

Communicating with Style **by Randy Siegel**

Since ancient times, man has attempted to categorize the different personality styles. In ancient Greece, Hippocrates outlined four temperaments: sanguine, phlegmatic, melancholic, and choleric. Native Americans assigned personality traits to the four directions.

Carl Jung was the first to scientifically study the styles. In 1920s, he published the ground-breaking book *Psychological Types* in which identified four behavioral styles: the Sensor, the Intuitior, the Thinker, and the Feeler. Other theories followed and now we have dozens of models from which to choose. My favorites are:

- Myers-Briggs Indicator, based on Jung's work
- DISC, which is used almost as much as Myers-Briggs in the business world
- The Birkman Method®, based on the work of Roger Birkman
- CST, or Communicating Styles Technology
- Tony Alessandra's Platinum Rule
- The Enneagram, which explains why we do something, as well as how

Over the years, I have compiled a simple model that borrows elements from all of these. In it, I identify four personalities:

- Samuel C. Sensor
- Theodore Thinker
- Ina Intuitior
- Felicia Feeler

Let's meet them.

Exercise: Who am I?

Instructions: Which style--Samuel C. Sensor, Ina Intuitor, Theodore Thinker, or Felicia Feeler--matches which set of traits?

Style	Positive Traits	Negative Traits
	Spontaneous Persuasive Empathetic Probing Introspective Draws out feelings of others Loyal	Impulsive Manipulative Over-personalizes Sentimental Postponing Guilt-ridden Stirs up conflict Subjective
	Accurate communicator Deliberative Prudent Weighs alternatives Stabilizing Objective Rational Analytical	Verbose Indecisive Overly cautious Over-analyzes Unemotional Controlling
	Pragmatic Assertive, directional Results-oriented Bases opinions on what he actually sees Perfection seeking	Status-seeking Acts first, then thinks Lacks trust in others Nit-picking Self-involved
	Original Imaginative Creative Broad-gauged Charismatic Idealistic Ideological	Unrealistic Fantasy-bound Scattered Devious Out-of-touch Impractical

Meet the Styles

In reviewing this information, it is helpful to keep in mind:

- No one style is better than another. Each brings a unique set of skills into the workplace.
- Most assessments are based upon self-assessment, and as such are subject to bias.
- You have elements of each of the four styles in you, but usually one style guides your behavior most of the time. Don't expect one style to totally nail your personality. If it's sixty percent or more on target, then it's probably your style.
- Your style most likely changes under stress. I go from Samuel to Theodore when I feel pressured.

This table will further summarize individual characteristics and communications preferences for each style. As you review each style, see if you can pick out your own. How about someone whom you work with?

Samuel C. Sensor

Areas	Characteristics
Environment	Expresses “status,” formal, stiff, somewhat impersonal
Appearance	Formal, loves labels for special occasions. Can be informal, simple, and functional at other times
Demeanor	Impersonal, hurried, impatient, high energy, physically restless, and assertive
Strengths	Administration and leadership
Can be seen as	Unable to see long-range or big picture, impatient and impulsive
Values/Hot Points	Action, goals, results, wealth, and winning
Goals	Save time, increase productivity
Wants	Control
Biggest Fear	Being taken advantage of
Irritation	Indecision

Under Stress	Dictatorial, insensitive, and impatient
Other Characteristics:	Compartmentalized Lives in here and now Tough negotiator Good at multitasking Learns by doing
Communications Preferences	
For decisions needs	Facts, top-line
Requires you to be	To-the-point, “What can you do for me today?”
Pace	Fast
Level of detail	Top-line
On phone	Succinct
Written word	Bulleted, provide executive summary
Orally	Speaks with conviction
Other Tips:	Confront and challenge. Schedule early meetings. Offer choices. Avoid detail.

Theodore Thinker

Areas	Characteristics
Environment	Expresses “efficiency,” tasteful but conventional
Appearance	Formal, functional, conservative, color coordinated but not colorful, understated
Demeanor	Impersonal, hard to read, thoughtful, and sometimes considered “dry” or “cold”
Strengths	Planning, problem solving, thinker and doer
Can be seen as	Perfectionist and critical

Values/Hot Points	Precision, process, procedure – safe choice, ethics
Goals	Justification
Wants	Thoroughness
Biggest Fear	Being embarrassed
Irritation	Unpredictability
Under Stress	Withdrawn, overly cautious (to the point of not being able to make decisions)
Other Characteristics:	Resists pressure of any kind Expects you to take initiative Reluctant to give any feedback
Communications Preferences	
For decisions needs	Data and documentation
Requires you to be	Detailed, thorough, accurate
Pace	Slow (allow time to think), systematic
Level of detail	Heavy
On phone	Organized, sounds ordered, measured, businesslike, and careful
Written word	Detailed, well-organized, structured, and specific
Orally	Needs time to think
Other Tips:	Plan each meeting carefully. Avoid social talk. Present obvious disadvantages.

Felicia Feeler

Areas	Characteristics
Environment	Friendly, comfortable, “homey”
Appearance	Informal, may “costume,” dresses for mood more than approval

Demeanor	Friendly, warm
Strengths	Listening and teamwork (often responsible for grapevine)
Can be seen as	Oversensitive and indecisive
Values/Hot Points	Acceptance, feelings, trust, and teamwork
Goals	Stability
Wants	Friendships
Biggest Fear	Sudden change and conflict
Irritation	Insensitivity
Under Stress	Submissive, moody, not concerned with details
Other Characteristics:	Works off of “gut” feelings a lot Can be spontaneous and unstructured Seen as perceptive and insightful Patient
Communications Preferences	
For decisions needs	Personal service and assurances
Requires you to be	Warm
Pace	Slow, relaxed, low pressure
Level of detail	Heavy
On phone	Friendly, chatty
Written word	Warm, short, and highly personalized
Orally	Warm
Other Tips:	Express enthusiasm; tell why personally important to you. Allow them to get to know you. Schedule meetings around meals. Customize program/individualized approach. Use open-ended questions to draw them out and build trust.

Ina Intuitor

Areas	Characteristics
Environment	“Fun,” messy, futuristic
Appearance	Unpredictable, could be fashion forward, flashy, or like “absent-minded professor”
Demeanor	Charismatic
Strengths	Brainstorming and sales
Can be seen as	Scattered, careless, lack of details, “long on vision, short on action”
Values/Hot Points	Big ideas and high energy
Goals	Recognition
Wants	Others’ approval
Biggest Fear	Loss of prestige
Irritation	Routine
Under Stress	Sarcastic, impulsive, can become detached
Other Characteristics:	Sees big picture; long-term implications Hates to feel “hemmed in”
Communications Preferences	
For decisions needs	How it addresses status/visibility
Requires you to be	Enthusiastic
Pace	Fast
Level of detail	Light
On phone	Playful (jokester)
Written word	Bulleted, writes abstractly
Orally	Dramatic

Other Tips:	<p>Offer testimonials and incentives. Allow lots of time for interaction. Let him/her set the pace. Balance information with stories. Involve as many senses as possible. Save them effort. Involve them in idea generation. Focus on concepts, not on details. Have fun!</p>
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Hopefully, you now have a feel for each of the communications styles and what makes their socks go up and down. Did you see yourself? How about someone with whom you work?

Most of us go through life communicating with people in ways we like them to communicate with us. For example, I am a Samuel C. Sensor, so my natural tendency is to be on-point and to-the-point. Seldom would I ask personal questions; it takes too much time. When I am dealing with a Felicia or Ina, however, I must flex styles to take the time to build a relationship before launching into the business at hand. When I am communicating with a Theodore, I delve into a lot more detail than I would normally, and if I am really on, I might throw in a process or procedure for good measure.

I am not being inauthentic when I flex styles. As mentioned earlier, each of us has a little of the four styles within us. I am simply making a conscious effort to intensify the style that matches that of the person with whom I am communicating. My intention is never to manipulate, but to connect. By flexing my style, I am only fertilizing the soil so that communication and connection can grow.

It's important to note that this handout is only intended to provide a brief overview of the four communications styles. This topic is worthy of a book unto itself. In the back you'll find a reading list for more information. I especially recommend *The Platinum Rule* by Tony Alessandra and Michael J. O'Connor which inspired much of my model.

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