

How to Instantly Read People by Tony Alessandra

Solve the people puzzle by discovering 4 distinguishable traits.

The ability to “read” people is by far one of your most valuable skills in business. The people you interact with each day send you signals, and if you learn what to look and listen for, each person will tell you exactly how to effectively work with him.

Everyone experiences the same basic human needs—results, recognition, regimentation and relationships—with some holding more dominance than others. Depending on the weight placed on each need, people differ in personality.

So what is there to read?

Dozens of signals—verbal, vocal and visuals—tell you when to speed up or slow down, when to focus on the details or when to work on building the relationship. But, because people are different, the same technique won’t always work.

Human Behavior Has Two Dimensions

When people act and react—with verbal, vocal and visual actions—in social situations, they exhibit clues to their behavioral style. Identifying that is possible by classifying a person's behavior on two dimensions: openness and directness.

Open vs. Guarded: Openness is the readiness and willingness with which a person outwardly shows emotions or feelings and develops interpersonal relationships.

Others commonly describe open people as being relaxed, warm, responsive, informal and personable. They tend to be relationship-oriented, and in conversations with others, they share personal feelings and tell stories and anecdotes. They tend to be flexible about time and base their decisions more on intuition and opinion than on hard facts and data. They also are likely to behave dramatically and to give you immediate nonverbal feedback in conversation.

Guarded individuals, on the other hand, commonly are seen as formal and proper. They tend to be more aloof in their interpersonal relationships. They are more likely to follow the letter of the law and try to base their decisions on cold, hard facts. Guarded people are usually very task-oriented and disciplined about time. As opposed to open people, they hide their personal feelings in the presence of others.

Direct vs. Indirect: Now consider the second dimension—directness. This refers to the amount of control and forcefulness that a person attempts to exercise over situations or other people.

Direct people tend to “come on strong,” take the social initiative and create a powerful first impression. They are fast-paced people, making swift decisions and taking risks. They easily become impatient with others who cannot keep up with their fast pace. They are active people who do a lot of talking and appear confident and dominant. Direct people express their opinions readily and make emphatic statements.

On the opposite end of that spectrum, indirect people give the impression of being quiet and reserved. They seem to be supportive and easy-going, and they tend to be security-conscious—moving slowly, meditating on their decisions and avoiding risks. They ask questions and listen more than they talk. They reserve their opinions and make tentative statements when they must take a stand.

When directness is combined with openness, it forms four different, recognizable and habitual behavioral styles: the socializer, the director, the thinker and the relater.

Socializer: Open and Direct

The socializer exhibits such characteristics as animation, intuitiveness and liveliness. He is an idea person—a dreamer—but can be viewed as manipulative, impetuous and excitable when displaying behavior inappropriate to a particular situation.

The socializer is a fast-paced person with spontaneous actions and decisions. He is not concerned about facts and details, and tries to avoid them as much as possible. This may prompt him at times to exaggerate and generalize facts and figures. He thrives on involvement with people and usually works quickly and enthusiastically with others.

The socializer always seems to be chasing dreams, but he has the uncanny ability to catch others up in his dreams because of his good persuasive skills. He always seems to be seeking approval and pats on the back for his accomplishments and achievements. The socializer is a very creative person who has that dynamic ability to think quickly on his feet.

Director: Direct and Guarded

The director exhibits firmness in his relationships with others, is oriented toward productivity and goals and is concerned with bottom-line results. Closely allied to these positive traits, however, are the negative ones of stubbornness, impatience, toughness and even domineeringness.

A director tends to take control of other people and situations and is decisive in both his actions and decisions. He likes to move at an extremely fast pace and is very impatient with delays. When other people can't keep up with his speed, he views them as incompetent. The director's motto: "I want it done right, and I want it done now."

The director is typically a high achiever who exhibits very good administrative skills. He likes to do many things at the same time. He keeps adding on until the pressure builds to such a point that he turns his back and lets everything drop. Then he turns right around and starts the whole process over again.

Thinker: Indirect and Guarded

The thinker is a persistent, systematic problem-solver. But he also can be seen as aloof, picky and critical. A thinker is very security-conscious and has a strong need to be right. This leads him to an over-reliance on data collection. In his quest for data he tends to ask many questions about specific details.

The thinker works slowly and precisely by himself and prefers an intellectual work environment that is organized and structured. He tends to be skeptical and likes to see things in writing.

Although he is a great problem-solver, the thinker is a poor decision-maker; he may keep collecting data even beyond the time when a decision is due.

Relater: Open and Indirect

The relater is unassertive, warm, supportive and reliable. However, the relater sometimes is seen by others as compliant, soft-hearted and acquiescent. The relater seeks security and belongingness and, like the thinker, is slow at taking action and making decisions. This procrastination stems from his desire to avoid

risky and unknown situations. Before he takes action or makes a decision, he has to know how other people feel about it.

The relater is the most people-oriented of all four styles. Having close, friendly, personal and first-name relationships with others is one of the most important objectives of the relater's style.

The relater dislikes interpersonal conflicts so much that he sometimes says what he thinks other people want to hear rather than what is really on his mind. The relater has tremendous counseling skills and is extremely supportive of other people. He also is an incredibly active listener. Because a relater listens so well to other people, when it comes his turn to talk, people usually listen. This gives him an excellent ability to gain support from others.

Learning to identify these four distinct personality types by their behavior takes time, but evaluating people's behavior within this framework can help you better understand others and yourself.