



3 Key Ways You Can Use The 5 Elements Communication Styles Diagnostic!

In our previous articles, we covered the importance of communication, and 5 reasons why you should use the 5 Elements diagnostic. These articles go some way to answering the questions of what and why, though of course there is much more to be said on both topics. Now, we want to cover the “how”! We know why communication is important and we know what 5 Elements tool is, but the final step is to understand how we implement this tool into our businesses, teams, or even our daily lives to effect a positive change.

There are three main ways to use this tool:

1) Self Diagnosis

It is worth breaking down what we mean by “self-diagnosis” at a more profound level before we get into the nitty gritty of how the tool operates. The word “diagnosis” is composed of two Greek words, “dia” and “gnosis”. “Dia” means “apart”, and “gnosis” simplistically means “knowledge”, although it has a more far-reaching mystical connotations, particularly in the realm of religious mysteries and secret or hidden knowledge. A diagnosis, then, is a form of distinguishing, of separating out, of zoning in on what the problem is (literally: separating the knowledge, or separating one thing from another).

This is essentially how all self-perception inventories, personality profiling, or motivational tools work. They allow us to narrow down and refine the possibilities of what we are so that we have a clearer understanding. The best tools do this in a way that is non-stereotyping. They don’t prescribe us (aka, *you are X, or you are Y*) but rather they suggest facets of our makeup that feels authentic and explain our challenges, behaviours, and desires to a degree. This is true of 5 Elements. None of us is simply x or y communication style. We utilise all five, but to varying degrees, and we prefer some over others.

If we dwell a little more on the “gnosis” part of “*diagnosis*”, some interesting truths come up. “Gnosis” is often translated as “knowledge”, but it is actually not representative of knowledge as in mere information. Gnosis is a complete integration of this knowledge into our being; it is the next step: *understanding*. In some societies, this means specifically an understanding of God, a transcendental experience that eclipses all others and becomes life-changing. For a more down-to-earth comparison, consider that euphoric light-bulb moment where you suddenly see the way forward because the knowledge has led to deeper understanding. In other words, it’s not enough just to “know” stuff, we have to put it into action, and that way we achieve “gnosis”.

So, when we use the 5 Elements diagnostic, or any tool for that matter, the key thing is not simply to complete the questionnaire and read our results once, but to truly and deeply meditate on and think about what they mean for us. One of the most powerful things you can do is try to think of practical examples. If Visioning is your primary communication style, for instance, can you think of any times where you became tired out or frustrated by having to deal with the small nuts and bolts of a project? Is there a person you know who is particularly detail-orientated and really gets at the back of your teeth? By cementing the learnings of the report in real-world experience, you will begin to move towards not just knowledge but gnosis where this newfound understanding is put into practice.

2) Team Diagnosis

When we use 5 Elements in a team scenario, things get really interesting. We can firstly use the tool to identify any friction points. For example, are there two people who often rub each other the wrong way? What are their communication styles? Does this reveal the root of the underlying tension? Now we are aware of this clash, what can each party do to make it easier for the other person?

Next, we can look even deeper to see how the team is functioning as a whole. As we've covered in previous articles, the 5 Elements not only describes communication style preferences in individuals, but also the 5-step process required to complete any project (a "lifecycle" if you will). Let's briefly recap on what those five stages are:

- we start with Checking and the question "What did we do last time and what were the results?";
- we then move on to a Vision of what we want to achieve;
- we create a Plan to achieve that vision;
- we then need to identify the what resources we require and are available (Facilitating);
- with resources in place, we need to act! (Doing);
- lastly, we come back around full-circle to Checking: How did we do? Can we improve?

Note, that although there are 5 stages, one of them is repeated (Checking). By examining our team next to this 5-step lifecycle, we can see whether there are either:

- **gaps**, instances where there are no members in the team who prefer a certain communication style, meaning that it is likely to be overlooked when undertaking the work, or...
- **over-representation**, instances where there are too many team members with a dominant style, which means that there is likely to be too much focus on one particular element of the project (such as the Planning stage).

The best way to understand this is with an example. If, let's say, you had 5 team members, and one of them had a Visioning focus, one a Facilitating focus, one a Checking, and two a Planning focus, then there is a gap, in that no-one is particularly focused on the actual Doing, the implementation of the project. This is likely to lead to problems unless addressed. In addition, you have an over-focus on Planning, which means it is likely that blueprints are going to be forever drafted and redrafted until a "perfect plan" is created, but nothing is ever completed or put out into the world. This is a ludicrously simple example, and of course it is entirely possible for people to have more than one "focus" in their 5 Elements profile (some highly adaptable people can even have 4 or all 5 styles equally balanced!). However, it serves to illustrate what we mean by looking at your team more closely.

3) Heuristic Planning

Lastly, you can use the 5 Elements tool to analyse past projects and to plan forthcoming ones. In a similar manner to the team analysis, you can outline who and what needs to be where by utilising this 5-step lifecycle. This lifecycle creates a natural sequencing of events, including who in your team should be on-hand at what stages during the project, based on their communication preferences (these communication styles might also be thought of as “operational styles”, given their wider implication). Lastly, it also allows you to anticipate and problem solve anomalies or setbacks heuristically by using this simple structural template.

For more information about how to use the 5 Elements diagnostic as a planning tool, you may wish to consult Chapter 4 of Mapping Motivation For Leadership (<https://amzn.to/2XzXyqB>), which gives a comprehensive overview of this process and 5 Elements, its roots, and the research behind it.

To complete your 5 Elements diagnostic and begin the journey to self *diagnosis*, head on over to <https://www.5elementscommunication.com> and use the code SUMMER30 to get a 30% discount on your test!