

# TRACOM Sneak Peek

Excerpts from  
**Working in  
Teams**

with  
**STYLE**





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## Introduction: Style and Teams

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Working in teams has become mainstream in the modern workplace. Both individual and organizational success increasingly rely on effective teamwork. Teams come in many forms – cross-functional teams to achieve strategic initiatives; temporary teams to manage short-term projects; even cross-organizational teams are common in many industries. Virtual teams are now more common, where team members live and work in different locations and may never actually meet face-to-face.

The one thing that all teams have in common is individuals. No matter what kind of team you are in or what its purposes are, you will have to interact with your fellow team members. SOCIAL STYLE can help you understand these people and how they are likely to interact with one another (and you).

Research has shown the connection between SOCIAL STYLE skills and teams.<sup>1</sup> Managers with high Versatility—the ability to understand others and interact effectively with them—are 27% more effective as team leaders than managers with low Versatility. Further, Versatility was shown to have a high relationship with the ability to work well within a team, effectiveness as a team leader and the ability to establish effective relationships with others.

This guide offers advice about how to approach the most common tasks and functions of teams—such as running meetings and making decisions. By following the strategies given here, you might even find that working in teams can become more enjoyable!

This guide assumes that you have had previous training in SOCIAL STYLE concepts. You may find it helpful to review your own SOCIAL STYLE profile and original training materials prior to reading this guide.

This guide will show you how to use SOCIAL STYLE to:

- Understand how people of different Styles operate in team environments
- Communicate with people of all Styles within a team
- Approach the most common team tasks
- Understand and manage team Style dynamics

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<sup>1</sup> TRACOM Group (2005). *Managerial Success Study*. Highlands Ranch, CO.



## Analytical Style

Need: **To Be Right**

Growth Action: **To Declare**

Orientation: **Thinking**

Backup Behavior: **Avoids — Withdraws from the Situation**

*Analytical Style people are focused on information and a desire to make the right decision, from their perspective. Thinking and careful analysis are important to these individuals. Others see them as reserved, slow-moving and risk-averse.*

*They are cooperative in action, as long as they are not forced to act too quickly and have freedom to organize their own efforts. They appreciate others who support their approach and principles. Follow-through and meeting commitments are important when working with them.*

*These individuals use time to fully review situations. They do not like to be rushed, believing that this will result in mistakes. Therefore, their decision-making is slow-paced and methodical, and they focus on facts and information. Gut instincts or attempted use of influence are seen as negatives.*

*In times of tension, these individuals are likely to avoid making a decision, or will leave the situation altogether. The concept of “paralysis by analysis” applies to them. They would rather delay action than make the wrong decision.*

### What Team Strengths and Weaknesses Do Analytical Style People Have?

Analytical Style people use their organizational skills to influence team processes, and to help keep teams on track. Their methodical approach to tasks and processes can be helpful, especially for teams that require a great deal of structure in order to achieve their outcomes. These individuals' rational approach to problem-solving is helpful for focusing teams on the most immediate concerns or issues, and can help to divert attention away from interpersonal issues that may be keeping the team from achieving results. Because they tend to be prepared, they are often very reliable in terms of accomplishing their work, and this helps the team continually make progress.

These individuals are sometimes slow to act, and can also be slow in conversation. They have a tendency to draw out conversations, speaking in more detail than is necessary or wanted by other team members. This can result in others becoming impatient with them, and trying to work around them rather than with them. These individuals are also cautious and can be hesitant to take action or move forward, even when the rest of the team is ready. This can result in unnecessary delays for the team. If they disagree with the direction the team is going, they might become disengaged, and will not voice their opinions. Alternatively, they may become very stubborn, clinging to their position without being open to other points of view.

## How You Appear to Other Team Members

Before getting into a discussion of team dynamics and how Style impacts team tasks, it is important to consider your own Style. As a member of the team, others will form certain impressions of you and will judge your behavior. This is especially true if you find yourself joining a team of people with whom you do not normally work closely.

Your Style and behavior can have a tangible impact on the team. By understanding how others see your behavior, you will be able to control your behavioral tendencies that can get in the way of effective team performance. Read below for a description of how others are likely to see you, and the implications this can have on the team.



### Driving Style

*The people on your team see you as direct and assertive. Your need for results and orientation for taking action can help the team focus their efforts on the goals and objectives that need to be accomplished. You have the ability to summarize information from the team into its most meaningful elements, which helps the team remain oriented toward the things that matter most.*

*Your behavioral preferences can have more negative consequences. You might come across as indifferent and pushy, and in team meetings others might see you as domineering and unwilling to listen to their ideas. Even worse, they may feel steam-rolled by you. Some people will view you as speaking too quickly or forcefully, which makes them feel like they cannot join in the discussion. If your focus is solely on results, without considering issues that are important to other team members, you may actually slow the team down and delay getting the results you want. Similarly, if you push for your solution or decision too quickly without getting input from others on the team, you might not get the buy-in from them that the team needs to succeed.*

### How to Improve as a Team Member

As a Driving Style person, you will need to be patient with other team members. Give them opportunities to talk during meetings, and listen carefully to what they are saying. Some team members with different Styles might need to be prompted to express themselves, so it is usually a good idea to ask questions. Show interest in their points of view, and incorporate their perspectives and talents into team processes and solutions. By their nature, team meetings require time to allow for all participants to have their input, and to come to agreements. If you are scheduling meetings, be sure to allow enough time for this, even though you may feel like time is being wasted.

## Establishing a Common Purpose

Teams become teams for a purpose. The team needs to solve a problem, develop a product, manage a project, or any number of other things. Perhaps because establishing the purpose of the team can seem like the simplest and most obvious task, it is often glossed over. This can have consequences later on, such as confusion among team members, disputes over accountabilities and resources, and misunderstandings about timelines and processes.

When a common purpose has been established, the team should know:

- Its priorities and goals
- The plan to achieve its goals
- Criteria for success

Involving all team members in establishing a purpose and direction for the team is important. In effective teams, the purpose and plan have to be owned by all team members, and everyone is accountable. Commitment to the plan is more likely if all team members feel that their perspectives have been taken into account.

Each Style will have specific strengths that contribute to this stage. For example, Driving Style members will be interested in developing a timeline and deadlines for progress. Expressive Style people will help to visualize goals and build enthusiasm for other team members. Amiable Style members can be valuable for ensuring that the team works well together and that there is group agreement to strategy and direction. Finally, Analytical Style members can be helpful for suggesting processes and the measurability of goals, and whether they are realistic.

When working with a team of individuals, it will sometimes be difficult to meet everyone's expectations. However, when formulating team direction and goals, you can apply Style to meet different people's needs in a way that will move the team forward. The following are characteristics you can expect from people of each Style when your team is establishing its purpose and goals. This is followed by advice on how to meet the needs of these individuals while maintaining a focus on the overall team's needs.



## Driving Style

*Instead of a lengthy discussion of a team's purpose, Driving Style team members might simply state it in one sentence. For example, "we need to develop a new technology infrastructure." These individuals are generally focused on specific outcomes, but not on the details of how to achieve those goals, and this can be reflected in their initial planning. They may not be very interested in discussing the specific process for achieving the outcome, at least not initially. Instead, they may be eager to rush into action. This can leave some team members feeling not only rushed before they are ready, but confused about the purpose and strategy of the team.*

*Because they are results-focused, getting Driving Style members involved early on is helpful for focusing the team on the outcomes. However, during this stage of team development, it might be necessary to slow them down. Let them know that time spent at this stage will save time and energy later on. Developing a common purpose with specific and actionable goals that can be measured will help the team to focus, and will also make the team more efficient.*



## Expressive Style

*Expressive Style individuals will like to have a voice in planning, especially since they have a desire to share their opinions and ideas with groups. They tend to speculate on possibilities, with less interest in developing detailed plans. They may be particularly vocal and effective if the team uses any group brainstorming activities at this stage. Their fast approach and big-picture thinking might be frustrating for some team members who will feel the need to focus on details at this stage of the team's development.*

*Getting these individuals involved during this early stage of team development will help meet their need for approval and recognition. However, you may need to moderate them somewhat to prevent them from dominating the process and setting unrealistic goals. Build on their enthusiasm by offering your own ideas and getting other, more quiet team members involved.*

## How Style Impacts Change in Organizational or Team Direction

Change in organizational or team strategy and priorities is often inevitable. This presents both a problem and a challenge for teams. If change is not managed successfully, team productivity can suffer. Team members who are overly stressed by change cannot give their full energy or attention to their work.

What is certain is that whenever there is a change effort, there will be resistance. However, from resistance comes resilience. Resistance brings a feeling of security. Team members find comfort and stability based on where the team and organization have been in the past. Resilience implies a feeling of uncertainty. The team is suddenly moving in a new direction, and the future is uncertain.

Most people deal with change in predictable patterns. By understanding and recognizing this pattern, you will be able to help your team effectively work through the change process. Regardless of whether change is perceived as good or bad, the pattern is:

1. Shock
2. Defensiveness
3. Adjustment
4. Acceptance

While most people go through this pattern, people of different Styles will display these characteristics differently. In particular, it is necessary to recognize signs of resistance within team members so their concerns can be appropriately addressed. Here we discuss how people of each Style typically respond to change, and how to help these team members effectively adjust to changing circumstances.





## Amiable Style

*Amiable Style people tend to work in the present time frame, but they are more hesitant to change than Driving Style people. When a team changes direction, they will be inclined to support that change, but might not be outwardly active in their support. They might look for opportunities to develop new or better working relationships with other team members.*

*When opposed to change, Amiable Style team members may display their resistance in passive ways. They might be quietly hostile toward those they feel are responsible, and may reduce their performance. In some circumstances, they might play the role of victim, indicating that they feel they have no control over their situation.*

*To help these team members move into a state of resilience, clearly explain the reasons for the change. If possible, try not to press too hard for immediate changes in their work or circumstances. Instead, institute change gradually and involve them. Point out any opportunities in the new situation for them to contribute.*



## Analytical Style

*Analytical Style people tend to work in a historical time frame, and they are cautious to take action. Therefore, when an organization or team suddenly changes direction, these team members may be slower to embrace the change than others. They might look for opportunities to influence the change. For example, they may want to be involved in designing new strategies or processes.*

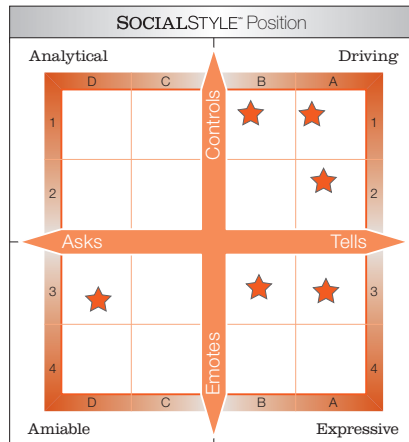
*Similar to Amiable Style individuals, these team members may show resistance in less obvious ways than others. They may procrastinate with their work or commitments, or they may try to withhold important information. In a more active way, they might make demands on the team, such as insisting that changes be implemented in a specific way that they think is right.*

*To help Analytical Style members move into a state of resilience, show them the rationale and reasoning that went into the decision to make a change. They often prefer to be alone with information before acting, so give them time to process the change and its implications. Point out any opportunities for them to influence the way in which the change is implemented, or to contribute within their area of expertise.*

## Examples of Team Styles

Teams with different mixtures of Styles are likely to operate in fairly predictable ways. As a member of a team, you can diagnose your team's mixture of Styles and use this information to help your team function more effectively. Here we present several examples. In each instance, the efforts of the team leader would be responsible for ensuring that the team's Style tendencies do not interfere with team performance.

### Team Example 1



We can make certain assumptions about the team shown above. This team will be fast-paced, willing to take risks, good at setting goals and timelines, and will focus on broad goals. This team might also miss important details or information along the way. With so many Tell Assertive team members, the lone Amiable Style member is likely to feel isolated and maybe even disregarded. Conflict is likely, since the majority of the team is competitive. While this team may move at a rapid pace, there is a high likelihood that errors will be made along the way, and that these errors will be overlooked by the team.