



The Training Exchange—The Importance of Understanding Communication Styles When Teaching

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Do you sometimes wonder why it is so difficult to communicate with some people and so easy with others? When you offer training classes, do you find some classes more receptive than others? What accounts for these differences?

I like to think of communication as a speaker, a listener, and a piece of Swiss cheese in between. What we say goes in one hole and out another, passing through a series of filters. These filters might include perceptions, assumptions, knowledge differences, distractions, preconceived notions, or perhaps different communication styles, which is the topic of this article.

Carl Jung, a Swiss psychoanalyst, developed the idea that behavioral patterns fall into four major categories. Psychologist Paul Mok translated Jung's theories into four communication styles, which explain how people process and send messages. If you would like someone to understand what you are saying to them, you need to speak to them in their preferred style of communicating, not your own preferred style. If you are teaching a class or giving a presentation, you need to consider techniques for reaching all four behavioral groups.

What are these four styles? The first one is called *intuitor*. Intuitors place a heavy emphasis on ideas and long-range thinking. They have vision, are imaginative, focus on the future, and have the ability to see relationships that many others do not understand. They tend to ask many questions so that they can fit all the pieces together.

A second style is called *thinker*, which is characterized by a heavy emphasis on logic. Thinkers find it satisfying to identify a problem, develop a variety of solutions, weigh them carefully, and test them to see

that the most logical, systematic approach is followed. They avoid emotionalism and speculation.

Feelers, the third style, focus on interactions with other people. They seek to understand and analyze their emotions and those of others, and are astute at reading between the lines. They tend to be sensitive to the needs of others, and are often seen as very dynamic and emotional.

The fourth style is *sensor*, which is characterized by action. Sensors get things done. They are direct, down-to-earth, and energetic, learning best by personal experience. They are only interested in ideas that are practical and workable.

When developing a training program, you must think about all four communication styles explained above. How are you reaching the intuitor? Are you including information on the long-term value of your program? What about the thinker? Are you showing data to support your ideas? To reach the feelers in the group, you may want to share personal stories related to your topic. As for the sensors, make it clear that you are not wasting their time and that they will derive immediate benefits from the program.

If you would like to take a survey to learn what your preferred style is, or would like more information on this topic, contact Training Associates Press (www.tapress.com).

Author's note: For the next Training Exchange article, I'd like to focus on ideas for bloodborne pathogen training. Please submit some of your training ideas to share with other ABSA members by sending me an e-mail at maryann@eagleson.org. I will be sure to give you credit. Thank you.