



5 Reasons to Use The 5 Elements Communication Styles Diagnostic!

These days, we have so many profiling tools at our disposal, ranging from psychometric tests to self-perception inventories, it is hard to work out which ones we should deploy. Many of these tools have overlapping utility, and some are vastly popular, having become a kind of “industry standard”. However, as is frequently the case, just because the majority of people are following one path, doesn’t mean that path is right for you. In fact, the “road less travelled on”, to quote Robert Frost, is often the one that yields most reward.

So, here are 5 reasons why you should use 5 Elements Diagnostic!

1) Self Awareness

The majority of disagreements in the workplace, and indeed beyond it, are not caused by the *content* of what’s being said, but *how* it is being said. This frequently boils down to differences in communication style. We all know that there are certain patterns of speech or wordings that bug us, though we may not be sure why. For example, we might find one manager particularly irritating because they always talk about their big ideas at full volume. Without any knowledge of the five primary communication styles, this irritation becomes *personal* and directed towards the individual. However, if we understand that the conflict stems not from a clash of personalities or even beliefs, but from a stylistic difference, then we can begin to work on and heal the rift.

This is the magic of self-awareness. When we have visibility of our own style, and indeed the styles of others, we can then “see the object as it really is” to quote Walter Pater. In fact, to quote more generously from Pater’s work, he makes a fascinating observation which is relevant to this whole principle: “‘To see the object as in itself it really is,’ has been justly said to be the aim of all true criticism whatever, and in aesthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one’s object as it really is, is *to know one’s own impression as it really is*, to discriminate it, to realise it distinctly.” (*The Renaissance*, 1873)

They are my italics. Pater proposes that if we are to begin to see the truth of any given situation, we must first look inward to discover what our “impression” is, and 5 Elements can help us do that.

2) Flexibility

One of the central problems we find with psychometric tests in particular is that they stereotype their users. They describe fixed behaviours and traits that are (arguably) unchangeable. Our tool, 5 Elements, is a communication styles diagnostic that is similar to a psychometric test in principle, but takes a slightly different approach. Whilst we do believe that the “styles” are largely fixed over time, meaning that you only need ever do the test once to discover your styles, they do not describe fixed

behaviours but rather *preferences*. For example, the Vision-style *prefers* to deal with the big picture, and with ideas. But they are not “limited to” that mode.

Now, this style can consequently lead to describable behaviours, such as a desire to talk through these ideas (which also infers a preferred communication mode: speech), but it is more flexible. There is an underlying style or preference, but it is not prescriptive or stereotyping, merely reflective of “where we’re coming from”.

3) Awareness of Others

From a place of self-knowledge, we can then begin to apply what we know to how we deal with other people. If we are aware of their communication styles because they have also completed a 5 Elements diagnostic, or even if we simply suspect what some of their top styles might be, then we can adapt our behaviour to create better interactions with them. For example, individuals with a Planning style preference like structure, strategy, and facts. How can we touch on these when communicating with them?

When we adapt our mode of communication to suit the needs of others, we begin to become quite a magnetic person, as those around us will enjoy communicating with us because we “speak their language”. The purpose of this tool is not to make you into a suave smooth-talker, however. In fact, not all styles prefer speech as their mode of communication, some prefer the written word (such as the Checking and Doing styles)! 5 Elements *is* designed to provide you with knowledge and insight that can help you to better reach people and get your message across, and, in doing so, you may also find that you begin to see the world from their viewpoint.

4) Teamwork

5 Elements is specifically designed with teams in mind. Not only do the communication styles describe individual preferences but they also describe the five-step process of completing any project, from Visioning the end-goal through to Planning, Facilitating (resourcing), Doing (aka, implementing), and finally Checking the work. By understanding the balance and preferences of our teams, we can discern where blind-spots or weaknesses may lie. We can also determine where conflicts might most frequently arise.

If you are curious about how 5 Elements can be used in a team-setting, then there is a free spreadsheet you can download from the resources page of our website!

5) Building Bridges

It’s estimated that some 85% of problems between people and organisations come down to communication issues, and so this is a tool which enables people to build bridges across communication gulfs or voids! This works from individual to individual, from managers to their teams (one to many), and from the organisation as a whole to its employees (and of course vice-versa).

I so frequently see employees describing their leaders as “tactless”. One company I encountered posted an email bulletin about the distribution of bonuses right after laying off a significant number of staff. However, whilst it would be easy to demonise leadership here, it is most likely simply a communication styles issue. Perhaps the leadership team was predominantly comprised of optimistic Facilitators who want everyone to know that their bonuses are still going through and they aren’t losing out? Perhaps the team was composed of Planners, who are more factual and practical? This is

not to say it makes their decision “right”, merely that it does not necessarily come out of a place of intentional heartlessness. There is also a burden of responsibility on the management team to be sensitive to the communication style preferences of its employees and teams, and that is the beautiful two-way street of 5 Elements. It starts with self-awareness, but then it progresses and becomes about other people!