



Behavioral Models and Various Personality Styles

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Abstract- Knowledge of project management technical skills is not sufficient to avoid project failure. Project managers also need well-developed “soft skills” in order to be successful, and the development of soft skills is not feasible unless project managers possess good emotional intelligence (EI). This is the ability to recognise and manage your own feelings and to deal effectively with the feelings of others. The key to developing EI is having a strong knowledge of personality styles.

People are fundamentally different in the way they think, act, feel, perceive, and respond. The better you are at adapting to these differences, the more successful you will be as a project manager. This paper briefly reviews the origins of the study of personality, including some of the more common and well-known behavior models. The primary focus is on the most common personality model in use, the Four Quadrant Model. This model states that differences between individuals can generally be categorised into four basic and easily recognized personality styles. In addition to discussing the key strengths and weaknesses of these four styles, the paper will address how each style responds under stress. It will also provide tips on how to identify the styles of project stakeholders and explain how project managers can learn to flex their own styles to effectively communicate with other people based on their personality style.

Keywords: emotional intelligence (EI), Four Quadrant Model, Behavioral Models

I. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge of project management technical skills—such as scheduling, risk management, or budgeting—is not sufficient if you want to become a good project manager. What you need in addition to technical skills are well-developed soft skills including leadership, conflict resolution, and communication. However, developing these soft skills is not possible unless you possess a fair amount of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to recognise and manage your own emotions and to effectively deal with the emotions of other people. In the article, “What Makes a Leader,” Daniel Goleman (2004) made the point that there is a direct link between a company's success and the emotional intelligence of its leaders. In fact, he stated that EI is twice as important as technical skill and IQ for job success. According to Goleman, there are five components that make up emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill. As with technical skills, EI can be learned. Critical to developing your EI is having a good knowledge of personality styles. The better you understand personality styles (both your own and others), and the better you are at adapting your personality style to that of others, the more successful you will be as a project manager in your dealings with your project team and stakeholders.

Personality and Personality Styles

The dictionary definition of personality is the collection of emotional and behavioural traits that characterize a person. That is, your personality is how you present yourself to the world. No one knows the extent to which personality is determined by genetics and hereditary factors, compared to the effects of upbringing, culture, environment, and experience. Most studies indicate the split between nature versus nurture is roughly 50–50. What is known is that everybody has a preferred personality (behavioural) style. The field of psychometrics is devoted to the study of the theory and technique of psychological measurement, including the measurement of personality traits. However, you don't need to be a psychometrician to acquire a very basic understanding of personality. The general theories that underpin personality tests and quizzes are relatively easy to comprehend.

History of Behavior Models

There are a multitude of theories and models that comprise the study of personality, and each theory helps you to understand more about yourself and others. However, when it comes to personality profiling, “there is nothing new under the sun.” The oldest of all personality profiling systems dates back over 5,000 years to the Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilisations. They believed that the health of the body was

connected with the four elements—fire, water, earth, and air—which in turn were related to body organs, fluids, and treatments. The ancient Greeks, particularly Hippocrates and Plato, formalised and popularised this knowledge into what they called the “Four Temperaments” of personality. The Greeks believed that to maintain good health, people needed an even balance of the four body fluids: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. These four body fluids linked to certain organs and illnesses and also represented four personality temperaments (or humours): cheerful, calm, enthusiastic, and somber. The Four Temperaments theory dominated Western thinking about human behavior and medical treatment and persisted until the middle of the 19th century. The advent of the new field of psychology in the late 19th century, spearheaded by Sigmund Freud and his followers, engendered increased interest in the area of personality. In his book *Psychological Type*, Carl Jung (1921) offered his own theory on how people perceive the world and make decisions. Jung postulated that people have three sets of preferences: orientation (extrovert vs. introvert), judgment (thinking vs. feeling), and perception (sensation vs. intuition). Building on Jung's work, William Marston (1928) introduced the four-quadrant behavior model in his book *Emotions of Normal People*. Marston described behavior as occurring along two axes (active vs. passive and favourable vs. antagonistic). By placing the axes at right angles, four quadrants are created with each quadrant describing a behavioural pattern. While Marston himself did not develop an assessment based on his four-quadrant behavior model, others did. In fact, it became the basis for most of the personality assessments that are commonly known and used today.

There are many different personality and motivational models and theories, and each one offers a different perspective. The more models you understand, the better your appreciation of motivation and behavior. Two of the most well-known personality assessments are the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and the Keirsey Temperament Sorter (KTS). The MBTI resulted from work conducted during World War II by Katharine Cook Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers. They believed that knowledge of personality preferences would help women entering the industrial workforce for the first time to identify the sort of wartime jobs where they would be “most comfortable and effective.” Their original questionnaire grew into the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, which was first published in 1962. By adding judging vs. perceiving to Jung's original three sets of personal preferences, the MBTI looks at four pairs of preferences with a resulting 16 distinct personality types.

Closely associated with the MBTI is the KTS, a self-assessed personality questionnaire designed to help people better understand themselves and others. First introduced in the book *Please Understand Me* by David Keirsey and Marilyn Bates (1978), the KTS focuses more on behavior, which is directly observable, while the MBTI primarily focuses on how people think and feel.

Other popular personality assessments, such as DiSC® and the various Colours Personality Tests, also build on Marston's four quadrant behavioural model. DiSC is a set of psychological inventories that groups personalities into four dimensions (Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness), while the Colors assessments group personalities by (what else) colours, such as red, yellow, green, and blue. The more complicated Enneagram system breaks with the four quadrant model to describe nine distinct personality types and their interrelationships mapped around an ancient symbol of perpetual motion.

Year	Source	Four Personality Styles			
c. 400 BC	Hippocrates	Blood (cheerful)	Yellow bile (enthusiastic)	Phlegm (calm)	Black bile (somber)
c. 340 BC	Plato	Artistic	Intuitive	Reasoning	Sensible
1928	Marston	Dominance	Inducement	Steadiness	Compliance
1958	DiSC	Dominance	Influence	Steadiness	Cautious/Compliant
1958	Myers-Briggs	Sensing/Perceiving	Intuitive/Feeling	Intuitive/Thinking	Sensing/Judging
1998	Keirsey	Artisan	Idealist	Rational	Guardian
1990s	Colors	Red	Yellow	Green	Blue

Exhibit 1: Comparative table of personality theories

The Basic Four Quadrant Model

As mentioned previously, most personality assessments are built on a basic four quadrant model (which

can be traced back to the ancient Greeks), with behavior mapped along two axes. While each personality theory uses its own vocabulary, the horizontal axis is usually labeled introvert vs. extrovert, while the vertical axis is most simply labeled feelers vs. thinkers. Introverts are typically described as being less assertive, quieter, more reflective, and in no rush to make decisions in contrast to Extroverts, who are described as being more assertive, more talkative, louder, and quicker to make decisions. Feelers are typically described as being more responsive to others, more playful, and more focused on feelings in contrast to Thinkers, who are described as being less responsive to others, more serious/reserved, and more focused on facts. The intersection of these axes forms four quadrants, each of which represents a personality “type” (Exhibit 2). Again, each theory uses its own vocabulary; however, the labels analytical, amiable, driver, and expressive serve well to define the four basic personality styles.

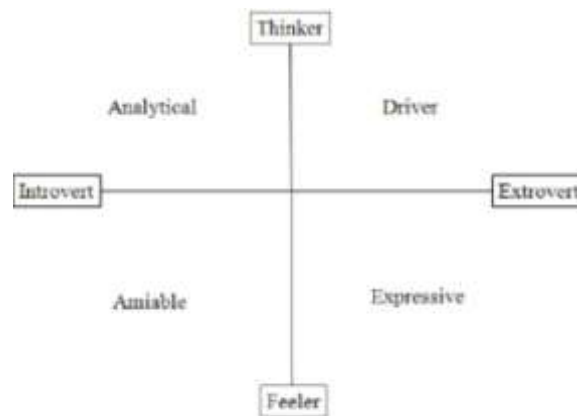


Exhibit 2: The Four Quadrant Model

The Four Basic Personality Styles

Before looking more closely at each of the four basic personality styles, it's important to note that what follows are generalised, simplified descriptions of behaviours and attributes. It's best to view the descriptions of the different personality styles as a sort of “shorthand” that provides useful, but incomplete, information about any individual. Human beings are extraordinarily complex, and no one is exclusively one temperament or type. While everyone is likely to have a dominant type or style, that style is augmented by a mixture of the other types and their traits and is often dependent on environment and circumstance. Also, no one personality style is “best”; each can be successful, and each has its merits as well as its drawbacks.

The Analytical Personality

The Analytical personality falls in the quadrant formed by the boundaries of Introvert/Thinker. Individuals in this quadrant are generally described as being logical, thorough, serious, systematic, prudent, cautious, and compliant. This personality type emphasises working conscientiously to ensure quality and accuracy. Analytical personalities tend to focus on tasks, seek details and facts, and need structure. Positive descriptors or strengths include perfectionist, questioning, idealistic, sensitive, self-disciplined, and precise. Negative descriptors or weaknesses include moody, negative, critical, rigid, legalistic, touchy, self-centered, unsociable, and impractical. Examples of the Analytical personality type include Thomas Jefferson and Albert Einstein.

The Amiable Personality

The Amiable personality falls in the quadrant formed by the boundaries of Introvert/Feeler. Individuals in this quadrant are generally described as being steadfast, cooperative, supportive, diplomatic, patient, and loyal. This personality type emphasises cooperating with others to carry out a task. Amiable personalities tend to focus on people, seek sincere appreciation, and need time. Positive descriptors or strengths include organised, easygoing, likeable, empathetic, dependable, and practical.

Negative descriptors or weaknesses include stubborn, indolent, unmotivated, self-protective, plodding, and dependent. Examples of the Amiable personality type include Robert E. Lee and Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The Driver Personality

The Driver personality falls in the quadrant formed by the boundaries of Extrovert/Thinker. Individuals in this quadrant are generally described as being dominant, independent, candid, decisive, pragmatic, and efficient. This personality type emphasises overcoming opposition to accomplish results. Driver personalities tend to focus on tasks, seek power and control, and need challenges. Positive descriptors or strengths include determined, strong-willed, competitive, decisive, demanding, visionary, and optimistic. Negative descriptors or weaknesses include domineering, controlling, insensitive, inconsiderate, unsympathetic, hostile, overbearing, opinionated, and unforgiving. Examples of the Driver personality type include Henry Ford I and Charles Lindbergh.

The Expressive Personality

The Expressive personality falls in the quadrant formed by the boundaries of Extrovert/Feeler. Individuals in this quadrant are generally described as being charming, outgoing, enthusiastic, persuasive, fun-loving, and spontaneous. This personality type emphasises influencing or persuading others. Expressive personalities tend to focus on people, seek popularity and recognition, and need the spotlight. Positive descriptors or strengths include warm, friendly, responsive, compassionate, and generous. Negative descriptors or weaknesses include undisciplined, disorganised, unproductive, dramatic, hasty, and manipulative. Examples of the Expressive personality type include Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt.

Identifying and Interacting With Different Styles

It would be wonderful if a personality test could be administered to everyone you meet so that you could quickly and easily identify their personality type and react to them accordingly. However, since that's not in the realm of possibility, it's helpful to learn how to recognise the basic personality styles so you can better interact with others. Keep in mind, however, that these are generalities and simplifications. One size does not fit all.

Personality Styles and Stress

It's very important to know not only your dominant style, but also your "back-up" style. Under stress, the four personality types tend to move away from their dominant (natural) personality styles and into their backup styles. Under extreme and/or continued stress, a person of any style may experience up to four sequential backup styles, each of which forces the individual further away from their natural style

- **Analytical:** The initial backup style is avoiding or withdrawing from the group (run and hide). Under continued stress, the Analytical personality will next become autocratic, then agreeable, and will finally attack.
- **Amiable:** The initial backup style is acquiescing or giving in ("whatever you want"). Under continued stress, the Amiable personality will next go into attack mode, followed by avoidance, and finally will become autocratic.
- **Driver:** The initial backup style is to become autocratic, that is to take over and get bossy ("my way or the highway"). Under continued stress, the Driver personality will next avoid, then attack, and finally agree.
- **Expressive:** The initial backup style is to attack and/or yell (throw a temper tantrum). Under continued stress, the Expressive personality will next agree, then become autocratic, and finally avoid.

The further away you get from your natural style, the more you stop "acting like yourself," the more interpersonal damage you will do. What do you do when you realise you are in backup style? It's easy to say "abandon it," but not so easy to do. First, you need to learn to identify and understand the things that you overreact to; you need to know what your "triggers" are (e.g., don't agree to unrealistic project goals; don't over commit). You need to learn to recognise the signs and to catch yourself early enough so that you can abandon your backup style. If you're too upset or stressed and can't get out of your back-up style, limit the interpersonal damage. Try to decrease the levels of stress through exercise, engaging in a hobby,

talking to friend, or employing various relaxation techniques. Don't make decisions or take any crucial actions. Give yourself time to get back to your natural state, and don't save backup behavior for friends/family.

In addition to knowing when you are in backup style, it is important that you learn to recognise when people have slipped from his or her dominant style and into their backup. Keep your manner constructive.

Remember that you may not be the real target of the other person's behavior. You can't prevent others from using their backup styles, or force them to abandon them. What you can do is recognise that it's a reaction to stress and, if possible, try to mitigate some of it.

How to Flex Your Style

“Flexing your style” refers to doing what is appropriate in a communication situation by temporarily using some behaviours typical of your non-dominant styles. It doesn't mean abandoning your dominant style, but it does require that you be well aware of your style's strengths and especially your own and other's weaknesses. It requires using body language and matching your wording to the preference of the person you are communicating with. Learning to flex your style is especially important when the other person is stressed, something important is at stake, or you need to get off on the “right foot” in a new setting. Your ability to adapt or bring into play different style traits in response to different situations and needs is one of the most powerful capabilities that anyone can possess.

The Path Forward

The information provided here is not new. As was mentioned at the beginning of this paper, personality profiling has been around for over 5,000 years. So why do most project managers ignore personality styles when dealing with project stakeholders? Many project conflicts could be avoided if the project manager understood the personality styles of the project stakeholders. Understanding personality models is of direct help in achieving personal awareness and adaptability; it can help you recognise behavior patterns in others —and yourself.

Learning about personality and realising that people have different styles is the first step in improving your emotional intelligence. The second step is becoming aware of your style, including strengths, weaknesses, and how you react to stress. The third step is learning to identify and work effectively with the personality styles of other people. The more you understand about your own personality and that of other people, the better able you are to realise how others perceive you, and how they react to your personality style. The fourth step is learning how to flex your style to improve the way you work and communicate with others on a project. Mastering these four steps will improve your emotional intelligence and make you a more effective project manager.

II. CONCLUSION

Knowing is one thing; doing is another. As Goethe said, “Everything has been thought of before, but the difficulty is to think of it again.” So what are you waiting for? Personality styles are not new, but you probably have not been using the concepts covered in this paper. Make the commitment to become an expert in identifying and working with all four personality styles. Keep in mind the Golden Rule, which has always been: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Perhaps it's now time to improve upon it by stating, “Do unto others based on their personality style.”

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