

Dealing with difficult people . . . or maybe it's you?

By Linda Tongue

Do you ever face those times when your boss is on your back, clients are demanding answers, everything needs to be done yesterday and a colleague is being nit-picky about detail when surely he can see that speed is of the essence? I mean, what planet is he on?

You are going at the speed of light to meet all these demands – admittedly, some of the demands might not be there if you had planned things a little more carefully. Some of the problems are due to mistakes you made because you were working so quickly you didn't check the detail, but even so! Some people are so slow!

And then maybe there is another member of your team who is great with ideas, and loves to start new projects – but rarely finishes anything?

Or someone who spends a lot of their time making sure other people are okay, fussing over them and acting aggrieved if this attention is not noted?

Or perhaps somebody who gets on with the job, works hard, but upsets people by being blunt and apparently uncaring?

Probably, you have a mixture of these styles of working within your team and sometimes it can be chaotic, with arguments and obstructive behaviour. Other times things can be just about okay, as they tolerate each other.

But wouldn't it be useful if they could all understand their own way of working, using the positive, avoiding the negative, and becoming a unified team where the members support each other, complement each others strengths and the team achieves its full potential?

With some understanding of human behaviour, you can identify where people get in their own, and each other's, way and encourage a much more positive way of working.

Starting with a dash

Some people are **Hurry Ups**, who think fast, talk fast and get a lot of work done. They dash from job to job, sometimes without the relevant paperwork or tools because they were so busy thinking about the next job that they did not give themselves time to fully prepare. They work well under pressure, but only attend to deadlines at the last minute (because before that they were dealing with a crisis) so they do not have time to check their work. They do not worry too much about mistakes – they get so much work done, what does the odd mistake matter?



It will matter to the **Be Perfect** in the team, because they have high standards and nothing else will do. They write lists and are very methodical, because they are driven to get things right – even if they miss deadlines to do it. They can upset the **Hurry Ups** in the team because they take a lot of time over things, checking and giving endless detail and they can get pedantic and split hairs.

Which upsets the **Try Hards** who find the **Be Perfects'** need to finish things rather boring and nit-picky. **Try Hards** like new things, new ideas (and the **Be Perfects'** insistence on practical application can be so irritating!). **Try Hards** will volunteer for the new projects and get very enthusiastic, putting in a lot of work but eventually losing interest and not finishing.

Be Strongs get really aggravated by the **Try Hards** in the team, because **Be Strongs** have a strong sense of duty and integrity and get really irritated with people who don't finish the job. They look down their noses at what they consider to be half-baked ideas and notions – and run a mile from anyone who gets too close and wants to know how they are feeling.

And that's really distressing to **Please People** – how can they please you if you won't tell them how you are feeling? **Please People** are like the oil in the engine of a team, they are nurturing, caring, sensitive people who like to look after others, in fact they like to look after others so much they can fuss around people and drive people who do not want to be looked after up the wall!

Is this ringing any bells? Which are you – and who might you be annoying?

Plusses and minuses

Within each of these Working Styles (Hay, 1993) there are positive and negative aspects of behaviour. When we are under pressure we tend to get into the negative end of the Working Style (known as the **Driver** – because we feel compelled, driven to act this way, even though we can see it isn't working for us).

Most of the time at work, people are under pressure and so if they are not aware of their **Driver**, they can add to that pressure by behaving in ways that make it less likely that they (and the team) will be successful!

If everybody was working in their Working Style, using their strengths, and appreciating those of others in the team, they would achieve more effortlessly, with less stress and strain, and fewer breakdowns in communication and morale.

Working Styles is just one concept in a framework of many others that add up to Developmental Transactional Analysis (DTA). The more we understand about human behaviour, the less we will sabotage ourselves and be more effective in influencing others with integrity.

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