*Transactional Analysis for Trainers*) as the positive manifestation of unconscious behaviours we learnt in childhood around 5 key areas

- How we should help other people
- Good standards to aim for
- Ways in which we should be reliable and dependable
- The importance of having a go and doing our best
- How to make good use of time

As a child you may have decided that if you do certain things or behave in a particular way you will be looked upon more favourably or receive more positive feedback. As you grow up, these develop into unconscious behaviours.

Decisions may therefore be based on the assumption that:

- I will be OK if I am **perfect**
- I will be OK if I am **strong**
- I will be OK so long as I **hurry up**
- I will be OK if I **please you and others**
- I will be OK if I **try hard**

They are evident when we respond to the slightest stress (joining a new group, responding to the boss or a difficult colleague). A secondary Driver may become evident when we are under severe stress (e.g. divorce, major change at work).

In their positive manifestation they provide us with useful messages around gaining respect and interacting with others.

Under stressful situations, however, the compulsive nature of these behaviours, may lead us to continue to behave in a way that is no longer helpful and which, as a consequence, increases our stress level.

It is only when stress levels are acceptable that the Driver will manifest as a strength. So when we learn how to keep our stress levels within acceptable limits our Driver characteristics will appear as strengths.

The 5 Working Styles

1. Be Perfect

Strengths

- Produces accurate & reliable work
- Well organised, preference for planning ahead, a structured approach
- Monitors progress
- Likes working with detail
- It's important that things are done right

Potential Weaknesses

- Uncomfortable with tight deadlines where there hasn't been the time to produce the 'perfect' piece of work
- Perfection is not always required, a concept that is difficult to contemplate
- May demotivate others with their 'nit picking'
- May struggle to delegate because of a fear that others won't produce to their required standard

2. Be Strong

Strengths

- Stays calm under pressure
- Good in a crisis
- Thinks logically when others may be panicking
- Can stay emotionally detached, make unpleasant decisions or give difficult feedback
- Seen as reliable & steady

Potential Weaknesses

- Finds it difficult to admit to struggling or feeling emotional
- Gets overloaded rather than ask for help
- Others may find them cold & impersonal
- May withdraw rather than ask for help or admit failure

3. Hurry Up

Strengths

- Works quickly & gets a lot done
- Responds well to deadlines – energy peaks under pressure
- 'If you want something doing give it to a busy person'
- Saves time on task to spend with people

Potential Weaknesses

- Delays until deadline is near. Unable to find that energy burst until the deadline looms.
- May come across as impatient to others
- Near enough is good enough – it might not be!
- May run out of time as they haven't built in contingency time

4. Please People

Strengths

- Good team members who enjoy being around others
- Show concern for others & encourages harmony between individuals
- Wants others to feel included & part of things
- Great for raising team morale

Potential Weaknesses

- Avoid the risk of upsetting others & challenging ideas – even when a challenge is appropriate
- Uncomfortable with both giving & receiving criticism, however valid
- Tendency to take criticism personally
- May appear to lack assertiveness
- Have their own view of what would please others which may not actually reflect others desire. Is more about ‘ what I think you’d like’ rather than what you actually would like.

5. Try Hard

Strengths

- Tackles things with great enthusiasm
- Great to have around to get projects off the ground
- Follows up all possibilities when problem solving
- Pays close attention to all aspects of a task, including what others overlook

Potential Weaknesses

- More committed to the start up than the completion!
- Lets tasks get bigger & bigger as they scope all possibilities
- Asks more questions than answers are needed
- Others may resent them getting the ‘interesting’ bits to do

Impact of Working Styles on teamwork

- People with similar Working Styles may find it more comfortable to work together.
- Individuals with different styles may increase each other’s stress levels.
- If individuals can recognise the value each style can bring to the team, tasks can be scoped to allow people to work to their preferred working style.
- Provides a useful framework for the team to consider when they are under most stress as a team: what contributes to that, who contributes to that and who is best equipped to move the team on through the stressful situation.