Behavioral Styles

The cartoon below parodies a promoting-style person interacting with an analyzing-style person. When someone does not behave in a way that seems normal to us, we wonder what is wrong with them. We often assume that everyone sees the world the same way we do and under normal circumstances thinks and acts as we would. Behavioral research shows that this is a false assumption.

“Never mind the song and dance, Higgins. What about the Atkins account?”
*Drawing by Modell; ©1985 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.*

There are fundamental differences in how people see the world around them and how they react to it. Understanding these differences in behavioral styles is a critical skill for today’s leaders.

The real value in understanding the behavioral style framework (controlling, supporting, analyzing and promoting styles) is how it can enhance relationships. When you can recognize another’s style and adapt to it in a way that improves the communication between you, you are basically speaking the language the other person understands.

**Controlling Style**

Realize that their main concern is results. Communicate in an efficient, results-oriented manner. State your opinions clearly, but allow the controlling-style person to have the final say.
1. Get to the point; be specific.

2. Provide options for them to choose.

3. Be decisive and self-confident.

Supporting Style

Realize that their main concern is relationships. Help them feel that they are part of a team. Avoid force and authority; understanding and respect are more effective.

1. Show sincere interest in them and their feelings.

2. Gently explore areas of disagreement; avoid open confrontation.

3. Be cooperative rather than aggressive.

Promoting Style

Realize that their main concern is excitement. They love new ideas, people and projects. Support their ideas and give them recognition.

1. Allow time to explore mutually exciting possibilities.

2. Look at the big picture and avoid getting caught up in details.

3. Make your presentation stimulating and exciting.

Analyzing Style

Realize that their main concern is perfection. Present facts and data rather than ideas and opinions, and give them enough time to work through all the details and make a decision.

1. Be organized and logical; avoid hype.

2. Give them time to get comfortable with the situation.
3. Avoid surprises.

Action Steps

1. Have a conversation with your team about your individual styles. Have each team member give feedback to you and to their teammates about how they see each person. Have people share how they like to be directed, coached, reviewed and supported. Jot down a few notes on what occurred.

2. Do the same exercise with your boss. With your family/friends.
Behavioral Styles

controlling  analyzing
promoting  supporting