

## Style-Driven Culture

By Merrick Rosenberg & Daniel Silvert

In case you're not familiar with the DISC model, here's a crash course. There are four styles, Dominant (D), Influence (I), Steady (S), and Conscientious (C). Each style corresponds to a specific set of behaviors that express themselves naturally in our interactions with others and help shape how we view the world. We spontaneously create energy and vitality when displaying behaviors in our natural style. Behaviors that are not consistent with our natural wiring tend to drain us of energy.

**Each of the styles can be described as follows:**

**D:** Results-oriented, bottom-line, direct, risk-takers, independent

**I:** People-oriented, enthusiastic, motivational, optimistic, social

**S:** Harmony seeking, calm, empathetic, patient

**C:** Accuracy focused, systematic, logical, analytical, questioning

### Styles drive culture

Each style adds something unique into the organizational culture. With that in mind, let's explore the styles from a team or organizational perspective. Imagine an environment comprised of people with just one style:

**The "D" culture:** This workplace would be characterized by an intensive focus on results. Decisions would be made quickly and decisively. While the strengths of this group would include vision and execution, a group of D's may sacrifice accuracy for speed. Meetings may be long and drawn out because everyone has strong opinions and wishes to share them. The expression, "Too many chiefs" would probably capture the essence of how they worked together.

**The "I" culture:** The most striking element of this workplace would be its high morale. I's effortlessly use humor to deflect stress. In addition, there would be no shortage of positive feedback. The key challenge in this workplace would be an inattention to processes that ensure quality and the spontaneous manner in which decisions are made. Team meetings would likely lack focus and could easily stray from the intended topics.

**The "S" culture:** Given the S desire for harmony, this culture would be characterized by teamwork and trust. However, conflict may be suppressed in the name of "getting along." The desire for stability would limit innovation or even the exploration of new approaches for fear of upheaval and change. On the surface there would appear to be little conflict, however, underneath people would feel bottled up. Ironically, in such 'safe' environments employees are often afraid to express themselves, leading to buried stress. Meetings for this group tend to be polite gatherings where little dissention or conflicts are broached.

**The "C" culture:** The C environment could be described by the carpenter's motto, "Measure twice, cut once." It might take a while to make decisions or create change in this culture, but once implemented, quality results are likely. This environment will feature clearly defined processes and systems where people will steadfastly follow the rules. Under high stress, a group of C's will require copious data analysis before reaching a decision, a dynamic that can often lead to analysis paralysis. Overall, a C dominated atmosphere is likely to be more on the serious side. Team meetings will feature much detail and a lot of questions.

### Style drives culture

A well-balanced organizational culture taps into the strengths of each style. Such an environment would simultaneously place value upon Results (D); Morale and the environment (I); Relationships and service to others (S); and Quality and processes (C).

If any one of those elements is missing the team will operate less effectively and success will be more difficult to achieve. Without the D focus on results, teams will be doomed to mediocrity. A group that lacks I optimism and enthusiasm may suffer from lower morale and higher stress. When S's are not present to build consensus, destructive conflict is more likely to erupt. And when C's aren't there to create systems, sweat the details, and ask challenging questions, quality inevitably suffers.

Note that this does not mean every team needs a perfect balance of styles. In fact, depending on the roles and responsibilities of team members, your team may be more successful if it is top-heavy with just one style. In addition, a team filled with any one style can consciously choose to be mindful of what other styles would bring to the table and access those perspectives from within themselves. None of us are any one or two styles. We each have the ability to flex to the right style at the right time. It simply takes practice.

Ultimately, teams can utilize style awareness as a major driver of organizational culture to maximize strengths, minimize blind spots, and create a balanced workplace in which individual and organizational needs are met.

*Merrick Rosenberg and Daniel Silvert are co-authors of Taking Flight! Master the Four Behavioral Styles and Transform Your Career... Your Life*



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# Avoiding Turnover

by Marshall Goldsmith

As we make our way through the challenges of the global economic crisis, high-impact performers are in demand. I'm speaking here of the indispensable workers who are willing to do what it takes to help the company succeed even in the most difficult of times. Those who pick up the slack when the organization is forced to cut back; those whose ideas save time, money, and effort; those who with a positive outlook help keep the organization moving forward.

How do you retain these people? This is a great question. The answer, simply put, is leaders must manage their human assets (i.e., employees), and they must do so with the same vigor that they devote to financial assets. In tough economic times, this may seem difficult; however, it is critical for the success of the organization.

Here are some steps that organizations can take that will help them keep today's high-impact performers and tomorrow's great leaders.

**1) Show Respect:** This may seem rote, but genuinely treating employees with kindness, respect, and dignity will elicit the continued loyalty of employees to both the leader and the organization. It is possible to lead people through fear and intimidation; however, the odds of retaining and developing people using this style are slim.

**2) Focus on a Thriving Environment:** Creating an environment in which high-impact performers

want to stay and will put their all into an organization takes more than a gimmick. It takes more than enrollment in the fad-of-the-month leadership development program. It takes an environment where people are learning, getting training, and developing their skills—where through inquiry and dialogue, the leader creates an environment that allows each individual to thrive.

**3) Offer On-Going Training:** High on the list for leaders who want to retain high-impact performers is training and on-going education, both of which ensure that people can 1) do their jobs properly, and 2) can improve on existing systems. Cross training—giving people the opportunity to experience and train in different aspects of the company is a great way to cross-fertilize between departments and across regions. This is a great competitive advantage when organizations are required to cut back on manpower. Cross-trained employees are equipped to handle different functions in the organization far more easily than those confined in silos.

**4) Provide Coaching:** By working one-on-one with employees in a coaching relationship, leaders can discover and tap the talents of individuals and direct their development, align their behaviors and skills, thus becoming active as agents of change, enhancing the success of the organization.

**5) Give Feedback:** More than an annual review, leaders may give employees assistance in specific areas, such as developing networks, handling work/life balance, and attaining job and skills training. Providing feedback is more than an annual or semi-annual performance measure. It is a continual process which comes in the form

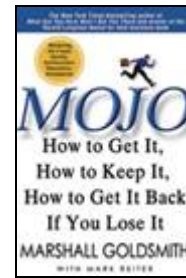
of mentoring relationships, support groups, and action groups.

**6) \$\$ and Decision-Making:** I haven't yet mentioned compensation, which is an obvious employee retainer, but it's not enough. In addition to compensation, people need to be involved in decision-making. The leader who asks people for their input on how the corporation can increase effectiveness is the leader who achieves buy-in from his/her employees. Not only does this help retain key talent, it also is a great way to generate ideas for organizational improvements!

Developing people is a strategic process that adds value to both the employees and the bottom line of the organization. Highly committed, highly competent people create financial rewards for the organization; organizations that develop their people and provide opportunities for growth are sought-after by high-impact performers. Great leaders know this simple formula. They understand it and strive to create an environment that supports it. And the result is success!

*Dr. Marshall Goldsmith recently been named by the American Management Association as one of 50 great thinkers and business leaders who have impacted the field of management. His 18 books include the Business Week best-seller, The Leader of the Future and Global Leadership: The Next Generation. Marshall is a world authority in helping successful leaders achieve positive change in behavior: for themselves, their people and their teams.*

Marshall's latest best-seller, **MOJO**, is now available.



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