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Know thyself: DISC

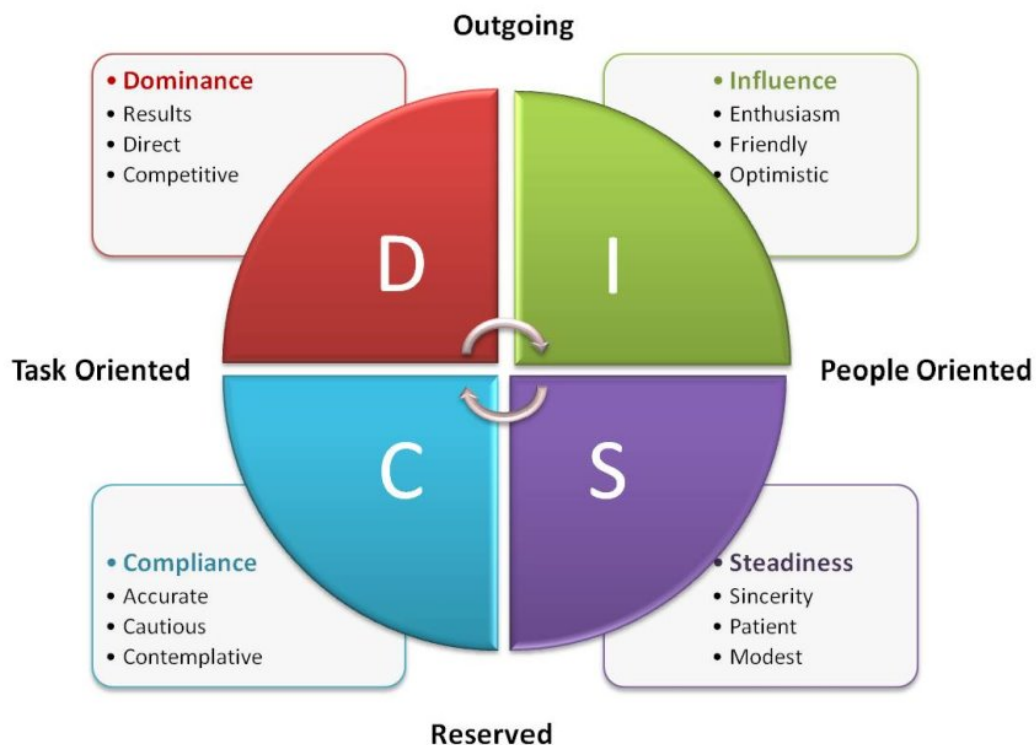
As leaders, knowing ourselves is an important aspect of leadership that is too often overlooked. Do you have a good understand of what 'type' of person you are? Are you an extrovert or an introvert? Do you like working with people or with things? Are you more a thinker or a doer? Have you put any thought into the fact that the people you often like to work with or be around have similar traits to you, and that the people you don't like to work with have different traits? This is usually all lumped into the broad concept of "personality types" or "interaction styles", of which here are many models. While many people may get the chance to take a personality/interaction test at work or maybe school, not everyone gets the chance.

In the next in this series of articles, we look at another assessment tool, DISC.

DISC is a different set of personality tests (properly behavioral/interaction styles) that was based on the work of William Moulton Marston (who happened to be the creator of Wonder Woman). His basic idea was similar to Jung, with 4 types:

- Dominance - relating to control, power and assertiveness
- Influence - relating to social situations and communication
- Steadiness - relating to patience, persistence, and thoughtfulness
- Conscientious - relating to structure and organization

This is usually put in a grid:



This is done because the top of the grid (D & I) are extroverted aspects, and the bottom (C & S) are introverted aspects, along an assertive-passive axis. Further, the left side (D & C) are task-focused and the right side (I & S) are social-focused, along a guarded-open axis.

In looking at the four types, they are explained this way:

Dominance - High "D"s are very active in dealing with problems and challenges, while low "D"s are people who want to do more research before committing to a decision. High "D"s are described as demanding, forceful, egocentric, strong willed, driving, determined, ambitious, aggressive, and pioneering. Low "D"s describe those who are conservative, low keyed, cooperative, calculating, undemanding, cautious, mild, agreeable, modest and peaceful.

Influence - High "I"s influence others through talking and activity and tend to be emotional. They are described as convincing, magnetic, political, enthusiastic, persuasive, warm, demonstrative, trusting, and optimistic. Low "I"s influence more by data and facts, and not with feelings. They are described as reflective, factual, calculating, skeptical, logical, suspicious, matter of fact, pessimistic, and critical.

Steadiness - High "S"s want a steady pace, security, and don't like sudden change. Low S intensity scores are those who like change and variety. High S persons are calm, relaxed, patient, possessive, predictable, deliberate, stable, consistent, and tend to be unemotional and poker faced. People with Low S scores are described as restless, demonstrative, impatient, eager, or even impulsive.

Conscientious - Persons with High C styles adhere to rules, regulations, and structure. They like to do quality work and do it right the first time. High C people are careful, cautious, exacting, neat, systematic, diplomatic, accurate, and tactful. Those with Low C scores challenge the rules and want independence and are described as self-willed, stubborn, opinionated, unsystematic, arbitrary, and careless with details.

It doesn't seem that any one group controls DISC, however Inscape Publishing (www.inscapepublishing.com) seems to be the largest provider of materials, and they call it "DiSC" (yes, with a lower case "i" is their trademarked version of the tests). Inscape sells both an on-line version of the assessment, as well as a self-scored version (surprisingly, the on-line version seems to cost more than the paper version), but you will probably have to go to other providers to obtain them. Now, with DiSC, it's not just a matter of being placed in one of four groups. You are tested and scored for each of the four, and this places you in the two-dimensional grid. This was due to further research in the topic, and Inscape calls this the DiSC Classic or DiSC Classical Profile.



I did come across a recent book by the people at Inscape entitled "The 8 Dimensions of Leadership: DiSC Strategies for Becoming a Better Leader" (2011) that includes a basic DiSC assessment. This is a pretty good book, and I would recommend it for those wanting to look into this further.