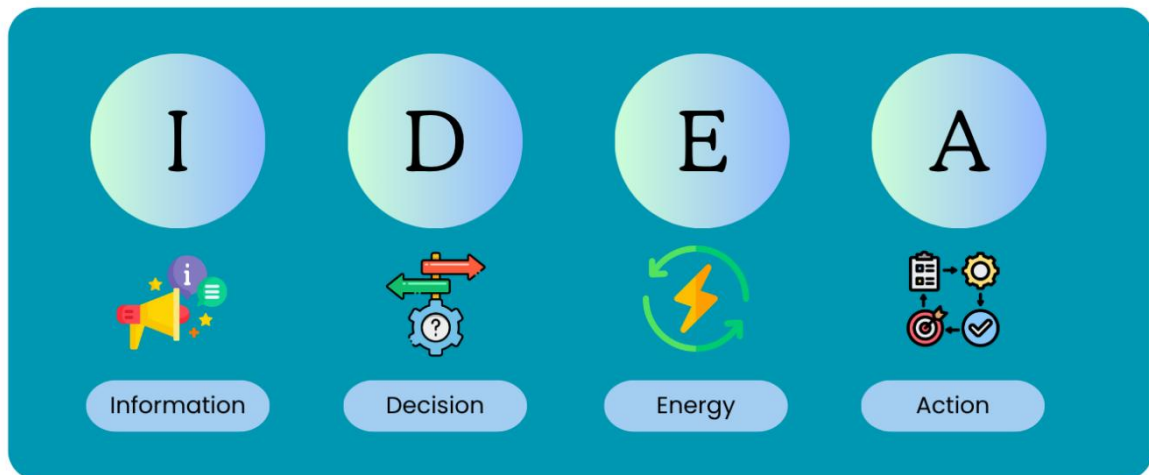


The IDEA Framework



You don't need a survey to understand your personality, or anyone else's either. All the profiling tools – DISC, MBTI, 16 Personalities, the Big 5, etc. - share the same pedigree. They're all based on similar conceptual frameworks and key ideas in over a hundred years of psychological theories.

But a personality profiling tool can only ever give you **a snapshot in time of how you see yourself** in that moment. And because it's subjective and self-reported, it can give you different results depending on how you feel in the moment and what you're experiencing. Your car's dashboard will give you different information about your speed, engine temperature and fuel level when you're driving on the highway than if you're parked in your garage. In the same way, you'll get one set of survey results if you're tired or stressed or under pressure at work, and different results if your feeling relaxed and in control, or on holidays, or just got a promotion.

Plus, **our personality changes over time and at different stages of life** – especially if we experience significant life-altering events such as getting married or divorced, moving interstate or overseas, having children, losing a loved one, being promoted or changing careers.

What all the profiling tools share is a focus on some very common patterns of human behaviour. So rather than getting locked in to a specific profile or survey result, it's easier and more effective to simply understand some of these patterns and how to recognise them.

IDEA

There are four easily recognised patterns in human behaviour. Each pattern is a pair of contrasting approaches. We all use both aspects of each pair; however, we have an unconscious bias, a preference for one that feels easier and more comfortable. Like right or left handedness, we have dominant and supporting modes of behaviour. Our preferred behaviour patterns need little thought or effort. While others require more conscious attention and energy.

To identify which pattern of behaviour we prefer, there are **four simple questions** we can ask:

The IDEA Framework

What INFORMATION do we tune in to?

- Is it details?
- Or headlines?

Where is our ENERGY?

- Is it extroverted?
- Or introverted?

How do we make DECISIONS?

- Do we focus more on tasks?
- Or do we focus on people?

How do we take ACTION?

- Do we prefer structure?
- Or go with the flow?

Remember, we all do both. However, we have an unconscious bias towards one as our default preference. And while we may develop the skills to use both approaches to suit the context we are in, when we are stressed or tired or not paying attention, our default setting will come to the fore.

Knowing our own style is helpful. We can moderate our behaviour as needed. Knowing other people's preferred style is even better - we can put ourselves in their shoes and communicate in ways they are more likely to relate to.

Leadership Style

The best leaders are flexible in the ways they respond to different situations and the people involved. They are willing to consider alternative perspectives. They know their own strengths; but also understand their own blind spots.

Our behaviour preferences influence the ways we communicate and lead. If we understand our own bias towards certain behaviour patterns, then we can better adapt and integrate our approach to suit any context or circumstance. Especially if we also pay attention to and value the different behaviour preferences of those we work with.

Use the paired descriptions on the following pages to think about where you operate most comfortably. Consider which descriptions sound most like you. Remember we all do both. However, one side of each pair feels easier and more natural. One we do on autopilot. The other takes a little more attention, energy and effort.

Map your leadership preferences

On the following pages, read through the paired descriptions and statements about each of the four sets of common behaviour patterns.

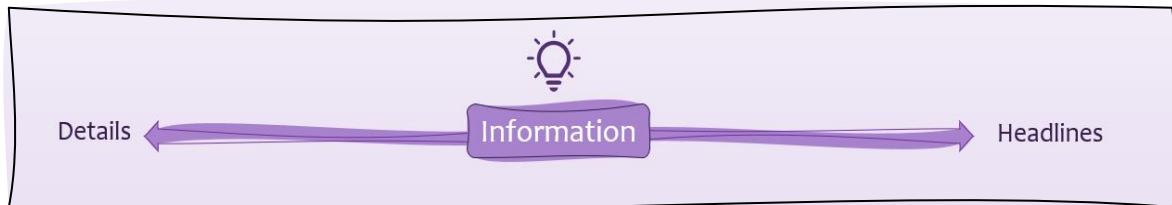
After reading each set of descriptions, use the diagrams to map where on the spectrum between each pair you feel you most comfortable. **For example:**



Then, read the 'How Does This Affect My Leadership' sections. And take some time to reflect and answer the questions provided.

What INFORMATION do you tune into?

Which of the following two description sounds more like you? Remember, we all do both. One feels easier and more natural. It's our default mode. The other takes more energy and effort. Draw a small circle on the scale below to show where you usually feel most comfortable.



Details

'Just the facts please'

I pay most attention to physical reality, what I see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. I'm concerned with what is actual, present, current, and real. I notice facts and I remember details that are important to me. I like to see the practical use of things and learn best when I see how to use what I'm learning. Experience speaks to me louder than words. I focus on the here and now.

- I remember events as snapshots of what actually happened.
- I solve problems by working through facts until I understand the problem.
- I am pragmatic and look to the "bottom line."
- I start with facts and then work towards a bigger picture.
- I trust experience first and trust words and symbols less.
- Sometimes I pay so much attention to facts, either present or past, that I miss new possibilities.

Headlines

'I can see the big picture'

I pay most attention to impressions or the meaning and patterns of the information I get. I would rather learn by thinking a problem through than by hands-on experience. I like to work with concepts or theories, even if I don't know how I will use them yet. I remember events more as an impression of what it was like than as literal facts or details of what happened. I'm interested in new things and what might be possible, so I think more about the future than the past.

- I remember events by what I read "between the lines" about their meaning.
- I solve problems by leaping between different ideas and possibilities.
- I am interested in doing things that are new and different.
- I like to see the big picture, then work out the facts from there.
- I trust impressions, symbols, and metaphors more than what I actually experienced.
- Sometimes I think so much about new possibilities that I never look at how to make them a reality.

How Does This Affect My Leadership?

Our default mode influences what information we give most attention to. Like a pre-set radio station that automatically tunes in to certain frequencies, we spontaneously notice certain types of information. Other information is routinely ignored or filtered out.

Our unconscious bias affects how we respond to and lead others. The table below highlights some of the ways our information filter shapes the way we give and receive instructions, how we learn new things, and how we respond to change.

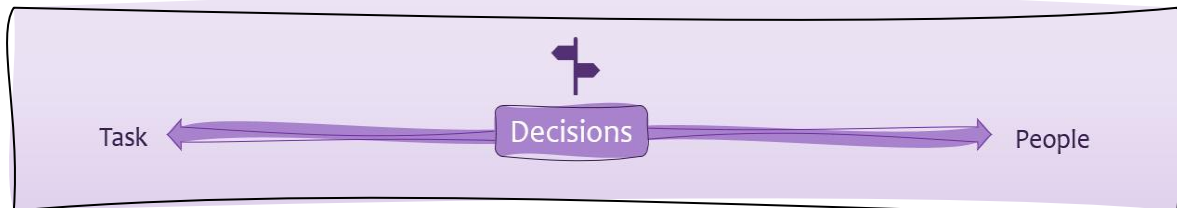
Details	Headlines
What kind of instructions work well for you?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the specific details • Like instructions to be clear and precise • Focus on the here and now • Prefer step-by-step, practical instructions • Like concrete examples • Vague or nonspecific instructions may be unsettling or cause confusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just an overview • Prefer to have an overall purpose defined • Anticipate future possibilities • Prefer to work things out for themselves • Feel constrained by detailed instructions • Usually comfortable with generalities and ambiguity
How do you approach learning new things?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to relate learning to past experience • Learn best with hands on, practical activities • Focus on learning that has immediate and practical applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like to see how learning connects to other ideas • Learn best with theory and imagination • Focus on learning interesting ideas for their own sake or future application
How do you respond to proposed change?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate change in the light of past experience • Want facts about how change will improve things • Want specifics about what and who will be affected • Use data to evaluate how realistic the change is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy change and anticipating the future • Focus on a vision of how things will be different • Want to see the overarching purpose and potential • Use imagination to explore what the future could look like

Reflect

- How does your preferred leadership style influence the way you give instructions?
- In what ways will you modify your communication in future to better suit those with different information needs?
- How will you adjust training delivery to accommodate others' preferred approaches to learning?
- Next time you navigate change, what will you do differently?

How do you make DECISIONS?

Which of the following two description sounds more like you? Remember, we all do both. One feels easier and more natural. It's our default mode. The other takes more energy and effort. Draw a small circle on the scale below to show where you usually feel most comfortable.



Task focus

'Does this make sense?'

When I make a decision, I like to find a basic truth or principle to be applied, regardless of the specific situation involved. I like to analyse pros and cons, and then be consistent and logical in deciding. I try to be impersonal, so I won't let my personal wishes - or other people's wishes - influence me. I try to help by pointing out flaws and offering critique.

- I enjoy technical and specialised fields where logic is important.
- I notice inconsistencies.
- I look for logical explanations or solutions to everything.
- I make decisions with my head and want to be fair.
- I believe telling the truth is more important than being tactful.
- Sometimes I miss or don't value the "people" part of a situation.
- I can be perceived as overly task-oriented; sometimes appearing uncaring, or indifferent.

People focus

'Who will be affected?'

I believe I make the best decisions by weighing what people care about and the points-of-view of persons participating in a situation. I am concerned with values and what is best for the people involved. I like to do whatever will establish or maintain harmony. In my relationships, I'm seen as caring, warm, and tactful. I like to help by pointing out what's working and offering praise.

- I have a people or communications orientation.
- I am concerned with harmony and nervous when it is missing.
- I look for what is important to others and express concern for others.
- I make decisions with my heart and want to be compassionate.
- I believe being tactful is more important than telling the 'cold' truth.
- Sometimes I miss seeing or communicating the 'hard truth' of situations.
- I am sometimes seen by others as too indirect; sometimes appearing idealistic or sentimental.

How Does This Affect My Leadership?

Our default mode influences how we make decisions and draw conclusions. Like an algorithm that runs in the background, our thinking follows a pattern that is familiar or comfortable.

Our unconscious bias affects how we respond to and lead others. The table below highlights some ways our decision processes shape the way we offer help and feedback, how we manage differences, and how we like to be valued and acknowledged.

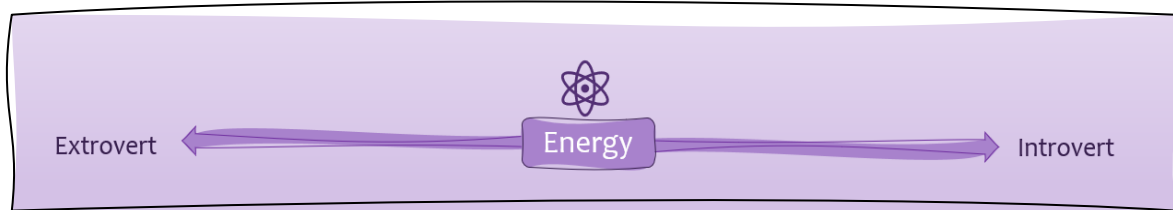
Task Focus	People Focus
How do you usually offer help to someone?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to help by fixing the problem • Usually focus on practical issues • Make a logical analysis • Step back and remain objective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to help by offering empathy and support • Usually explore how people feel • Ask questions about the context • Step in and engage with the person
How do you approach giving feedback?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use feedback to improve performance • Assess against objective criteria • Note flaws and critique first • May need to remember to include praise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use feedback to support the individual • Assess in terms of impact on relationships • Note good points and praise first • May need to take care not to overlook flaws
How do you respond to dissent or different viewpoints?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on seeking objective truth • Ask questions to clarify and find answers • May seem critical of other viewpoints • Are comfortable debating the issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on seeking harmony • Look for common ground and agreement • May sidestep highlighting differences of opinion • May be uncomfortable with conflict or disputes
In what ways do you prefer to be recognised or appreciated?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer to be acknowledged for a job well done • Want recognition on completion of projects or when you excel • Value recognition from people most qualified to assess your performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer to be acknowledged for your contribution and effort • Want to feel valued, included and appreciated • Value appreciation from the people you have served or supported

Reflect

- How does your preferred leadership style influence the way you draw conclusions and make decisions?
- In what ways will you modify your feedback in future to better suit those with different needs?
- How will you adjust your response to dissent or different viewpoints?
- Next time you offer someone praise or recognition, what will you do differently?

Where is your ENERGY?

Which of the following two description sounds more like you? Remember, we all do both. One feels easier and more natural. It's our default mode. The other takes more energy and effort. Draw a small circle on the scale below to show where you usually feel most comfortable.



Extraverted

'Let's talk this over'

I like getting my energy from active involvement in events and having a lot of different activities. I'm excited when I'm around people and I like to energise other people. I like moving into action and making things happen. I generally feel at home in the world. I often understand a problem better when I can talk out loud about it and hear what others have to say.

- I am seen as "outgoing" or as a "people person."
- I feel comfortable in groups and like working in them.
- I have a wide range of friends and know lots of people.
- I sometimes jump too quickly into an activity and don't allow enough time to think it over.
- Before I start a project, I sometimes forget to stop and get clear on what I want to do and why.
- My pattern is do-think-do.

Introverted

'I need to think about this'

I like getting my energy from dealing with the ideas, pictures, memories, and reactions that are inside my head, in my inner world. I often prefer doing things alone or with one or two people I feel comfortable with. I take time to reflect so that I have a clear idea of what I'll be doing when I decide to act. Ideas are almost solid things for me. Sometimes I like the idea of something better than the real thing.

- I am seen as "reflective" or "reserved."
- I feel comfortable being alone and like things I can do on my own.
- I prefer to know just a few people well.
- I sometimes spend too much time reflecting and don't move into action quickly enough.
- I sometimes forget to check with the outside world to see if my ideas really fit the experience.
- My pattern is think-do-think.

How Does This Affect My Leadership?

Our default mode influences how we interact with the world. Some of us prefer to engage through action and external expression. Others prefer to engage first through reflection and thinking things through before acting.

Our unconscious bias affects how we respond to and lead others. The table below highlights some ways our energy mode shapes the way we approach meetings, the type of work environment we prefer, and how we choose to recharge.

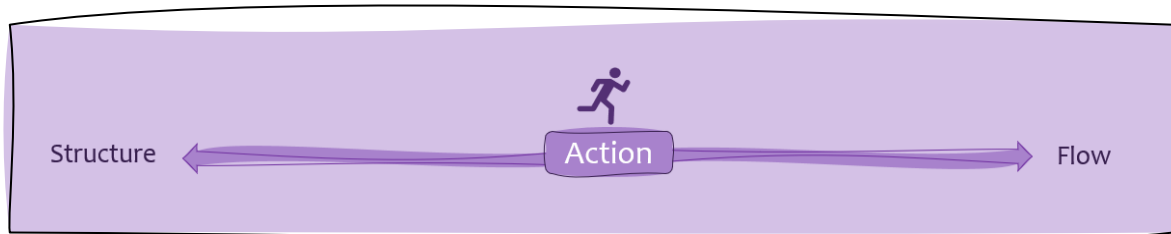
Extrovert	Introvert
How do you approach meetings?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like to talk things over • Tend to be expressive in meetings • Find it draining when there is no interaction • May talk over the top of others • Rarely prepare or read pre-meeting information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like to think things through • Tend to be reserved in meetings • Find it draining if there is no time for reflection • Usually to wait your turn in conversation • Prefer time to digest as much pre-meeting information as possible
What does your preferred work environment look like?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer open-plan and opportunities for interaction • Welcome conversations and interruptions • Like having some background noise • Prefer face-to-face and phone calls • Enjoy a busy lively environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer personal space and opportunities for concentration • Welcome time for reflection • Find background noise distracting • Prefer email and text-based communication • Enjoy a calm relaxed environment
How do you recharge?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-energise by doing something active • May talk through your day with someone • Usually enjoy social engagement after work • Prefer recreation activities that include physical or social interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-energise by having time to reflect • May like to have time alone to process your thoughts about the day • Usually enjoy solitude after work • Prefer recreation activities that include quiet concentration

Reflect

- How does your preferred leadership style influence the way you approach meetings?
- In what ways will you modify your approach in future to better suit those with different needs?
- How might you improve your work environment to allow more options and flexibility?
- Next time you or your team need to recharge, what will you do differently?

How do you take ACTION?

Which of the following two description sounds more like you? Remember, we all do both. One feels easier and more natural. It's our default mode. The other takes more energy and effort. Draw a small circle on the scale below to show where you usually feel most comfortable.



Structure

'Just do something'

To others, I seem to prefer a planned or orderly way of life, like to have things settled and organized, feel more comfortable when decisions are made, and like to bring life under control as much as possible. I am motivated by new tasks and like to begin them as soon as I can. My first question is when can I start?

- I like to have things decided.
- I appear to be action oriented.
- I like to make lists of things to do.
- I like to get my work done before playing.
- I act in a controlled way.
- I plan work to avoid rushing just before a deadline.
- Sometimes I focus so much on the goal that I miss new information.

Flow

'Let's wait and see'

To others, I seem to prefer a flexible and spontaneous way of life, and I like to understand and adapt to the world rather than organize it. Others see me staying open to new experiences and information. I am motivated by deadlines rather than tasks, and this often where I do my best work. My first question is when is this due?

- I like to stay open to respond to whatever happens.
- I appear to be loose and casual. I like to keep plans to a minimum.
- I like to approach work as play or mix work and play.
- I work in bursts of energy.
- I Respond to emerging information.
- I am stimulated by an approaching deadline.
- Sometimes I stay open to new information so long I miss making decisions when they are needed.

How Does This Affect My Leadership?

Our default mode influences how we take action. Some of us make lists and use them. Some of us make lists and lose them. Whatever our preference, we don't have to think about it. It just feels normal, natural and comfortable to work that way.

Our unconscious bias affects how we respond to and lead others. The table below highlights some of the ways our action style informs how we respond to deadlines, how we tackle complex tasks, and the ways we view 'closure'.

Structure	Flow
What is your approach to meeting deadlines?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan the process before beginning work Use lists and schedules Work in a step-by-step, orderly way May feel frustrated by unexpected changes May feel stressed by last minute time pressure See play as a reward for finishing work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in a flexible, open-ended way Wait to see what emerges May feel constrained by fixed plans Adapt easily to unexpected changes Usually energised by time pressure See life as too short not to take chances to play
How do you tackle a complex task or project?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start immediately, write a list Follow a pre-set plan or method Have a clear structure and timeline Organise and plan each step Work methodically through the plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start later, brainstorm some ideas Respond flexibly to the moment Dive in and see what develops Figure out what's needed along the way Be spontaneous and see what happens
How do you view the idea of 'closure'?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prefer things decided sooner rather than later Like clarity and certainty so you can move forward with confidence Feel more comfortable to have things settled Unresolved issues and incomplete tasks are a source of potential anxiety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prefer to keep options open as long as possible Comfortable with ambiguity so you can adjust and change your mind Feel tied down by fixed conclusions Unresolved issues and incomplete tasks are just situation normal

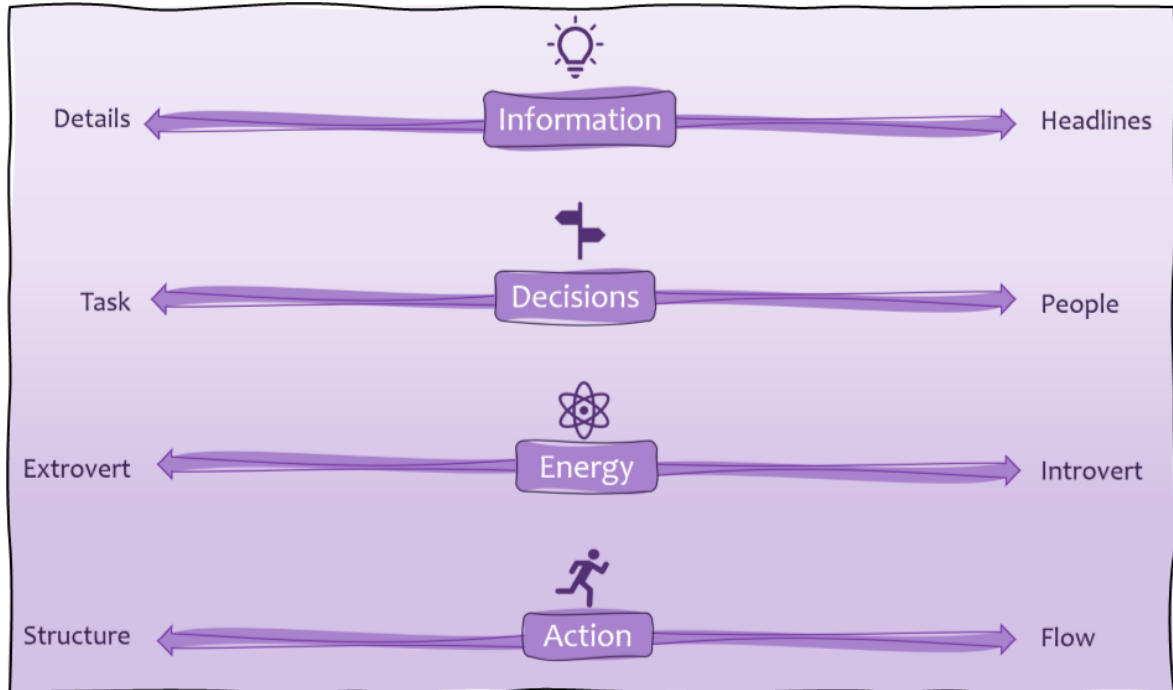
Reflect

- How does your preferred leadership style influence the way you manage tasks?
- In what ways will you modify your approach in future to better suit those with different strategies to accomplish tasks?
- How will you adjust your communication to accommodate others' preferred working styles?
- Next time you manage a team project, what will you do differently?

How Do You Lead?

Map your behaviour preferences from the previous pages onto the scales below.

Remember, we all have a dominant side and a supporting side (like right- or left-handedness). We do both, but have an unconscious bias towards one side of each scale. Our preferred side uses less energy; it feels natural and comfortable. It's our default mode, where we operate on autopilot. Our supporting side requires more energy, focus and deliberate attention.



Reflect on your responses above and consider the following questions:

- What do these responses suggest about your leadership style?
- How would you describe your usual leadership style?
- How would other people describe it?
- How much do you flex your behaviour and approach?

The IDEA Framework

- What might hold you back from trying new ways to lead?
- Think about the people you work with. Who among your colleagues is similar to you?
- Who among your co-workers may have a different style to you?
- How does this diversity add value to your work as a team?
- What is the real challenge here for you?

What is one action you will take or new approach you will practice over the next 4 weeks?

Communication Preferences

Our behaviour preferences influence how we communicate. We gravitate toward our own preferred styles, and this is often where we function best. Nevertheless, with practice we can adapt our communication style to suit any role. That said, it does require extra attention and energy to do so. And if we use a non-preferred style over a long period of time that doesn't allow for, or call on, our usual preferences, inefficiency and burnout may result. We contribute most when we go with our strengths. And we supplement and support this by adopting a different style when needed and communicating using other's preferences when appropriate.

DETAILS

- Prefer evidence, facts, details, and examples presented first.
- Prefer practical and realistic applications shown, with relationships between the facts clearly explained.
- Rely on direct experience to provide information and anecdotes.
- Use an orderly, step-by-step approach in conversations.
- Like suggestions and ideas to be straightforward and feasible.
- Refer to specific examples.
- In meetings, follow the agenda.

HEADLINES

- Prefer global themes and broad issues presented first.
- Prefer to consider future possibilities and challenges.
- Rely on metaphors, insights and imagination as information and anecdotes.
- Use a meandering, roundabout approach in conversations.
- Like suggestions and ideas to be novel and unusual.
- Refer to general concepts.
- In meetings, use the agenda as a starting point or a guide only.

TASK focus

- Prefer to be brief and concise.
- Prefer the pros and cons of each alternative to be listed.
- Can be intellectually critical and objective.
- Are convinced by cool, impersonal reasoning.
- Present goals and objectives first Use emotions and feelings as secondary data.
- In meetings, seek involvement with the task first.

PEOPLE focus

- Prefer to be personable and in agreement.
- Prefer to know an alternative's impact on people and values.
- Can be appreciative and accepting of others.
- Are convinced by personal authenticity.
- Present points of agreement first.
- Consider logic and objectivity as secondary data.
- In meetings, seek involvement with people first.

EXTRAVERSION

- Prefer to communicate with energy and excitement.
- Prefer to respond quickly without long pauses to think.
- Converse about people, things, and ideas in the outside world.
- Sometimes need to moderate your delivery.
- Seek opportunities to communicate with groups.
- Like at least some communication to be face-to-face.
- In meetings, like talking out loud to build your ideas.

INTROVERSION

- Prefer to keep energy and enthusiasm inside.
- Prefer to pause and reflect before responding.
- Think through ideas, thoughts, and impressions.
- Sometimes need to be drawn out.
- Seek opportunities to communicate one-to-one.
- Like at least some communication to be in written format.
- In meetings, verbalize ideas that have been thought through.

STRUCTURE

- Prefer to agree on schedules, timetables, and reasonable deadlines.
- Dislike surprises and prefer advance warning.
- Expect others to follow through, and count on that happening.
- State your positions and decisions as final.
- Want to hear about results and achievements.
- Focus on purpose and direction.
- In meetings, concentrate on completing the task.

FLOW

- Are willing to discuss timetables but resist tight deadlines and unchangeable schedules.
- Enjoy surprises and adapt to last-minute changes.
- Expect others to respond to situational requirements.
- Present your views as tentative and modifiable.
- Want to hear about options and opportunities.
- Focus on autonomy and flexibility.
- In meetings, pay attention to how things are proceeding.

Quality Decisions Come From Quality Questions

We are wise to ask questions of other people whose focus is different to our own. It's a useful way to get a well-rounded understanding of the information we need to make good decisions and create optimal solutions. Here are some suggestions:

DETAILS

- How did this problem occur?
- What are the verifiable facts?
- What exactly is the situation now?
- What has been done and by whom?
- What already exists and works?
- What is the real challenge for you here?

HEADLINES

- What can we interpret from the facts?
- What insights and hunches come to mind about this situation?
- What would the possibilities be if there were no restrictions?
- What other directions/fields can we explore?
- What is the problem similar to?
- Paint me a picture. How do you see this?

TASK focus

- What are the pros and cons of our alternatives?
- What are the logical consequences of these options?
- What are the objective criteria that need to be met?
- What are the costs of each choice?
- What is the most reasonable course of action?
- What specific outcome are we looking for here?

PEOPLE focus

- How will the outcome affect the people, process, and organization?
- What do we like and dislike about each alternative?
- How will others react and respond to these options?
- What are the underlying values involved for each choice?
- Who is committed to carrying out the solution?

A Note About Stress

In most circumstances we are reasonable consistent with the kind of **information** we tune into and how we make **decisions**. However, **under stress** we may unconsciously begin to switch to our less preferred (and less developed) style and act in ways that are the inverse of our usual behaviour.

If you notice yourself or a colleague behaving in ways that may indicate stress, follow the recommended procedures to find the appropriate support and guidance.

Details	
You will usually	Under stress you may
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise the pertinent facts • Apply experience to problems • Notice what needs attention • Keep track of essentials • Handle problems with realism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become caught in a rut, rehashing the same details • Get stuck, lose common sense, and not see possible ways out • View the future in negative terms • Turn unduly pessimistic
Headlines	
You will usually	Under stress you may
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise new possibilities • Come up with new solutions to problems • Delight in focusing on the future • Watch for additional ideas • Eagerly start in on something new 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become overwhelmed with ideas and possibilities, all equally enticing • Obsess over unimportant details • Become so preoccupied with one irrelevant fact that it becomes your whole focus • Overindulge with excessive eating, drinking, exercising, TV, etc., to avoid facing reality
Task Focus	
You will usually	Under stress you may
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse the situation • Find flaws in advance • Hold consistently to a principle • Weigh the pros and cons • Stand firm against opposition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become opinionated and unwilling to change your point of view • Have unexpected and uncontrolled emotional outbursts • Be hypersensitive to suspected slights • Take criticism very personally
People Focus	
You will usually	Under stress you may
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathise with people • Be concerned about how others will feel • Allow for extenuating circumstances • Know what is really important • Appreciate each person's contributions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop listening to and accommodating others • Become so sensitive to conflict that you ignore or avoid it • Be hypercritical; find fault with almost everything, but in an illogical manner • Act domineering, taking charge without a thought to others

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