

# FIVE ELEMENTS



## Communication Styles Diagnostic

Lockdown has profoundly changed the way we work, and the reality is that it's unlikely everything will "go back to normal" at this point. As a result, there is understandable uncertainty about what awaits us when businesses are able to operate without restrictions. Some questions crop up frequently when the topic of "returning to work" arises, including: should we bring people back into the office or allow them to continue working remotely? if we are doing a bit of both, how do we decide who is allowed to work remotely and who comes back into the office? should we make these decisions based on role, skills, or some other factor?

These are all very valid questions, and not ones with easy answers (and ultimately, each business will have to tackle them in their own way). Added to this, there is a pervading sense in the nation that we've "forgotten" how to socialise! Of course, this isn't the case, and those skills return quickly. But it is worth being aware that we have gotten out of the habit of navigating large gatherings, and we will need to refresh those skills.

However, we'd like to present a slightly left-field view on how you could approach resolving these issues.

At 5 Elements, we understand that everyone has a preferred communication style and/or styles. This is not only about communication, however: it also influences how one goes about tackling projects (some practitioners using 5 Elements have referred to it as "operating styles"), and, perhaps even more importantly, how we like to be communicated *to*.

The 5 styles are Visioning, Planning, Facilitating, Doing, and Checking.

To give a brief overview of each style:



Visioning is concerned with the top-level “vision” of “Where do we want to be?”. It is ideas-orientated and the preferred method of communication is via speech. The Visioning-style is imaginative – they are visualising the future before it happens.



Planning is concerned with the question “How do we get there?” and creating a practical step-by-step procedure for getting to where we want to be. Planning is also future-orientated, (you need a plan before you can leap into action!) but the preferred method of communication is written. They like structure.



Facilitating is about resourcing, and the question “What do we need to get there?”. The Facilitating-style is present-orientated and focused on relationships – facilitating others, facilitating the vision. It tends to be high energy and optimistic. The Facilitator is socially aware and all about the preferred mode of communication is dialoguing.



Doing is naturally concerned with the question “What actions happen?”. It is present-orientated and focused on the task at hand, as well as the details of the operation in general. It is a classic instance that the Doing-style communicators on the ground feel that the upper brass have no idea about the real “ins and outs” of how things work. They tend to like listening carefully.



Checking is about “What have we achieved?” and “What could we do better next time?” It is past-orientated, so looking at past results and also precise in thinking about how things can be improved next time. The Checking-style tends to be about facts and analysis, and their preferred mode of communication is written or through asking questions.

This is an all-too-brief overview, but it does give you some flavour of each of the styles. It is worth mentioning here that we are not “one style”, the 5 Elements does not stereotype. We may have more than one style or indeed, in rare cases, a combination of all of them. Most people have one or two dominant styles, however.

Based on this, we can see that certain communication styles are going to thrive by returning to the office, and others are going to prefer remote-working. The Visioning-style, for example, might be quite happy at home, able to imagine and create in their private space, and then deliver that vision to their team via a Zoom call. Likewise, most Planning-style communicators will find that they are able to map things out with very little need to be “on site”.

The Facilitator, on the other hand, is going to miss the hustle and bustle, the social interactions, and the opportunity to boost others. Similarly, the Doing-style communicator may find themselves uncomfortable in an environment where they have to structure their own day, and where they are distant from the hub of the organisation.

The Checking-style communication is also likely to suffer working from home. The Checking-style communicator likes to ask questions, but when one is working from home, it becomes far more ambiguous who is available to answer those questions. There is all-round less certainty.

We also find that the tools organisations use to continue day-to-day operations will have a profound influence on the employees depending on their communication style. Apps like Slack, that operate almost in the same way as social media sites, but for collaborative work projects, very much suit the Checking and Doing style communicators who love to be kept in the loop at all times. But for Visioning-style communicators, it is a barrage of notifications that is not supportive of focused, creative work. On the other hand, Zoom meetings might very much suit the Facilitators, as a substitute for true face-to-face interactions, but might feel completely onerous to the Planners, who like to get things done, dispense with the chit-chat, and establish a clear pathway forward.

By determining your communication style, and the style of your employees, you can better facilitate their needs, whilst also getting the most out of them, because when we operate in ways that align with our communication styles, and are sensitive to the styles of others and what they prefer, then we begin to remove friction, enhance energy levels, and overcome obstacles with teamwork.

To complete your test, and discover what your communication style is, you can go here

<https://www.5elementscommunication.com>