The Social Styles Handbook

Find Your Comfort Zone and Make People Feel Comfortable with You
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Foreword

We all know of distinguished doctors whose terrible bedside manners devastate their patients. Or of geniuses in strategic planning who can’t inspire anyone to follow their lead. And sadly, we all know partners who give up on love because they can no longer “relate” to one another. What a waste in human potential!

Does this have to be? Daniel Goleman’s groundbreaking book Emotional Intelligence described this waste, in detail. He argued the cause is a lack of Emotional Intelligence, or EQ – as important as IQ. Only one problem: Daniel didn’t tell us how to improve our EQ.

Don’t despair: The Social Styles Handbook has all the how-to answers Daniel left us wondering about, in an easy to understand format. All you have to do is bring your learning attitude.

I believe that weakened or broken relationships are caused by differences in expectations. Think about that for a second now, as it relates to your own relationships at work and at home. In my case, I realized I was so stuck in meeting my expectations that I seldom considered the other person’s. Ouch! My low EQ kept me from having the strong, productive relationships I wanted.

Then I discovered Social Styles, and I got better. My IQ didn’t change, but I upped my EQ. I found more success and fulfillment. You can too.

So learn how to “be” with others by meeting their expectations, making them feel comfortable, and dealing with them on their terms. Discover Versatility and the power it brings to your relationships. Learn how to adapt your behavior to the Social Styles of people you want to relate to most.

After you’ve read and applied The Social Styles Handbook, you’ll see relationships improve and be more fulfilling, and successes come more easily. If those rewards match your expectations, you won’t be disappointed. You’ve already won!

Larry Wilson
Research and profiles of more than two million people around the world by Wilson Learning indicate that people fall into one of four Social Styles in terms of their comfort zones of behavior. Roughly 25 percent of the population falls into each group.
Think about the most important things going on in your life right now. Are you job hunting? Vying for a promotion? In a tough situation with a client, boss or co-worker? Looking to get someone’s help, or create a great first impression with someone important? Are you just trying to understand someone who’s really different from you? Wondering why in such everyday situations sometimes you seem to excel, and at other times unravel?

Think communication. Think relationships.

Strong interpersonal skills won’t get you a job for which you have no technical expertise (although we all probably have a story or two to the contrary). You’re just as unlikely to get a position for which you are technically qualified, however, if you don’t connect on a personal level with a potential new boss. In the big picture of human transaction,
people won’t buy from you, be influenced by you, or collaborate with you if they aren’t comfortable with the way you come across personally and professionally. There are too many choices in the marketplace for most people to be willing to endure excessive tension in professional relationships. Life is too short to spend it working and doing business with people who stress us out.

To get ahead, it helps to get along, and the underpinning of getting along – building strong relationships – is good communication. It’s as simple as that. And it’s as complicated as that.

Simple? “There is essentially no limit to the number of ideas or propositions that we can convey using sentences,” writes Michael Corballis in American Scientist magazine. Corballis, a professor of psychology at the University of Auckland in New Zealand, is a noted researcher and author in the area of the origins of language.

Complicated? The remarkable flexibility of human speech, Corballis says, means people can immediately create sentences made up of words perhaps never used in combination before. “Language also allows us to escape from the immediate present and refer to events in other places and at other times,” he says. “We can use language to fantasize, to describe events that have never existed and never will.”

See where things can start to get thorny?

WORDS AREN’T THE KEY

Further complicating communication, of course, is the research that shows communication – the transfer of information – is based only in small part on the words we use. Albert Mehrabian, professor emeritus at the University of California in Los Angeles and the author of Silent Messages: Implicit Communication of Emotions and Attitudes, determined that the effectiveness of communication is based on these three factors:

- 7 percent of the effectiveness of communication is based on the meaning of the words we use.
• 38 percent of the effectiveness is based on the way we say the words we choose.
• 55 percent of the effectiveness is based on nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions.

Although Mehrabian’s research was done back in the 1970s, this insight about the disproportional importance of tone of voice and nonverbal signals in communication still surprises many people today. Communication is far trickier than the mere passage of words from one person’s lips to another person’s ears. Talking is much easier than conveying message and meaning clearly.

Communication is perhaps the most complex thing humans do. It also is arguably the most critical skill for thriving and surviving in just about any situation short of being stranded alone on a desert island. That’s why the work of trying to uncover the secrets, mysteries, tips, and tactics of effective communication is an industry unto itself. A search on the Internet for Web sites and resources related to the word “communication” turns up 28 million hits in 0.65 seconds. Refine the search by adding the word “skills” and the number of hits is still 4.3 million. Searches at online booksellers Barnes and Noble and Amazon.com turn up between 35,000 and 62,000 references for books, videos and other learning materials in English.

With all the information about communication that’s so readily available, and the prospects that about a million things can go wrong in even the simplest relationships, you may be worrying you’ll need your own Ph.D. in psychology to understand what it takes to communicate skillfully. The good news is that you don’t.

_The Social Styles Handbook_ is based on concepts that are easy to grasp and that reflect the essential wisdom of much of what has been researched and written about improving communication and building successful relationships. No credentials are required for what we have to share with you. All you’ll need is a willingness to look at the world a little differently and to adapt your behaviors a bit in the interest of
making others more comfortable when you are working on relationships. With practice, what you learn from these pages can make you more effective in just about everything you do that involves others.

SOCIAL STYLES, VERSATILITY AND SUCCESS

Wilson Learning has done nearly 40 years of its own research with more than two million people worldwide in developing and refining our Social Styles tools. We have learned that we can quite accurately group people around the globe into four general Social Styles: Analyticals, Drivers, Expressives and Amiables. We’ve also learned that simply understanding the implications of these behavior styles is a huge first step in the quest to improve communication and build better relationships. The second step is mastering Versatility, the skill of making slight adjustments in your own behaviors in order to make others more comfortable.

The applications for Social Styles are endless. Look at the list of topics below. Each is a hot-button phrase you’ll find in business publications, management books, MBA course catalogs, and, most importantly, on the lists of strategic issues and initiatives in any business operation. Can you find a single topic that isn’t greatly influenced by individual skills of communication and relationship building?

- Branding products, services and organizations
- Driving for results and return on investment
- Strategic planning
- Selling in tough times
- Improving quality
- Creating customer loyalty
- Doing more with less
- Creating new markets
- Hiring and retaining great employees
- Leading change
- Creating an environment of innovation
• Working in teams
• Building trust
• Networking for results
• Motivating frontline employees
• Diversifying the work force
• Training the work force
• Leading with integrity
• Driving fear out of the workplace

Wilson Learning research demonstrates that using the Social Styles concepts, tools and techniques can help in all of these big-picture areas, as well as in specialized aspects of professional performance – everything from being a better boss to being a respected and valued team member. The truth is, you could probably easily add to this list almost endlessly.

The science and technology of communication continues to evolve at a staggering pace. The unending parade of new electronic tools – from e-mail to cell phones and Web sites and palm-sized computers – allows us to bombard each other with information from an almost inescapable and growing array of sophisticated methods. Many experts argue, however, that the art of human interaction ultimately plays the most critical role in building solid relationships.

As you work your way through The Social Styles Handbook, you will learn about the four Social Styles in detail and begin to understand the foundational implications they have for you and your behavior with others. You will learn your own Social Style and how it influences your success in establishing and maintaining important relationships. You will learn how to “read” other people’s styles and adapt your normal behaviors to improve your chances of getting along and performing better. You will gain appreciation for the strengths that each style offers, and benefit from the richness that comes from embracing diversity.

Understanding the case for communication is the beginning. Whether you are a boss wanting to motivate your staff, a salesperson...
looking to close more deals, or a team member interested in smoothing out how your team works together, the concepts, tools and techniques you will learn in this book can have a profound influence in your life. In the end, you will be better prepared to understand, influence and collaborate with everyone – from co-workers to customers to family and friends. Let’s get started.

SUMMARY
- Learning to communicate and build relationships more effectively will influence just about every hot-button aspect of your personal and professional life.
- You don’t need a Ph.D. to communicate effectively, just a willingness to look at the world a little differently.
- Only 7 percent of the effectiveness of communication is based on the words we use; everything else is in how we say things.
- The planet divides almost equally into four Social Styles: Analyticals, Drivers, Expressives, and Amiables.
- Versatility is the ability to adapt your behaviors slightly to make others more comfortable.
- Technology provides an extensive array of electronic tools for communicating, but it is the art of human interaction that builds relationships.
We all have comfort zones several sizes too small.

Unknown

The ability to make others feel comfortable is the essence of Versatility.

The great communicators in the world, the people you know and admire for their aptitude at nurturing strong relationships, all have a knack for putting people at ease.

COMFORT OPENS THE WAY TO TRUST

With comfort comes trust and confidence, which are prerequisites for being able to move any relationship beyond the superficial and get things done with others.

Without trust, your colleagues or customers won’t disclose the information you need to work with them. They won’t be receptive to your suggestions. And they simply won’t do what you request. That’s true whether your customer is a client purchasing legal services from you or a colleague from your company’s marketing team to whom you must sell your ideas for a new product introduction.

Without trust, co-workers or people you supervise will be leery of hidden meanings in what you say. You’ve seen it many times – there will be more energy spent on debating the politics and intentions of various players than on the work at hand. These days, nobody has time for that.
THE EFFECTS OF DISCOMFORT
As you learned in reading about task and relationship tension, when others experience excessive stress in their relationships with you, the energy needed to get things done is dissipated by their personal discomfort. Without comfort, your relationships are likely to falter and your performance in anything you do involving other people will fall short of everybody’s expectations.

Tevilla Riddell remembers immediately thinking about uncomfortable relationships with co-workers when she first learned about Social Styles. “I was looking for immediate applications for what I was learning and I remember saying, ‘Now I understand the misconnections.’ I realized the issue wasn’t about people liking or disliking me; it was a matter of them having different needs in terms of communication.”

“I found that application right away,” Tevilla says, “and now I use it all the time, whether it’s with clients on a sales call or dropping off my laundry at the dry cleaner’s. This awareness about people feeling discomfort gives me an effective strategy for looking at how I approach relationships. It makes me stop and ask myself, ‘What can I do to improve communication?’”

The key phrase, of course, is, “What can I do to improve communication?”

In other words, what can you do to make other people feel more comfortable, even if it means making yourself somewhat uncomfortable in the process?

It is critical to understand that Versatility doesn’t mean adjusting your behaviors to make yourself comfortable in every communication situation. On the contrary, being versatile and successful in building productive relationships means, at times, you purposefully take on a degree of discomfort for yourself. And this is a reality that may never change. No matter how well you master Social Styles, there will probably always be situations that challenge you to adjust your own comfort zone in the interest of accommodating the communication needs of others.
THE PAYOFFS FOR MAKING OTHERS COMFORTABLE

The implications for the benefits of focusing on the comfort of others in your relationships are apparent in countless daily situations.

In a coaching or managing situation, if you don’t happen to share the other person’s Social Style, your most carefully constructed positive criticism and guidance may not hit the mark, if the other person feels too much discomfort. Trust will be lower and a degree of defensiveness may even develop.

If you work on a team of people who all happen to share a given Social Style, it’s easy to forget that when you make a presentation to an outside group that the members of that group may be from different styles, or even from various different styles. Making a conscious effort to pitch your communication with the audience’s styles in mind can really produce good results here.

In any customer situation, assuring your customer’s comfort will pay off in many ways. Among other things, it will help you get a better sense of what it will take to develop a long-term relationship that can translate into repeat business.

Ann Horner, a main board director at Bourne Leisure Limited in the UK, makes extensive use of Social Styles in this regard. Bourne Leisure sells caravans (trailer homes) and holiday stays at a range of holiday resort locations across the UK and Europe. One of the numerous applications and benefits of Social Styles, for Ann, is to make others comfortable. This ranges from very personal and practical to organizational and strategic levels.

It’s not her tendency to write down many of the ideas and plans she discusses with colleagues, Ann says. “I often also go with my gut feeling on things, but I have some colleagues who are more comfortable when we do more analysis. Because I value the differences in our styles, I’ve learned to put more things on paper and to not rush those colleagues’ decisions, which leaves them time to come up with options I might not have thought of. It has been good for me to create this kind of self-discipline.”
As a company, Ann says, Bourne Leisure uses Social Styles and an overriding concern about the comfort of others in hiring practices and in making other strategic personnel decisions.

“Bourne Leisure is the epitome of a versatile company,” she says. “We have incredible diversity, starting with the founding partners,” who deliberately cultivate and regularly exploit the differences in their own styles. “We have strong role models for hiring people to support our weaknesses and take advantage of differences. As an organization, we are quick to identify the skills people need to deal with the problems they will face in certain positions.

“Relationships are critical in any business, but we have 40 resorts with a variety of facilities, and we operate with remote staff that might be 10 hours’ travel time away from us. Relationships are really important for us. When we decide who will run a particular park, we think about who has the style best suited for that location, and we think about the preferences our people have for what they want to do and how they want to do it.”

The practice of focusing on the other person’s comfort might seem excessive or operationally risky to some businesspeople. However, just as focusing on another person’s comfort in a one-to-one relationship can create trust, confidence, collaboration and results, so can a management team’s willingness to be a bit uncomfortable in its leadership practices.

“If you focus on the outcomes you’re after,” Ann says, “you see there is a much bigger potential payoff if you’re willing to work on your own Versatility. It is just so helpful to look at things from your customer’s perspective . . . and to understand that everyone you work with is a customer.

“We know we can’t just tell people in our organization what to do. If you accept that, you realize you have to put yourself in their shoes and to think about what’s in it for them to do what you need done, and to think about what will be the most comfortable and effective ways for them to deal with those issues.”
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR COMFORT
Creating comfort for others will require different things from you in different situations.

As you have already discovered, there are four main Social Styles that you will learn about in detail in the upcoming chapters – Analytical, Expressive, Amiable and Driver. You will find that you fit best in one of those four styles of communication.

As you have also learned, statistically speaking, one out of every four of people you meet will be the same Social Style as you. In those cases the same behaviors might make you both comfortable. In three out of four cases, however, the things that might help you feel comfortable are not likely to have the same effect for the other person in a relationship.

For some people, you will have to adjust your assertiveness to make them more comfortable, and for others, you will have to modify your responsiveness. For those in the Social Styles quadrant diagonally across from yours, you will need to adjust on both dimensions. Not surprisingly, this is the group with whom you may have the greatest difficulty communicating comfortably. All of this means, of course, you may have to stretch your own comfort zone to make the majority of your relationships more successful. You can hope for reciprocity; the best possible scenario for building great relationships is when all parties are willing to make adjustments to help others feel comfortable. The reality, however, is that you may be operating on your own most of the time, and it’s up to you to recognize that your success with using Social Styles depends on your willingness to focus on making others comfortable without worrying about your own comfort levels.

You can have a huge influence on the relationships in your life, even when you are interacting with people who seem to have little or no intuitive awareness of the Social Style concepts. The detailed look at the characteristics and behaviors of the four Social Styles you will learn in Section 3 will build on this fundamental concept that good relationships begin with comfort.
SUMMARY

• Making others – not yourself – feel comfortable is the essence of Versatility.

• Comfort inspires trust and confidence, without which there is not much chance of creating and maintaining a successful relationship.

• The payoffs for making others comfortable range from earning repeat business from customers to building an organizational culture that empowers and enables people to perform at the highest possible levels.

• Making others comfortable will require you to stretch your own comfort zone in three out of four relationships. Sometimes you will need to adjust your assertiveness, at other times your responsiveness, and with people in the Social Style quadrant diagonally opposite yours, both.
We are all creatures of habit.

Dee Hock, the founder of credit card giant VISA, once said, “The problem is never how to get new, innovative thoughts into your mind, but how to get old ones out.”

This insight is significant to Social Styles for a number of reasons. First, of course, we are asking you to consider communicating differently. Whether you are 20 or 64, you have been managing your relationships in your own way for all those years. And you have no doubt been quite successful at it.

Our promise is that you can be even more successful. But to do so you must make room in your thinking for some new ideas related to Social Styles, in part at least, by giving up of some of your old ideas and behaviors. That is often not easy to do.

COMFORT ZONES AND HABITS
One reason that it is hard to give them up is comfort, as discussed in Chapter 7. But you are also influenced by habit.
We all have our comfort zones that define the patterns we follow and the boundaries we impose in doing the routine things in our lives. We know people who automatically put on the same shoe first every time they dress, and almost feel compelled to start over if they inadvertently mix up the order. It’s a little thing. It’s comfortable that way. It’s easy. It’s something done with little or no thought. It’s a habit.

Putting on the same shoe first every day is not a behavior that will influence anything of much importance in your life. Most of us, though, also have comfort zones and habits that affect the more complex aspects of our lives, including how we communicate and relate with people.

Another value of this insight into the difficulty of getting rid of old ideas: As you begin to use Social Styles, one of the first challenges you will face is to catch yourself repeating habitual, relationship-inhibiting patterns in the ways you interact with people. Think back to the arm-crossing exercise we asked you to do in Chapter 2. You learned in that simple activity that there will be awkward moments when you begin to become aware of Social Style differences between yourself and others but are not always sure how to respond. These are the instances when habit can become a trap for you.

Here is why.

There are three basic steps that occur in most human interactions:

- We observe.
- We draw conclusions about what we see and hear.
- We respond to what we observe.
The cycle starts all over again when we observe the outcome of that response.

The problem is that most often we base our conclusions on the assumption that the other person is standing in our shoes, or at least shoes very much like ours. When we take that “typical” approach, we limit our understanding to projecting only from our own thoughts, experiences and feelings about similar situations. As a result, we may easily and frequently misinterpret what other people think and feel. (We’ll talk more about thinking and feeling in the next chapter.)

Unfortunately this practice is very common. All too often our reactions to other people’s behaviors are instinctively based on what we know would make us comfortable in a similar situation. This is habit at its worst.

At work, for example, this habitual response usually results in our treating each colleague in the same way. That approach lets us stay in our own comfort zone. This can be seductive, even if it’s unproductive. As we noted before, three or more times out of four our comfort zones won’t match those of other people, which can cause them varying degrees of discomfort. Imagine what would happen if you suddenly began to treat each colleague in a way that matches the way he or she likes to be treated?

**ADAPTING – BETTER THAN JUST REACTING**

A more productive pattern for effective communication is to focus on being versatile instead of habitual.

- Identify the other person’s Social Style, taking into account what you will learn about Social Styles in this book.
- Reflect on the person’s style, thinking about what makes people of this Social Style feel comfortable.
- Modify your own behaviors in ways that will create comfort for the other person.
The payoff? Research shows in the sales arena that there is a strong correlation between high Versatility – adapting instead of reacting – and high performance. It can be a bit more difficult to measure empirically the benefits of Versatility in other professions and situations, but accomplished Social Style practitioners across the board confirm that breaking old communication habits makes them better at what they do.

Ann Horner of Bourne Leisure Limited says, “I’m not sure I can specifically quantify the value of using what I know about Social Styles, but I know I wouldn’t want to try to do my job without it.”

**STYLE MODIFICATION**

In the end, you’ll break your less effective communication habits by using what we call style modification.

You will see improvements in your Versatility and your relationships immediately with only small adaptations and modifications in your behaviors. For really significant results, however, you will want to learn and practice the
### Social Style Modification Strategies

When you learn to identify others’ Social Style, you can use this table to help you adapt your behavior to match their comfort zones. You can use the strategies that form the borders of another person’s type to shape and modify your behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK-DIRECTED Responsiveness</th>
<th>PEOPLE-DIRECTED Responsiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANALYTICAL</td>
<td>AMIABLE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Talk about the task; reference facts as well as feelings**
- **Try to organize your thoughts in a logical pattern when communicating**
- **Acknowledge the ideas and points that others make**
- **Articulate expected results of taking action**

**Increasing Task-Directed Assertiveness**

- Be open to others’ opinions, concerns and feelings
- Acknowledge the value you place on other people’s time
- Demonstrate a willingness to follow the lead of others
- Ask for cooperation, but don’t demand it

- **Demonstrate a willingness to get to the point**
- **Volunteer information you have to others**
- **Be willing to express points of disagreement**
- **Summarize the positions you feel others are suggesting**

**Increasing People-Directed Assertiveness**

- Take the time to establish rapport with your co-workers
- Reinforce other people when they express good ideas
- Share your feelings or personal information
- Allow yourself and others to break the routine while problem solving

- **Be open to others’ opinions, concerns and feelings**
- **Acknowledge the value you place on other people’s time**
- **Demonstrate a willingness to follow the lead of others**
- **Ask for cooperation, but don’t demand it**
modification skills specifically suited for relating with each Social Style.

You have learned the basic challenges and opportunities in recognizing and changing your communication comfort zone and habits. Section 3, Social Styles In Depth, will provide many more details and plenty of lessons learned from the experiences of people using Social Styles regularly in their personal and professional lives.

SUMMARY

• New ideas come easy, but old habits die hard.
• In the “typical” pattern of communication, we make observations based on how we would react in certain situations and fail to take into account the communication style preferences others feel.
• The quickest way to improve communication is to adapt and modify our own behavior in response to observations we make about other people’s Social Styles.
• Research shows that Versatility pays off in better performance. People who use Social Styles as a tool have trouble imagining doing their jobs without it.
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Why do you connect easily and quickly with some people, and find others more difficult?

More than two million people already know why. They use Social Styles and Versatility skills to read and adapt to the natural behavior of others. Simple to learn and apply, Social Styles and Versatility skills immediately improve communication and relationships at work and at home. Use them and you’ll accomplish more with everyone.

The secret is very simple: treat people the way they want to be treated.

- **Your Social Style** – Are you a Driver, an Analytical, an Amiable or an Expressive? What behaviors give you the clues? What strengths and limitations come with each style?
- **Reading Others’ Social Styles** – How to read the signs and know how each person wants to be treated. If you are an Expressive, how do you interview with or manage an Analytical? If you are a Driver, how do you handle your Amiable customer’s or co-worker’s objections?
- **Handling Conflict and Stress** – How to handle predictable patterns of behavior people follow in response to stress. Return to productive relationships quickly when you respond correctly.
- **Using Versatility at Different Points in a Process** – Each Social Style needs a different approach as you progress through a typical conversation or project. Meet people’s particular needs and ensure productive, long-term relationships.

These proven, life-changing tools have produced measurable results for people in all types of jobs and businesses worldwide. If you learn about Social Styles and practice Versatility, you too will see immediate, positive results.

"Social Styles has been a real boon to me. After 20 years of extensive training in many different areas, it is the most effective training I’ve ever received. And I have colleagues who feel the same way.”

James Miller, Manager of Software Development, Qwest

“|I’m not sure I can quantify the value of using Social Styles, but I know I would not want to do my job without it.”

Ann Horner, Main Board Director, Bourne Leisure Limited