Communication Compass

Every person approaches communication from an unique perspective. Understanding your preferred communication style allows you to become more self-aware. Understanding the preferences of others allows you to become a more effective communicator. The Communication Compass activity allows people to identify their personal communication preferences and develop strategies to enhance communication with others.

_The Activity:_

1. Give the participants an opportunity to read Handouts 1–4, which contain descriptions of the four communication styles.

2. Ask participants to think about the one that most applies to them. If someone has difficulty determining which style to choose, have them ask themselves these questions:
   - What seems most comfortable?
   - What is your tendency when under pressure?
   - What is your first inclination when you get a new project?
   - What feedback have you been given about yourself?

3. After participants have decided where they fit best, have them form small groups in the corners of the room based on their preferred approach.

4. Based on their work experiences, ask each group to answer the following questions on chart paper. Have the groups report out.
   - What is really great about communicating in your direction?
   - What is really hard about communicating in your direction?

5. Ask each direction to think about how to approach other directions in terms of communication, decision making, etc.

Here are a few additional questions and topics you can ask the groups to address:

- What is your direction’s greatest strength?
- What is your direction’s greatest weakness?
- What is your direction’s pet peeve?
- What pace does your direction keep?
- What animal best represents your direction?
- What would be your direction’s mascot?
The following handouts can be used to help facilitate the activity and discussion.

Sources:
*The Personality Compass* by Diane Turner and Thelma Greco, 1998.

**Adapted from the Northwest Leader Corps training curriculum written and compiled by Nicole Trimble. An EnCorps resource. Please retain the original program attribution when adapting or using this resource. Rev. June 2007.**
Communication Compass

NORTH

Let’s Do it!
Asks Forgiveness. Not Permission
Makes Decision While Talking
Acts Quickly
Fast/External Processor

WEST

Details!
Gather All Data before Decisions
Asks Questions
Acts with Intent
Slow/Internal Processor

SOUTH

Let the People Be Heard!
Gather All Opinions before Decisions
Internal Reflection and Processing
Acts Slowly
Slow/Internal Processor

EAST

Here is the 5-Year Goal!
Big Picture Vision
No Details
 Acts with Passion
Fast/External Processor
North: The “Get It Done” Person

**Approach to Work**
Assertive, Active, Decisive
Likes to be in control and determine the course of events
Quick to act, expresses urgency for others to act quickly also
Enjoys challenging people and situations
Thinks in terms of the “bottom line”
Likes a quick pace and the fast track
Courageous, Ambitious, and Confident
Perseveres – Not stopped by “NO”
Goal-centered, ambitious
Hardworking leader who is comfortable being in front
Value Words – “Do it now!” “I’ll do it.”

**Best Ways to Work with a North**
Present your case quickly, clearly, and with enthusiasm and confidence
Let them know they will be involved – their payoff and their role
Focus on the “challenge” of the task.
Provide them with plenty of autonomy
Establish timelines and stick with them
Give them positive, public recognition
Use them to complete tasks that require motivation, persuasion, and initiative
South: The Nurturer

Approach to Work
Friendly, Likeable team player
Allows others to feel important
Supportive, nurturing and caring towards colleagues
Willing to trust others’ statements at face value
Peace-loving, sympathetic, and helpful
Feelings-based, trusts own emotions and intuition as truth
Able to focus on the present moment
Process-centered
Generous, non-competitive and likes to build on the ideas of others
Value Words: “Right” and “Fair”

Best Ways to Work with a South
Remember process, attention to what is happening with the relationship between you
Justify your decisions around values and ethics
Appeal your relationship with this person and his or her other relationships
Listen hard and allow the expression of feelings and intuition in logical arguments
Be aware that this person may have a hard time saying “NO” and may be easily steamrolled
Provide plenty of positive reassurance and likeability
Let the personal know you like them and appreciate them
East: The Visionary

Approach to Work
Innovative, Creative and sees the big picture
Very idea oriented, focuses on future thought
Risk-taker, adventurous, spontaneous
Has insight into mission and purpose
Looks for overarching themes and ideas
Appreciates a lot of information
Strong spiritual awareness, free spirited, unconventional
Likes to experiment and explore
Value words: “Option” “Possibility”

Best Ways to Work with an East
Show appreciation and enthusiasm for ideas
Listen and be patient during idea generation
Avoid criticizing or judging ideas
Allow and support divergent thinking
Provide a variety of tasks
Provide help and supervision to support detail and project follow through
West: The Analyst

Approach to Work
Seen as practical, dependable, and thorough
Provide planning and resources to others
Moves carefully, deliberately, and follows procedures and guidelines
Use data to make logical and analytical decisions
Weighs all sides of an issue, balanced
Introspective, self-analytical, focused, reserved
Careful, thoroughly examines people’s needs in situations
Works well with existing resources – gets the most out of what has been done in the past
Skilled at finding the fatal flaw in an idea or a project
Value Words: “Objective,” “Organized”

Best Ways to Work with a West
Allow plenty of time for decision-making
Provide data – objective facts and figures that a West can trust
Don’t be put off by critical “NO” statements
Minimize the expression of emotion and use logic when possible
Appeal to tradition, a sense of history, and correct procedures