

Case study - What a difference a style makes!

By Lyn Trill

I have just returned from an uplifting experience! A year ago a large government company had undertaken to put their management team through the LSI (Life Style Inventory) 360 degree diagnostic process in order for the team to look seriously about how their thinking and behaviour was affecting their leadership styles.

All results were displayed on the circumplex used for the majority of the Human Synergistics diagnostic tools. The circumplex is like a clock. Outlined below are the brief explanations of each style in the circumplex.

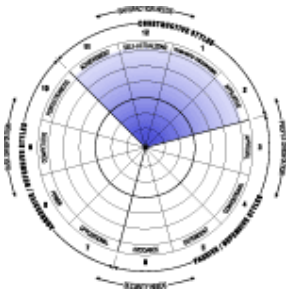
The Constructive Styles (blue) characterise self-enhancing thinking and behaviour that contribute to a high level of satisfaction; a healthy balance between people and task related concerns; and proficiency at accomplishing tasks.

11 o'clock – Achievement - People high in this style think ahead and plan, explore alternatives before acting and learn from their mistakes.

12 o'clock – Self Actualising - People with this style demonstrate a strong desire to learn and experience things, creative yet realistic thinking and a balanced concern for people and tasks.

1 o'clock – Humanistic-Encouraging - People high in this style devote energy to coaching and counselling others, are thoughtful and considerate and provide people with support and encouragement.

2 o'clock – Affiliative - People high in this style share their thoughts and feelings, are friendly and cooperative and make others feel a part of things.



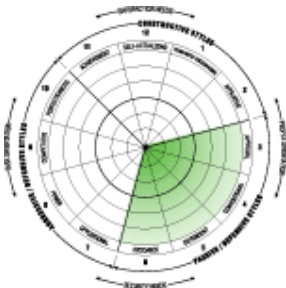
The Passive Defensive Styles (green) represent self-protecting thinking and behaviour which can produce a predictable and secure situation, but at the cost of learning, adaptability and ultimately survival.

3 o'clock – Approval - Reflects a need to be accepted and a tendency to tie one's self-worth to being liked by others.

4 o'clock – Conventional - People high in this style tend to rely on established routines and procedures, prefer to maintain the status quo and want a secure and predictable work environment.

5 o'clock – Dependence - People high in this style allow others to make decisions for them, depend on others for help and willingly obey orders.

6 o'clock – Avoidance - People high in this style "play it safe" and minimise risks, shy away from group activities and conversations and react to situations in an indecisive and non-committal way.



In the case of the above company, the results predominantly revealed a very aggressive form of leadership.

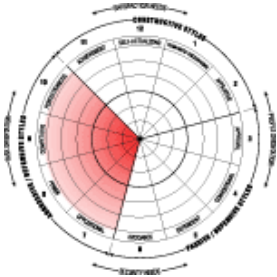
The Aggressive Defensive Styles (red) represent self-promoting thinking and behaviour used to maintain status position and fulfil security needs through task-related activities.

7 o'clock – Oppositional - Reflects a need for security that manifests itself in a questioning, critical and even cynical manner.

8 o'clock – Power - People with strong tendencies toward this style dictate (rather than guide) others' actions, try to run everything themselves and treat others in aggressive and forceful ways.

9 o'clock – Competitive - People high in this style seek recognition and praise from others, view even non-competitive situations as contests or challenges to "prove" themselves and try to maintain a sense of superiority.

10 o'clock – Perfectionistic - People high in this style are preoccupied with details, place excessive demands on themselves and others and tend to show impatience, frustration and indifference toward others' needs and feelings.



The result of this aggressive style of leadership was that the staff tended to engage in very 'green' behaviour. Trying hard to please and avoiding risks rendered them as very reactive. The company was going through an extensive change process and innovation was a priority.

It was gratifying as a coach to witness the dedication of these managers in changing their aggressive style and 'moving into the blue'. Of course this does not happen by osmosis and it has taken a great deal of coaching, training and facilitating with these managers who became aware that there needed to be a change in their style.

This morning I witnessed a completely different scene. I was greeted by a very talented young woman who strode toward me with confidence and exuberance. A year ago she was heavily into Avoidance and a mood of Resignation. Her change in management style has allowed her staff to move into a stronger collaborative style and surprise, surprise; the management team is continually delighted by the untapped talent that they are discovering.

Conversations for core business practice has been a cornerstone of the coaching process and extensive work with three main areas;

- language, which creates reality ;
- moods and emotions, which affect our actions, and
- physiology, a much neglected area.

We are yet to measure the bottom line benefits of these changes but we anticipate that they will be very positive. It is certainly a far happier and more productive workplace. We congratulate those managers who were not only open to taking a deep look at themselves, they were willing to learn more constructive behaviour. It makes our job so worthwhile!

Contact us on 1300 766 092 to find out how Third Sigma International can change your leadership team