

Communication is not always easy - so how can we help?



The important things you need to know!

In our modern world of instant messaging, email, mobile phones, and Zoom, we have the ability to communicate with people all around the world, and in a variety of different ways, perhaps more so than at any other point in human history. However, as we all know, communication is not always as easy as it's cracked up to be. Even simple ideas or gestures can be misconstrued, or cause offence.

These differences often arise not because of the content of what's being said, but rather due to the individual style of the communicator.

Our research has concluded there are [five primary communication styles](#), and each of us prioritises (or leans toward) one of more of these styles. Some of these styles are—by definition—at odds with one another, as they are driven by different priorities, hence why it can sometimes seem like we're talking at crossed purposes with someone, even when we seem to be in agreement on the surface!

There is no “right or wrong” style here, only a matter of perspective. By gaining insight into what our style or preference might be, we can begin to understand what types of behaviours or styles rankle with us, and what styles most suit our way of working. If we take this one step further, we begin to learn about the styles of those around us, which can lead to breakthroughs in team-building and cooperative efforts.

So, what are the five styles?

VISION style means that:

- **you prefer dealing with Vision, challenges and ideas.**
- you like to direct, be decisive, and also intuitive in how you behave and reach conclusions.
- your preferred mode of communication is through speech, which tends to short, fast, and to the point.
- your big contribution to leadership is: creative problem-solving.

PLANNING style means that:

- **you prefer dealing with Planning, strategy, and structure.**
- you like to calculate, predict, and think through in how you behave and reach conclusions.
- your preferred mode of communication is through speech, which tends to be slower, more considered than V-style, with an emphasis on facts.
- your big contribution to leadership is: developing strategies and tactics.

FACILITATING style means that:

- **you prefer dealing with Facilitating, persuading, and being socially aware.**
- you like to project positivity, optimism and a can-do mind-set.
- your preferred mode of communication is through speech, but because of your acute social awareness—perceptiveness—this manifests itself primarily through dialogue or conversations with others.
- your big contribution to leadership is: communicating both internally and externally.

DOING style means that:

- **you prefer dealing with Doing, action now, and the nitty-gritty of deliverables.**
- you like to be practical, factually orientated, and measured in how you behave.
- your preferred mode of communication is two-fold: listening and written, which helps create structure, which you like.
- your big contribution to leadership is: ways forward to unblock barriers to achievement.

CHECKING style means that:

- **you prefer dealing with Checking, analysis and precision.**
- you like to be factual, accurate and self-aware in how you behave and reach conclusions.
- your preferred mode of communication is through writing, which is definitive, and questioning, which helps in your search for more information.
- your big contribution to leadership is: detailed analysis of any situation.

This is an all-too-brief overview, and it is also important to bear in mind that many people have more than one style dominant in their profile, and some even have three or more (though this is much rarer)!

All of these styles fit together as part of a cycle. More than this, the Five Elements correspond to the Five Seasons of Chinese philosophy. Together, these elements / seasons describe the lifecycle of any given project or endeavour.

- We start with **Checking**, and asking the questions what did we do before, and how well it did work? This is the Winter season, and the element of Water. Nothing is growing here, but we can check in with how the year has gone!
- We then move to **Visioning**, which is represented by Spring. We create a vision for what we want to achieve (a tiny seedling), whether it's launching a new

product, creating a new service, or streamlining the business to maximise its potential. This is typified by the question, “Where do we want to be?” Visioning correlates to the element of Wood in Chinese philosophy which represents new growth.

- From Wood, we move to Fire, which is **Planning**. The Fire here represents the Fire of Industry, because the Planning asks the question “How do we get there?” This corresponds with the season of Early Summer, where new life is starting to shoot.
- After the Fire of Planning comes the Earth of **Facilitating**. This is because Facilitating is a grounding stage. Here, we ask the question “What resources are necessary to complete our aim?” correlating to the season of Late Summer, which is where things start to mature, for the vision to become a manifested reality.
- After we have resourced our project, we move on to the implementing: the **Doing!** This is represented by the season of Autumn, in which the trees shed their blossoms, the flowers shoot their shot, and life reaches its momentary apex. This corresponds with the element of Metal. Something has been forged!
- Lastly, we return again to the Winter of **Checking**, where we evaluate how the project went.

As you can see, this lifecycle is very useful for formulating a clear procedure of how to go about any project, and gives you a helpful checklist as to whether any stage has been missed. More than this, it also means you can assess how well your team or teams is suited to the project. Do you have lots of Vision-orientated communicators but no practical implementation-focused Doers? This could cause a problem in the latter stages of the project.

Communication is all-important, and as you can see, it is not only about one-to-one interactions, but also about how we *operate* in working or productive environments. Though we are not pigeon-holed to a specific “role” by our style of communication, we are likely to have natural aptitude for certain project roles over others. Equally, we are likely to contribute more at certain stages of the lifecycle due to our preferences. It’s easy to see how communication breaks down when people start to take control of projects in their entirety, not recognising that every person, and “season”, has its place. By learning more about our communication styles, we take our first step on the road to smoothing out our communications with others, and even better, to finding how we work best.