

Everything DiSC[®] Catalyst[™] Activity Guide



BRETT M. COOPER AND EVANS KERRIGAN

Table of Contents

How to Use This Guide	4
A Primer on Emotional Intelligence	5
Understanding Your Decision Making	6
Communicating Across Styles	12
Creating Productive Conflict	18
Making the Team Work	26
Working With Those Outside Your Circle	38
Mastering Leadership Through DiSC®	47



Congratulations!

Congratulations! You've taken your Everything DiSC® assessment and you've logged in to the Catalyst™ platform. You now have access to a powerful tool that will improve your skills as a leader and will help make your team more productive and more cohesive. By leveraging the language and insights of DiSC®, your emotional intelligence will grow and you'll be better equipped to both understand and honor those around you.

Change happens over time through consistent effort and practice. We hope that the ideas shared in this Activity Guide will be helpful in your journey toward building more powerful team connections and work relationships that really work.

Brett *Evans*

Brett M. Cooper and Evans Kerrigan

Co-authors, *Solving the People Problem: Essential Skills You Need to Lead and Succeed in Today's Workplace*

How to Use This Guide

This guide is organized around the six workplace application areas discussed in the book, *Solving the People Problem: Essential Skills You Need to Lead and Succeed in Today's Workplace*:

- Decision making
- Communication
- Conflict
- Teamwork
- Customer Service and Sales
- Leadership



For each application, you'll find several activities and discussions you can pursue on your own or with your team. The common goal of the various actions is to deepen your understanding of – and appreciation for – what everyone brings to the team.

Each section starts with a brief summary of the application area followed by suggested activities. The activities are categorized as follows:



Self-reflection – these are typically structured processes that guide you to consider a topic and/or recent interactions. Because these are done solo and do not require action beyond thinking, these are relatively simple to do.



Paired/group discussions – these are ideas for discussions you can have with another person or your team. Because these involve other people and require some thoughtful sharing and exchanges, these are typically moderately challenging.



Team activities – these are things you can do that call for more challenging group engagement and/or a formal assessment of individuals or a team. Because these are more advanced actions, they may benefit from the help of a third-party facilitator.

A Primer on Emotional Intelligence

To raise your emotional intelligence (“EQ”), you need to have a language and structure to investigate your actions and motivations. You can use the language of DiSC® and style to help us explore these ideas, both for yourself and your colleagues. Shown below is an emotional intelligence framework that can guide your efforts.

	AWARENESS	APPLICATION
SELF	<i>Know Your Style</i>	<i>Choose Actions Wisely</i>
OTHERS	<i>Know Other Styles</i>	<i>Adapt Behavior for Mutual Benefit</i>

Know Your Style

Knowing your own style is the basic understanding of your thoughts, actions, and behaviors. To break it down a little further, self-awareness is an awareness of your internal motivations and your external behavior. For simplicity, we call these motivations and behaviors your style.

Choose Actions Wisely

As you become more conscious of your own style tendencies, it becomes possible to apply that awareness to make better, more productive choices in a range of situations.

Know Other Styles

Other people’s styles are not better or worse than our own, they are simply different. Becoming aware of other styles is about recognizing, accepting, and eventually *honoring* these differences. It involves slowing down enough to see and understand their actions from their perspective.

Adapt Behavior for Mutual Benefit

By building your awareness of other people’s individual styles and by using that knowledge to adapt how you behave, you stand the best chance of successfully navigating difficult situations. This can also help in building work relationships that are respectful, productive, and mutually successful. In other words, *work relationships that really work!*

Understanding Your Decision Making



Checking Your Gut

The first place to apply the language of DiSC® is to your internal process of weighing alternatives and making decisions. This is a solo endeavor and takes place internally as you are faced with any decision. Each of us has our own priorities, some weighted more heavily than others, that filter to the top of our decision making criteria. To begin knowing ourselves is to begin understanding the weight we assign to various priorities when making any decision.

Improving How You Make Decisions



I. Understanding how we filter our decisions

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “Workplace”, select “What Drives You”, scroll down and read “Your Workplace Priorities”.

The Activity:

We frequently accept that our internal decisions are based on a balanced review of the facts. In truth we each use a set of internal priorities that seem to show up at the top of our list consistently. It takes stepping back to understand what your own criteria are and what criteria you may neglect to bring into your decision making. While there is no right or wrong way to decide something, it is typically helpful to look at the problem from a wide variety of perspectives before coming to a firm conclusion.

Steps to examine this with yourself:

1. Make a list of possible criteria that could be used as priorities in making decisions
2. Review choices you have made in the past and identify which criteria keep showing up as your internal priorities
3. Look at how different criteria from your list might change some of your decisions
Would these other criteria help with some of your decisions?
4. Honestly examine if the standards that you prioritize lead to the right decisions or if you need to update your script

Building your EQ requires reflection. Get into the habit of conducting after-action reviews by reflecting after a decision on the thoughts that impacted your direction, and what other criteria you might have considered. By becoming more aware of your patterns of thoughts, you can interrupt that process when it does not best serve you.



II. Develop the ability of your team to understand how they make decisions

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

NOTE: This activity leverages the Agile EQ™ module on the Catalyst platform.

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “Agile EQ” then select “Beyond your Comfort Zone”, read through all of the different “mindsets” as they relate to you and how much effort each takes.

*If you don't have access to the Agile EQ module, speak with your HR team or manager.

The Activity:

You can examine the drivers of your decisions as a solitary exercise, or you can bring others into this process. If you choose to take on this work with other people, it provides an opportunity to learn from each other. Since our styles and the drivers we tend to think about may differ, it can help us gain greater perspective on what we value and on what other ideas could help expand the context we can see. Sharing this learning opportunity with others can help to build understanding and appreciation of each other and make discussing our internal process easier for a group.



Steps to take

Steps you could take with another person, or with a team:

1. Discuss how, as people, we internally decide and respond to others, frequently without slowing down to consider other options
2. Share some of what you have uncovered about your own natural criteria and habits
3. Build a list with the team of some decisions they frequently need to make
4. When you have captured the team's list of decisions they need to make, ask people to think about the first reactions they usually have and what leads to those reactions
 - a. You can help the team begin to think about this by providing some possible criteria they may prioritize in their decisions
 - b. Some possible ideas that might occur to the team could include:
 - What exciting possibilities might become available?
 - How will others feel about it?
 - How quickly can we move?
 - What risks are there to the decision?
 - Do we know enough information to make the decision?
 - Who else is already doing this?
 - How does it fit with other things we are doing?
 - What will be the payoff?
5. Have each person identify and then share the specific, key drivers which are most frequent in their decisions
6. As you hear others sharing their drivers, think: Are there any criteria I hear that could be helpful to add to my normal pattern in work situations?
7. How can you help make these new criteria part of your decisions going forward?

This can be a challenging exercise for a team. In facilitating this exercise, you want to focus on the fact that these criteria are different for everyone and that is OK.



III. Restating the other person's point

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

NOTE: This activity leverages the Agile EQ™ module on the Catalyst platform.

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “Agile EQ” then select “Develop your EQ”, read through the “where you should start” ideas.

The Activity:

We can become better aware of our own priorities, as well as the priorities of others, by using this practice. Frequently in conversations, we are influenced by our own style, approach, and decision-making priorities. This can limit our ability to hear the other person's point of view. If we can begin to increase awareness of our own drivers as well as other priorities that might improve the quality of our decisions, we expand our skills and flexibility of our thoughts.

A way to start this practice is to be an active listener yourself. Prior to responding with your own position and reasoning, attempt to restate the key points of the person you are talking with. Strive to do this to their satisfaction prior to moving to your own point. By making this effort you can accomplish multiple positive outcomes:

- This can serve to help you to become more aware of priorities others use in their decision making
- By taking the time to truly understand before you respond, you may find there is a great value in the other person's perspective that you had not considered
- You show that you are truly listening, which serves to build trust and increase the likelihood of the other party also listening more actively to you





IV. Clarify for the team how decisions will be made

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “Workplace”, then select “You and Other Styles”, and read how you interact with each of the four primary DiSC® styles.

The Activity:

One of the important things that we need to do in leading others is to be clear in how we intend to make decisions. There are decisions that we will want to make ourselves and tell people about after the decision is made, but there are also many places where we want to involve others in the decision-making process. When we engage others, it is really important that we are clear with people how the decision will be made.

Here is a list of ways you might make a decision. As you go down the list, the level of engagement requested and required from others increases:

- You decide by yourself and announce to the group
- You ask for information from others then make the decision yourself
- You ask for information and discuss with the team to come to a determination as a group while retaining the deciding vote
- You let the group decide (possibly using majority rule)
- You seek consensus where all group members agree on the decision

As you move down this list of ideas, you will gather more perspectives and points of view, which will both impact the decisions themselves, and the level of buy-in you might get from the team. At the same time, as you move down the list you may increase the time it takes to get a decision and also surrender some of our individual control.

It is not that one type of decision-making process is the right one. There are situations where any of these may be the correct path. What is critical is that you are clear with people what the decision-making process will be. Make it a part of your ongoing process with the team to discuss how decisions will be made and you will find that it makes it easier for others to participate. You may also get better decisions and follow-through.

Communicating Across Styles



It's Not Just Words

Interpersonal communication is one of the key aspects of employing and growing our EQ. We frequently interpret the words of others through our own communication style filter.

By developing a deeper understanding of all styles, including our own, we can broaden our ability to communicate well with others. We become less likely to misinterpret what others say, and we become better at sharing our own thoughts in a way that others are more likely to hear them in the spirit we intend.

Building Higher EQ in Your Communications



I. Take your team through how style plays into communication

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “DiSC-ology”, then select “DiSC Theory” and read about the two dimensions, the four quadrants, and the idea of stretch.

The Activity:

One good way to increase your awareness of your communication tendencies and their impact is to bring others into the conversation. Using the techniques below, you can open a discussion of style and how you each like to communicate with others.

1. Discuss the concepts of DiSC® with a person that you interact with
2. Explore the style that you each bring to the relationship
3. Have a discussion about how those styles impact how you communicate with each other
 - a. What interactions work most smoothly?
 - b. Are there instances where your styles can interfere with clear communication?
4. Build an action plan for how you can both be more aware of your own style and each other’s style
 - a. What could you do to improve future communication between the two of you?

Engaging in this type of conversation about how you communicate can help to build a stronger relationship. It can equip you to work together more effectively going forward, and it might even help you move beyond misunderstandings that may have happened in the past.



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II. Ask for feedback from others on your communication

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “Your Colleagues”, use the filter to find people with each style (D, i, S, and C), scroll to the “compare your tendencies” section and read through how you compare on the different continua.

The Activity:

The gift of feedback can be exceptionally helpful as you practice new skills and behaviors. Without it, it is more likely that you will fall back into old patterns and not notice that your best intentions have faded from view.

Though feedback can be a challenge, developing a habit of looking for and listening to feedback can have a huge impact on your career and growth. Here is a process you can use to collect feedback on how you are employing your knowledge of DiSC® to grow your social and emotional skills.

1. Identify a few specific changes that you want to make regarding how you communicate with others
2. Identify a small number of people that could provide you honest feedback about what they see in your communications (this is your feedback team)
3. Provide your feedback team with your action plan
 - a. What are the specific things you want them to look out for?
 - b. Consider your style and theirs, and share how you can best hear feedback from them
 - c. Thank them for their efforts
4. Work to implement your action plan - you are responsible for your behavior
5. When you are offered feedback, thank the person who has shared it
6. Be sure to keep an open mind and don't get defensive if you hear something you don't like. Take feedback in the spirit it has been offered and look for how you can apply it to continue improving your communication skills



III. Have a discussion about how communication differences impact trust

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “Your DiSC Style” and scroll down to the bottom of the page and listen the podcast about your DiSC style.

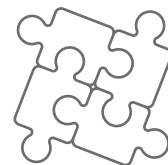
The Activity:

Communication becomes easier as trust between individuals grows. When you better understand different styles of communication, you can be more aware and sensitive to taking things wrong.

A common mistake people make when working with different styles is that they filter messages through their own lens and erroneously assign their own meaning to the other person’s messages. This “filtered” interpretation may not reflect the person’s actual intent.

If we can bring our styles to the surface, where we improve our awareness of the style differences, we can mitigate some of this challenge. Here are some steps that you can use with your team to explore how your communication differences might impact your ability to build trust with each other:

1. Build your list of communication preferences
2. Share the list with your work group
3. Have each person choose up to three characteristics that they feel best explain how they communicate
4. Have each member share the words that describe their preferences
5. After each member has shared, open a conversation about the impacts that the variation in style has on their communication
 - a. Pay attention for where the style differences cause friction or misunderstanding
6. Have people identify 1-3 ways they want to work toward improving communication and building trust within the group



IV. The Appreciation Seat

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “Your Groups” and then click “Create Group” and add your team members. Click the link “Style Insights” and read what people care about.

The Activity:

One of the exercises that builds trust and helps teams better understand and appreciate the differences in how we work is the Appreciation Seat. When members of a team feel uncomfortable with different styles, it can make communication and projects more difficult. One way to begin to move past this is to have people recognize and call out the strengths that an individual’s different style brings to the team.

We teams are working hard, the differences in how people communicate and work can feel like irritations rather than opportunities. Creating space to step back and provide some recognition lets you remember how those differences bring strength to your efforts.

You can do this safely by focusing on the strengths you and your colleagues see in each other.

1. Gather the team to share feedback with one another
2. Nominate someone to sit in the “Appreciation Seat” first (others will take turns sitting in the Appreciation Seat as the exercise proceeds)
3. Give team members a minute to think about a unique contribution that this person makes to the success of the team
4. Have everyone take turns sharing their feedback with the person in the Appreciation Seat
 - a. A sidenote for the person in the Appreciation Seat. Be sure to accept the feedback gracefully. While it is often tempting to brush aside compliments with a comment like “Oh, it’s nothing,” this can detract from the positive intent of the feedback. Instead, you can honor the person giving the feedback by simply saying “thank you.”

The Appreciation Seat next steps

Taking it further: If your team is strong and has some practice with giving and receiving feedback, you can include a second round that asks people to share some “constructive criticism,” such as something the person might do to help the team be even more successful. Adding this in can help everyone identify their personal growth opportunities, but it usually works best after a team has already established a high level of trust with each other.



Creating Productive Conflict



The Right Kind of Disagreement

Success at work involves challenge and change on an ongoing basis. We are constantly considering new products and services, new requirements from our customers, and new improvements in our ability to deliver on expectations. We need the best answers and ideas to help us succeed each day, which requires us to challenge our assumptions and vigorously debate new approaches. In this ever-changing environment, our communication differences can make it more difficult to get issues resolved effectively.

If we do not understand and honor our different styles, we add to the pressure of the environment. Our varying styles, when not appreciated, can lead to misunderstandings and unproductive behaviors. We need people to passionately share their best ideas and to feel safe doing so.

In a study of what led to the best teams, Google found that one major factor was psychological safety. By understanding and appreciating each others' styles we are showing acceptance of where people are coming from. By recognizing them as individuals with their own style, we make it safer to people to be their authentic selves.

Using Positive Conflict For the Best Solutions



I. Reflect on past conflict situations

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “Your Colleagues” and then choose a colleague that you’ve recently had a disagreement with. Scroll to the bottom and read the tips about working together.

The Activity:

One of the key starting points for building stronger awareness of how your style plays into conflict is to review past conflict situations that you have been in. Styles impacted us long before we were aware of them. By using your knowledge of DiSC®, you can reflect on some conflict situations and see how style may have played a role. This insight will help future conversations stay focused on productive conflict around ideas rather than negative conflict.

Here is a simple process to help you build your awareness around style impact in conflict.

1. Think about a specific conflict that you have had with a co-worker
2. Identify the style of the other person in the interaction
3. Thinking back on the way that the conversation played out, are there aspects of your styles that impacted your ability to respectfully discuss different ideas and/or see each other’s point of view?
4. Based on what you see as you examine the interaction, how could you handle your side of the conversation differently to allow for a more successful interaction?

After identifying ways that you could better handle the situation, you will have more awareness for the next time a situation like this arises.

Taking it further: Discuss what you learn with the other party to build joint awareness of how you both can support more effective interactions going forward.



II. Explore how you understand and respond to conflict with your team

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

NOTE: This activity leverages the Management module on the Catalyst platform.

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “Management, and click “Motivation”. Scroll to the bottom and click the links that talk about Motivation and each of the four primary DiSC® styles. For each, read through their motivational needs and how you can adapt.

*If you don’t have access to the Management module, speak with your HR team or manager.

The Activity:

As shared in the book, *Solving the People Problem*, “conflict” has many different meanings and connotations, some of which are certainly inappropriate for the workplace. For example, conflict involving mean-spirited attacks does nothing but to create a hostile and unproductive work environment, and should always be avoided.

But another, more productive definition views conflict simply as a mental struggle over an idea from opposing perspectives. With that description, is there any question that conflict will always be a useful part of our work environments?

To help teams be more productive when debating ideas, it can be helpful to talk about our definition of conflict. We want people to realize that, when pursued respectfully, conflict is necessary part of work and we need to be able to step into it so we can achieve the best results.

Here is an exercise that you can do with your team:

1. Set up a group conversation by providing a definition of what conflict is and why we need to engage in it on teams
2. Break into partner interviews to ask the following questions, giving the pairs 10 minutes to have a discussion
 - a. I grew up believing that conflict was...
 - b. A benefit of conflict in the workplace is...
 - c. It is easier for me to engage in conflict at work when...
3. Have a group debrief – each team member shares what makes it easier for them to engage in conflict at work and how the team can support them. For example, “It is easier for me to engage in conflict when I’m not surprised. I would appreciate a heads up about the topic of the meeting so I do not feel blindsided.”

This can be a good way to further improve your awareness as a team so that you and your colleagues can support creating positive and productive conflict.





III. Is what I am saying, what they are hearing?

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “Workplace”, then select “Build Better Relationships”, and read the sections for each style titled “When you need to be more effective”.

The Activity:

In normal communication, we often hear a different message than what the speaker intends because we filter it through our own lens. This happens for many different reasons: including our style, background, any biases we have, or even simply not paying enough attention.

It happens in the blink of an eye and our limbic system responds to our filter with a powerful emotional reaction, making it difficult to get out of the script. Frequently the story we are reacting to has more to do with our filter than it has to do with the other person’s message.

It could be that someone is forceful in their messaging and we hear it as they are unhappy with us. It could simply be that they are more direct and forceful in their natural communication style. We frequently infer messaging that may be incorrect and we act on those inferences, potentially creating more difficult communications.

It can be difficult to get past the scripts that we run until we become aware that they may be an incomplete or inaccurate representation of what was actually intended. We can then begin to challenge some of our initial thoughts. We may further examine the meaning by asking before taking things wrong and reacting.

One way to think about this idea is to:

1. Think of a situation or conversation that caused you to be uneasy or upset
2. Try to identify what was said and/or how it was said that caused your reaction
 - a. What actual words triggered you?
 - b. What did you take the meaning of those words to be?
 - c. What did you tell yourself about why someone would say that?
 - d. If how it was said bothered you, reflect on what words you would use to describe the approach and how that may have impacted your reaction
3. Now think of alternative reasons that could have driven that initial action
 - a. Could style have played a part?
 - b. Could the other person have felt rushed and come across wrong?
4. Now that you see some alternate ways you may have gotten to that stress point, is it possible that you reacted to something that was not real?

We need to become more sensitive to our internal process and not let our scripts run free. We need to pause and check to ensure we are reacting in a way that will allow us to handle conflict more successfully.



IV. Coaching others to avoid triangulation

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “Workplace”, then select “Build better relationships” and read the sections for each style titled “when problems need to be solved” and “when things get tense”.

The Activity:

One major challenge that makes conflict worse in organizations is when people do not deal directly with the person with whom they have conflict. Frequently, people go to others to build allies and to enlist others to commiserate about what they perceive as someone else being a problem. We call this triangulation. Rather than communicating directly we bring in another party to avoid dealing with the issue.

This is a natural impulse for many since we tend to avoid what we feel could be a difficult conversation. Many teams say they should avoid this behavior, but it can be difficult to make this change. As a leader, it is important for us not to be pulled into these situations. We need to coach our team to be better able to handle issues themselves.

By working with our team using our knowledge of styles, we can help people have better awareness and language to deal with the impact on our communications. With style differences frequently contributing to our conflict, supporting people in this way can help reduce the difficulty of a direct conversation.

To support your team’s application of DiSC®, you want to make the expectations for handling conflict very clear. The preferred standard is to have people directly work through their issues, though you may need to support them to be able to do this successfully. When we can help our staff build the skills to handle issues themselves, we can begin to reduce the volume of these requests and help the team raise their ability to deal with conflict.

What to do when a team member brings conflict to you

When a team member brings up an interpersonal conflict to you, here are several questions you might ask them to help them prepare and handle the issue themselves:

- What are the actual facts of the situation?
- Are any of your feelings based on thoughts that might not be correct?
- What is or are the actual issue(s) that need(s) to be addressed?
- What would be the best path forward to address these issues?
- How can I help you prepare to have the conversation yourself?

The process of providing coaching, rather than stepping in and trying to “solve” the issue, may seem slower at first. But as your team builds these skills they will have less need to pull you in to small disagreements in the future. Additionally, the team is likely to find that they trigger less negative conflict as they continue to learn to deal better with the differences over time.

Making the Team Work



DiSC® and Emotional Intelligence in the Team Space

A major way that our emotional intelligence can help us become more successful is in our team interactions. Introducing multiple people with varied and unique personalities and experiences will always increase the potential for both success and struggle. We have seen how complex decisions are when we make them alone and how challenging communication and conflict can be between just two individuals. In teams, we are dealing with multiple people with different styles, as well as all the interactions those various styles create.

The larger and more diverse the team, the more opportunities you have for poor decision-making, miscommunication, and unproductive, emotionally disruptive conflict.

This may sound bleak, but on a more positive note the upside of teamwork is far greater than the downside. Teamwork has become the most irreplaceable system of organization in most businesses for a reason: it brings about the best results. When a team is running well, it can harness the strength of every member. That is why, casting our eye to the years ahead, we expect that teams will become more ever-present in every workplace.

Building a More Cohesive Team



I. Setting ground rules for the team

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

NOTE: This activity leverages the Management module on the Catalyst platform.

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “Management”, then select “Management Overview”, and proceed to read “How DiSC works” (be sure to watch the video).

*If you don’t have access to the Management module, speak with your HR team or manager.

The Activity:

Research done by Google internally found five key characteristics of the most successful, productive teams. One dynamic stood above the others as the most important, that of psychological safety ⁽¹⁾. If teams can make it safe to take a risk and be vulnerable with each other they have a wonderful leg up on other teams.

One simple way to begin building that sense of comfort for a team is to set ground rules. Clearly defined team norms make it known to all what is fair and acceptable—as well as unacceptable—for your meetings and other team interactions. This creates a space where everyone can feel comfortable expressing themselves and participate fully in the conversation.

Be imaginative here. Should there be a time limit for how long someone can hold the floor? Do you want your talkative Is and Ds on one side of the table with quieter Ss and Cs on the other so you can better balance speaking time? Should you always review the last meeting’s ideas at the beginning of the next meeting, giving your “think it through” teammates an opportunity to share any new thoughts they have? Not all ground rules have to do with style, but taking the style variation into account in creating a set of guidelines will help ensure every member of the team can actively make your team better.

(1) <https://rework.withgoogle.com/blog/five-keys-to-a-successful-google-team/>

The Anti-Solution

One creative way to build ground rules for a team is to use a modification of brainstorming called an Anti-Solution. Here is how this process can work:

1. Gather the team together and let them know that you will be building a set of ground rules to allow you to all be successful working together
2. Take into account how your differences can be honored by your ground rules
3. Start by brainstorming answers to the following question: “What could we do in meetings and interactions to keep us from being successful?”
4. Build a list without excusing away ideas. Ideas that might come up could include interrupting each other in conversations, not preparing for meetings, keeping information to myself, etc.
5. When the team has built a substantial list, end the initial brainstorm
6. Build a list of ground rules by asking the following question: “How can we make any of the first list exceptionally unlikely to happen?”

Group Norms

Creating a list of ground rules is only one step in the process. The application and use of those ground rules is where the work of creating the list pays off for the team. These group norms belong to the team and each member should honor them. When our behavior falls outside the standards we have set, any member of the team should be able to help us get back to our rules. Having the agreements in place makes it much more likely that team members will self-regulate.

Consider a driving analogy – if we know the speed limit, how many lanes there are, and what the driving conditions are, it helps us be a safe driver that follows the rules.

When we can make this process a normal part of our team interaction, we will reduce unnecessary friction. This can actually make it possible to bring more passion and productive conflict into our discussions. Since we have built guard rails for the team, we have enhanced the ability to deal with more difficult issues safely.

Here is a set of ground rules that one team built as an example:

1. Be open to other points of view
2. Be respectful of each other
3. Support everyone participating
4. Create a safe environment to air issues
5. Check for agreement among the group
6. Listen before responding
7. If you don't know, ask
8. Be on-time to meetings and complete action items
9. It is ok to disagree agreeably
10. Clarify action items and decisions at the conclusion of a meeting

The ground rules for your team will be different. Make sure the rules serve your team.



II. Build a team map

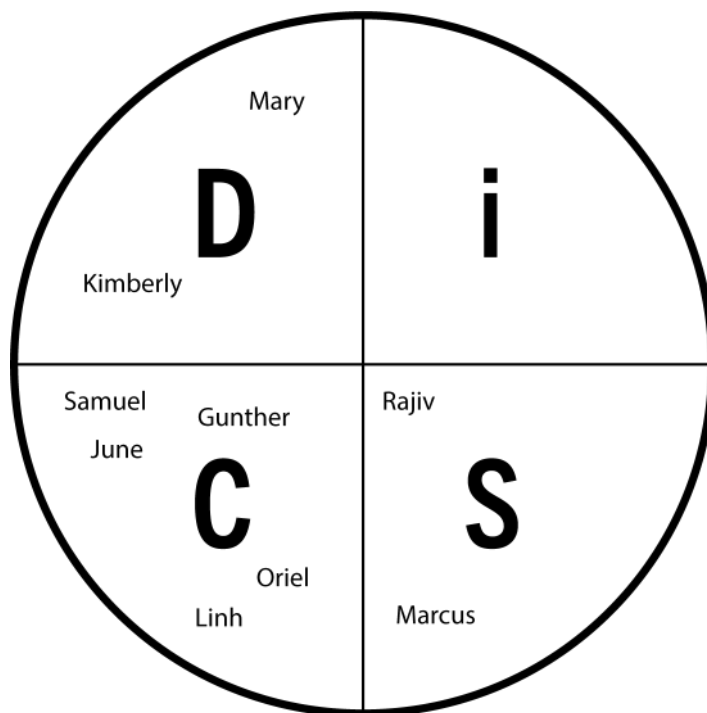
Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “Your Groups” and then click “Create Group” and add your team members.

The Activity:

The style interactions between two individuals can seem complex at times. When we begin to think about a broader team and all the possible interactions, it can be tough to keep that variation in mind.

One way to help your team develop their awareness of the styles of everyone in the group is to build a picture of the styles of the whole team in a single illustration. Below is an example of a team’s illustration to give you an idea of what this could look like.



The team view

Having a clear picture of how the team is spread out around the styles allows you to have a conversation around how this impacts your communications and work. It allows you to see if there is an imbalance or gap in how your team might approach work. For example, the team from the previous page has no I's and only two (vs. seven) on the right side of the circumplex. If they were a senior team about to execute a significant change, they may want to consider the perspective often offered by i's and S's. In particular, they would be wise to spend more time than may feel necessary considering the people impact and how to drive enthusiasm for the change in their communication and execution.

The team view can be helpful in bringing style into the conversation to continue growing awareness. One of our clients uses a large poster with everyone in the agency on it. This has led many in the organization to a better understanding of the variation in style, reactions to conflict, etc. For many, the style map is a place to begin thinking about how to prepare for important or difficult conversations and ensure that they can meet the needs of the other person.





III. Step up and step back

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

NOTE: This activity leverages the Agile EQ™ module on the Catalyst platform.

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “Agile EQ” then select “Beyond your Comfort Zone”, read through all of the different “mindsets” as they relate to you and how much effort each takes.

*If you don’t have access to the Agile EQ module, speak with your HR team or manager.

The Activity:

We all know that some people are more likely to speak up in meetings. This does not necessarily mean that these are the only people we need to hear from or that they have the best information. For our teams to make sure we get the best from everyone and to create more psychological safety for the group, we can employ “Step Up and Step Back” to invite balanced participation.

This strategy draws on the emotional intelligence model, pushing team members to become more aware of DiSC® styles and encouraging them to apply that knowledge to make wiser choices and adapt their behavior for mutual benefit.

Step Up, Step Back

This exercise invites a team member who notices that a small number of people are dominating the team conversation, to ask that they “Step Back.” This provides the space for others to contribute. It also allows a team member who sees that a part of the team has pulled back from the conversation to ask if anyone would like to “Step Up” and share their input.

Of course, self-regulation – and some self-awareness – here also helps. If you see that you are the one dominating the conversation, push yourself to “Step Back” and make room for others. Or if you notice that you’ve not yet shared your opinion, find a way to “Step Up” so the team benefits from your input and ideas.

Providing a ground rule like this can help us be more sensitive to the balance of the conversation in the group. We know that we can create better answers and better follow-through when all members of the team feel like they have had the opportunity to be heard.

This is about creating the space for all to participate. It is an offer for quieter members to join into the conversation. Additionally it is an offer for more talkative team members to make space for others in the conversation. The responsibility for participation is shared by everyone on the team.



IV. Delivering and receiving feedback

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “Your Colleagues” select a colleague you’d like to give some feedback to, then scroll down to the bottom of the page to “Working Together”, and read through “Connecting”, Collaboration”, and “Buy-In”.

The Activity:

Interpersonal conflict in work teams is inevitable. Indeed, some level of tension works to feed creativity and motivation. But when the behavior or attitude of a teammate is interfering with the team’s efficacy, you may find it necessary to provide some challenging feedback.

Below are some things that may be helpful when presenting difficult feedback:

1. Offer your feedback in a private, quiet place where your teammate won’t feel embarrassed or defensive
2. Reaffirm the goals and purpose of your team as it relates to your feedback
3. Outline how current behavior is impacting you and the team, even if the consequences are unintended
4. Try to be specific and support your ideas with examples
5. Ask permission to offer feedback and suggestions
6. Make sure that the exchange is a conversation, not an attack, lecture, or reprimand
7. Give the other party plenty of time early in the conversation to respond and listen attentively
8. Avoid aggressive language
9. Use the pronouns “I” and “we” rather than “you”
10. Act with grace, understanding, and empathy

Receiving feedback

The workplace is a beehive of feedback whether we ask for it or not. Things like facial expressions, gestures, silence, reactions, etc. give us a sense of how people are reacting to us and/or our work. Moreover, when we receive direct feedback, much is offered cautiously because most colleagues want to be supportive and friendly. After all everyone realizes that you will continue to work together after the feedback is delivered.

Since we grow and learn from honest and constructive feedback, it is important keep in mind the guidelines below for receiving feedback effectively:

- Don't be defensive. Even if the feedback is hard to hear, stay cool, ask honest questions, and process the intent of the feedback before you react
- Listen for the unspoken message. Sometimes you have to read between the lines to find the true feedback
- Don't listen selectively. Try to take in the whole of the feedback. Don't focus on one statement or detail that rubs you the wrong way
- Ask follow up questions. To discover the underlying truth of the feedback you receive, you may have to ask questions that call for elaboration, examples, clarification, and details
- Don't react emotionally. Receiving feedback can be nerve wracking so try to stay relaxed. If you hear something surprising, take time to think it through before you react. If you still feel emotional, consider being up front by saying something like, "I appreciate the feedback. I know and trust that you've shared it with an intent to help me and the team, so thank you. I need some time to process it before I can talk about it as constructively as I'd like to"
- Be receptive. Establish yourself as a person who will listen thoughtfully to feedback. This doesn't mean that you have to accept all criticism, it just shows that you are eager to improve and grow
- Absorb and act. Not all feedback is useful but through honest introspection you can decipher those parts of the feedback that will help you find success. Once you have done this, set a course of action to incorporate it into your performance

Caring Feedback



Below is an example of how the caring feedback model can be applied. The left column shows a description of an approach you can take. The right column shows how specific language can be used for a peer to hold another accountable. In this example, one team mate noticed when another team member ignored a customer, instead staying focused on paperwork when the customer approached and needed help.

Explain your positive purpose.	“I want to help you be even more effective in your interactions with your customers.”
Ask permission to give feedback.	“May I give you some feedback?”
Describe the specific behavior you noticed or heard about.	“I noticed you finishing your paperwork when a customer approached you needing help.”
Name the consequences— for you, your team, customers, and the organization.	“I imagine that this came across as disregard to the customer. And that doesn’t fit with our organization’s customer focus.”
Offer a pinch of empathy.	“Now I realize you might have been absorbed in the middle of something and it’s hard to be interrupted.”
Offer your suggestion, request or expectation.	“Still, I think it’s important to set aside what you’re doing when a customer approaches you and attend to them immediately. That would make it clear that they are your first priority.”

Let's practice the Caring Feedback model

Create a two-column worksheet with each step of the Caring Feedback model listed in the left-hand column. The right-hand column provides space for applying that step to a given situation. Have people work with a partner on one of the following situations. Then, invite people to share their feedback language with the whole group.

Situation 1:

You overhear a team member talking about a co-worker's proposal. The proposal was just adopted by the team, and you hear the team member say: "I can't agree with her approach to the project. I know we talked about it but it just doesn't make sense to me."

Situation 2:

You overhear a team member saying to another, "I don't know what to do. I sent my report out but I just reviewed it and the date is wrong. I'm afraid I'll get into trouble if I say anything, though."

Situation 3:

Your team agreed on ground rules for meeting that includes no side conversations. Yet one team member is right now having a side conversation while an important team project is being discussed at your staff meeting.

Situation 4:

You overhear a team member talking to someone from outside the team, saying "We just don't have enough staff to get the work done and I know I'm going to be late again on my report."

Situation 5:

You hear a co-worker sharing with another team member, saying "It's not worth getting in the middle of the discussion about his project. It's just going to make him mad at me!"

Situation 6:

You overhear two team members discussing the staff meeting that just concluded, saying: "I don't have any idea who is going to follow up on that...I know it's not me!"

Working With Those Outside Your Circle



Seeing and Adapting to Style Quickly

Making good first impressions and building healthy relationships is central to business success. Misreading people or communicating in ineffective ways can result in missed opportunities, unhappy customers, or frayed relations with those we serve. Creating rapport when we are starting new relationships can be one of the tougher aspects of any job, regardless if you are working with people who are external or internal to your organization. However, building up your emotional intelligence will provide the insights and techniques you need to communicate more effectively and build healthier relationships with those who are outside of your inner circle.

Building constructive relationships outside our circle can improve sales, increase customer retention, and strengthen collaboration. Ensuring positive outcomes to our short, less frequent interactions can be just as important as driving healthy relationships within our daily work teams.

However, those shorter interactions present a different challenge. With clients and colleagues, we may get only a brief time to establish the kind of rapport that leads to a productive relationship. Even when we speak with a person somewhat regularly, the brevity of these interactions can make forming a clear picture of their style a challenge.

Applying DiSC to Customers and Partners



I. Create a list of cues

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “DiSC-ology”, click “The DiSC Model”, watch the video and read about the Everything DiSC® model.

The Activity:

All of us are asked to work with people we do not know when we start the interaction. In some jobs like sales or customer service, these can be the dominant connections that will lead to our success or lack of it. Even for people in other roles, our ability to quickly pick up on the style and needs of people we meet can help our interactions be more successful.

It is important to be able to figure out the style of people we meet so that we can get better results for all. It is also critical to build our skills and sensitivity in order to understand those around us.

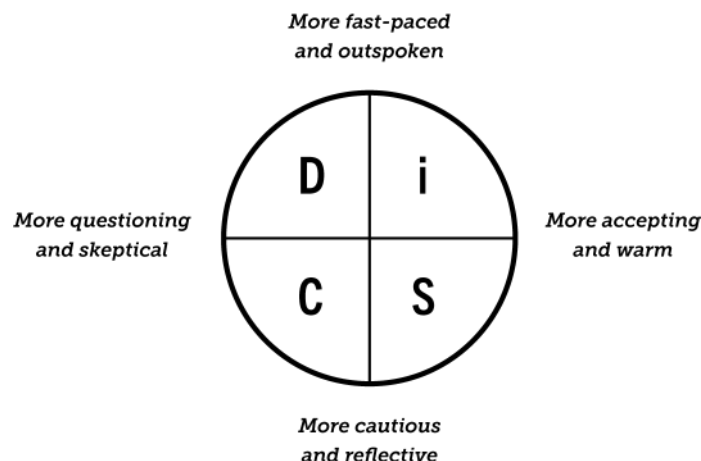
Some people find this easier than others. One way that we can build our team’s skill at doing this is by sharing that knowledge across the team. Setting up a conversation to explore styles and cues that might help us identify them quickly can be a valuable tool.

Setting up the conversation

Here is a way that you could set up a conversation about identifying style with your team:

1. Gather the team and introduce them to styles and the two continua that create the DISC model
2. Ask people for cues they could see or hear in conversation that might help them identify whether a person is more cautious and reflective or more fast-paced and outspoken
3. Build a list of the cues that will help in identifying placement on this axis
4. Ask people for cues they could see or hear in conversation that might help them identify whether a person is more questioning and skeptical or more accepting and warm
5. Build a list of the cues that will be helpful in identifying placement on this style
6. Have a discussion with the team about how they can use this information to build connection and understanding early in relationships

Remind people that any initial thought is just that, an early impression. It is important, during your interactions, to continue to learn more about people so you can ensure you are meeting them where they are.





II. Identifying the style of others

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “DiSC-ology” and select “The 12 Styles” and read through each of the 12 Everything DiSC® styles.

The Activity:

To practice your skills at identifying style from cues, you can utilize your powers of observation on characters that you see in entertainment, famous people or other groups that you can observe or read about.

Think about characters you have seen in movies, plays or TV shows and identify what style they are playing. Identify specific cues that you see that help you place them on the two continua of behavior. This will be easy to do with some characters, as they play completely to a specific style. As you get begin to improve your skills, you can begin to add in more nuanced characters and begin to see what you notice with people you meet in your real life.

This can be done individually to build your own skills, or can be done with a group, which may lead to additional knowledge and benefits.

Game Experience

To do this with a group of people and enhance everyone's skills, you can create a game experience. This can be a wonderful way to make it fun as people learn to better identify style and the impact that this may have on our interactions. Below is one simple way that you could set this up.

1. Share the DiSC framework with the group and task each person with creating a list of celebrities, historic figures or other people everyone would know about
2. Collect the lists from each person and combine them so everyone has contributed and no one has seen the whole list prior
3. Create teams or have everyone participate solo
4. As each character is shared with the group, each team should determine the style of the character or person
 - They need to be able to explain the specific characteristics and behaviors that led them to their answer

The goal is to have fun and become aware of cues that can help us start to learn about the new people we meet.





III. Practice identifying style and adapting approaches

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “Workplace”, then select “You and Other Styles”. Watch the videos of each style sharing insights in their own language. Pay attention to their pace and body language.

The Activity:

When we meet new people, we don’t have the luxury of a long history of interactions with them that may make applying our DiSC® knowledge easy. Building the ability to identify styles quickly and with limited data is an important step.

We need to hone our skills at seeing cues that will help us work with people in a way that is healthy and successful. One great way to refine the skill of identifying style and being able to respond, is to work through some scenarios that apply to the type of work you do.

On the page that follows are two sample scenarios that you could use with your team to generate ideas about different approaches to the situation. For either scenario, a few things to think about with the team:

- See how much agreement there is in the group
- Have a few people share why they chose their response
- Process how different approaches might work and how DiSC plays into this

One way to improve on this idea would be to build scenarios that specifically fit the needs of your organization and team. If you lead a sales team, build a sales scenario, or several, to work on.

Scenario 1

- You are starting on a new project with people you don't know and haven't worked with before
- At the first meeting, you notice Sue champion her plan as soon as the meeting starts
- She pushes back immediately when other ideas are raised
- Most members of the team stay quiet

Processing the discussion with your team

- What style do you think Sue might have?
- What would you recommend to help the team going forward?

Three possible reactions to discuss if you want to provide:

1. Go along with Sue's ideas since it lets the group start moving
2. Step in to provide space for other ideas to be raised in the group
3. Point out that the group needs to find a solution together

Scenario 2

- You are asked to present your idea to Fred, a senior leader you don't know or work with normally
- As you enter the office you notice pictures of his family and team outings with co-workers
- He comes out from behind his desk and shakes your hand welcoming you to the office joining you at a side table
- He enthusiastically shares that he has heard great things already and is excited about what you have to share

Processing the discussion with your team

- What style do you think Fred might have?
- How would you begin sharing your project?

Three possible reactions to discuss if you want to provide:

1. Share your excitement with the idea and talk about how it could impact the work
2. Share your financial analysis up front to prove the ROI
3. Focus on how this would impact people on the team and customers



IV. Practice adapting your approach

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

NOTE: This activity leverages the Agile EQ™ module on the Catalyst platform.

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “Agile EQ” then select “Your EQ strengths”. Scroll down and read the sections titled “You may run into trouble if you”.

*If you don’t have access to the Agile EQ module, speak with your HR team or manager.

The Activity:

Our first three exercises in this area were team exercises. This next one moves beyond identifying someone’s style through team-based discussion. In the exercise below, you will practice identifying style and adapting your approach at the same time. This will take your knowledge to another level by practicing and applying the insights real-time.

This requires a little preparation to ensure that you can use this successfully for the team in a positive way. Set up this exercise with the following preparation:

1. Create reminder cards that contain typical behaviors for each style (these will be used for the role plays)
2. Build three situations that would come up in work for your team
3. Write up your three scenarios
4. Determine trios that could work well together for the exercise



When the time for running the exercise arrives:

1. Provide background and share the style tips card and scenarios with each person
2. Split the team into trio groups
3. Provide the directions to each trio:
 - a. Someone chooses to go first (Person 1)
 - b. Person 2 chooses (silently, to themselves – no sharing!) a DiSC style to portray in the scenario
 - c. Person 3 will play observer for the first round
 - d. Run through the first scenario with person 2 playing to the style they choose from the card
 - e. Play out the scenario for 5 minutes with person 1 attempting to discern the style and adapt behavior
 - f. Observer, take notes on what you see about the style and adjustments
 - g. Debrief
 - What went well for both of you?
 - What could you improve on?
 - h. Pick the next scenario and rotate roles
 - i. Each trio chooses each of three roles in succession (new person, person needing to adapt, and observer)
4. Break the group into trios to run through the three scenarios

Debrief with the larger group after people have run through their scenarios. What did people learn and what can they apply at work?

Mastering Leadership Through DISC



Leadership is About Service, Not Power

Leaders build successful relationships that allow them to produce great results. Great leaders don't focus on the power they have to make people work. They focus on how they can serve to create success for the organization and the people they are working with. Approaching leadership from a perspective of service, you are inclined to look for ways to accommodate others so that the team and the individuals succeed together.

Seeing leadership as service allows everyone to benefit, yourself included. And you can develop that service mentality by increasing your awareness of how your leadership affects others.

As leaders, we should see ourselves as being in service to what the whole team is trying to accomplish. To achieve our goals, we must support the people we work with because their success is the organization's success, which ultimately is also our success. And the people on our team succeed when we are able to meet their needs.

Improving Your Leadership With DiSC®



I. What types of work best appeal to the members of the team

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

NOTE: This activity leverages the Management module on the Catalyst platform.

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “Management”, select “Your management style”, scroll down and read about your priorities, what you enjoy, and what drains you.

*If you don’t have access to the Management module, speak with your HR team or manager.

The Activity:

One of the benefits of better understanding style is that we can talk about the types of work that bring joy and satisfaction to different people. DiSC can be a wonderful way to approach the conversation around the aspects of work that are most natural and comfortable for members of our teams.

Developing our awareness of the types of work our staff find motivating can help us to engage people in the most productive way.

Of course, DiSC is not intended to assess fit for specific jobs. Most jobs can be done in a variety of ways and by people with a variety of styles. And the work of most organizations can be organized in a multitude of ways. DiSC can be helpful to understand what types, setting, characteristics and methods of work are most appealing to people. For example, some people thrive as members of highly collaborative teams that iterate on the fly. Others prefer to work more individually and on more structured projects that allow for planning and predictability. An assignment with a tight deadline that involves high visibility and uncharted territory will be exhilarating to one person but paralyzing to the next. Being aware of the work that appeals to each member of your staff will allow you to help each team member to be successful and feel good about their contribution.

Use your DiSC® insights

To begin making use of your DiSC insights in planning work you could approach it in the following manner:

1. Have a discussion with the team about all the various types of work the team needs to accomplish
2. Share the DiSC model with the team and have people identify their own style
 - a. It is important to remember that style is just one influence on people's preferred work. DiSC can be a great way to start a conversation with your people about the types of work they find motivating
3. Have people talk about the pieces of work that they find most enjoyable as well as those that make them feel most uncomfortable
4. Have the team look at the work to be done and examine if there are ways of approaching the work that bring the team's strengths to bear
5. Work with the team to see how work can be distributed to help everyone find a good balance. It is important to help people understand we all have to do some of the things that will make us uncomfortable

This needs to be an ongoing discussion as new tasks come to the team and as team members look to grow their skills. The ability to have open conversations about work will strengthen your relationship with your team as well.





II. How to recognize or compliment me

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “Your Colleagues” and select a team mate you’d like to recognize. Read what the person cares about and what they may be stressed by.

The Activity:

One key role leaders are responsible for is rewarding and recognizing the people that they work with. This is another part of our role where style can have a big impact. Both our own style, and the style of the person we would like to recognize, play a part.

Our own style may make us more or less likely to make recognition a priority. It may also impact how we prefer to celebrate others. This can be one of the challenges of overly designed recognition programs. Part of the art of leadership is to make your recognition personally meaningful for your team. Each person in our organization has different priorities and needs. We should honor this when we want to honor them.

Doing this the right way for the person we want to celebrate is critical. If we do this in the wrong way, it may not be seen as recognition at all. In fact, it can make the recipient feel worse and seem like something they want to avoid. What is important is how the recipient perceives it. Recognition is not about you.

Learn about what matters to each member of your team by asking them. We have seen leaders use small questionnaires to get ideas from the team. Many great leaders have actually taken the time to have this conversation with each person on their team.

- Do they want to be recognized personally or in front of everybody?
- Would they rather be recognized with their team or as an individual?
- What do they value? Is time most important? Providing new opportunities? Increased visibility across the organization?

We find that the right recognition, delivered in the way that matters most to a person, has a huge positive impact for performers on our team.



III. What is the best way to communicate tasks to my team

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

NOTE: This activity leverages the Management module on the Catalyst platform.

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “Management, and click “Direct and Delegate”. Scroll to the bottom and click the “direct & delegate” links for each style. For each style read “How they like to work” and “How to adapt”.

*If you don't have access to the Management module, speak with your HR team or manager.

The Activity:

Our styles can impact how we hear information when tasks and assignments are shared with us. The way we share work with people can either help them succeed or can actually create issues that can make the work more difficult.

An important part of creating the best chance of success for your team is to take the time to learn what each team member needs from you when launching a new project or assignment. Not everyone interprets work instructions the same way we do. If we can adapt our language and approach, we can help ensure success for our team and the organization.

Too frequently, we see leaders make assumptions about how work is best assigned and followed up on. These assumptions can cause great heartache and frustration.

One practice we have found useful is taking the time to learn some of the variation between your team members on what sets them up for success at work. There are many questions that can be helpful to make sure you support your staff when new work is being assigned. Here are a few you can discuss with your team members:

- Do you like a clear definition of the tasks you are being asked for or do you want to be given broad discretion when being given work?
- What type of project reporting will work well for both of us?
- What do you need from me to make sure you can be successful?



IV. Providing feedback and coaching to staff

Activity pre-work in Catalyst™:

NOTE: This activity leverages the Management module on the Catalyst platform.

Login to Catalyst, go to the main menu, select “Management, and click “Develop talent”. Scroll to the bottom and click the “develop talent” links for each style. For each style read “Recognize their potential” and “How to adapt”.

*If you don’t have access to the Management module, speak with your HR team or manager.

The Activity:

One key area that can be fraught with misunderstanding is preparing and delivering feedback to people, especially corrective feedback. There is an opportunity to cause damage in a relationship if we are not careful in these situations.

Feedback is critical to improved performance so it is important to ensure that we deliver it in a way that allows the recipient to use it effectively. As leaders, we owe it to our staff to provide it in a clear and understandable way that will best connect for them, even when the conversation may feel uncomfortable.

This requires us to be aware of our feelings and the feelings of our people around feedback.



Being aware of your feelings

If your style leads you to be overly concerned about the relationship, it can lead you to soften your feedback in a way that robs your team member of clarity around the message or concern. If your style is all about being direct, at times your message may not be heard because it is taken as an attack rather than the message you hoped to send about specific corrections. The examples in these cases are about our reactions to communicating feedback. It is important to know our challenges, so that we don't get in our own way.

Equally important is understanding how others hear feedback and react to it. If you make a list of what you hope for when you are providing feedback, the list might look like this:

- They'll hear me out
- They'll try not to get defensive
- They'll ask for clarification and evidence
- They'll take comments as a call to action

If you hope for these outcomes, you need to be aware of the style and preferences of your staff so you can conduct feedback in a way that allows this to happen. Have a discussion with your team about styles and then hold conversations with individuals about how they best receive feedback.

This Activity Guide is a companion to the best-selling book
SOLVING THE PEOPLE PROBLEM:
Essential Skills You Need To Lead and Succeed in Today's Workplace

Do you work with anyone who thinks or acts differently than you?

Would you like to have a better understanding of why they think and act the way they do?

Would you like to learn how to create healthier and more productive relationships with your coworkers, including colleagues, direct reports, and even your boss?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, then pick up a copy of *Solving the People Problem*. The book shares research, stories, and actions you can take to improve your social and emotional skills.

About the Authors: Brett M. Cooper and Evans Kerrigan help professionals like you build work relationships that really work. Over the last twenty years, they've influenced thousands of people in government, non-profits, and corporate America to work together in more productive, more effective, and more human ways.

Through Integris Performance Advisors—the firm they co-founded—Brett and Evans have helped clients increase employee engagement, improve efficiency, and generate hundreds of millions in financial benefit. Brett and Evans are frequent speakers on team dynamics, leadership, and operational excellence. To access more great content and resources, and to connect directly with Brett and Evans, visit SolvingThePeopleProblem.com