

WHICH SEINFELD CHARACTER ARE YOU?

In our business dealings, we are often guilty of just not listening. We come to the table with an agenda—a new product, a new service—and wait while a prospect or existing client tells us what’s going on with his or her business. At some point, that person will pause—and we pounce with our spiel. This approach rarely works - successful business development requires some level of rapport and relationship building. As in all aspects of life, this can mean dealing with those who may not share your views or approach. In order to adapt quickly and improvise in these instances, it’s helpful to understand people’s communication and personality styles.

There are a number of tests that can help us understand the personality and communication styles of others, including the popular DISC model. This model has four quadrants: dominance, influence, steadiness, and conscientiousness. Influence and steadiness are on the right side of the brain, and dominance and conscientiousness are on the left side. Understanding someone’s dominant quadrant can help you find a way to work more effectively with them.

WHAT SEINFELD QUADRANT ARE YOU?

I'll let you in on an interesting tidbit, successful sitcoms often include a character from each of the following quadrants, because the resulting friction tends to be funny. Next time you watch a sitcom, take note of who is in what quadrant. Seinfeld is a perfect example of this - each of the main characters exemplifies one of the DiSC quadrants - so, let's take a look and see which Seinfeld character you are...



JERRY SEINFELD: DOMINANCE

These are the drivers among us. They are competitive, decisive, independent, determined, and results-oriented. They want control and admiration. They also tend to be domineering, impatient, and poor listeners. They dislike disorganization and wasted time. They don't think you should bring your feelings into work. They can be hot tempered. Some see them as bullies. Some people in this category might be considered poor listeners. It's likely because they often make a decision, and anyone else's words are wasting precious oxygen. Many CEOs, CFOs, and Managing Partners have Dominant personalities.



ELAINE BENES: INFLUENCE

These are the cheerleader types who want to do what they love without being confused by the facts. These people are optimistic, animated, persuasive, imaginative, and enthusiastic. They are good communicators. They love having fun, being the center of attention, and receiving applause. They are dreamers. However, they may talk too much, overwhelming others with information. They have short attention spans. They don't like being alone, and they don't like structure. At their worst, they tend to be disorganized and miss deadlines. Often, sales teams exhibit influential characteristics.



COSMO KRAMER: STEADINESS

These are the "can't we all just get along and work together" people. They worry about whether others are okay. They are friendly, reliable, and supportive, like a Labrador retriever. They are patient and diplomatic. They want everyone to like them and obsess if someone doesn't. They are very concerned about personal relationships and harmony in the workplace but tend to be overly sensitive, conformist, and lacking in time boundaries. They won't tell you what they think; instead, they will tell you what you want to hear— which can be a dangerous trait. They don't like to be rushed, they don't want to be alone, and they avoid conflict when possible. At their worst, they tend to be indecisive, easily overwhelmed, and miss deadlines. Those in Human Resources often align with Kramer and value steadiness characteristics.



GEORGE COSTANZA: CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

These are the thinkers. They want to get it right all the time, and they want to be efficient, thorough, accurate, and careful. They are disciplined and love solving problems and researching. This group tends to be very critical and picky. They don't like disorganization or surprises. At their worst, they are rigid, argumentative, and stubborn. These are accountants, engineers, actuaries.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR SITCOM CAST

Now that you understand where you fall within the quadrants, you can begin to think about how to work and respond to any cast of characters you may come across. Friction will naturally arise because these are people with opposite outlooks. Still, you must work well with all types, since every group contains people in each category. So, how do we connect and adapt to someone who is not like us?

- To connect with those who are in the dominant quadrant, be direct, be specific, and offer multiple solutions. Remember, they are the decider. If you give them only one option, it's more than likely going to fail, or it can become their idea instead of yours.
- To connect with those who are in the influence quadrant, be enthusiastic and positive, and avoid details. Put things in a way that they can relate to. I have often heard accountants complain that the salespeople never get their expense reports in on time. My solution would be to point out to those salespeople that they file early for their tax refund so that the government doesn't get to use their money any longer than necessary, so they should submit their expense report to the company for a similar reason.
- To connect with those who are in the steadiness quadrant, engage in small talk, ask a lot of questions, and be informal, as if talking with a friend. Just don't let them suck away your time and extend your workday. You need to be respectful but firm about managing the conversation. Let them know you appreciate the chatting, but it's time to get down to business.
- And for those of us who are in the conscientiousness quadrant, we need to communicate to people in the other three that we would like to focus on just the facts, please, so that we can get organized.

Having positive experiences with people from all backgrounds and perspectives starts with respect. Respect comes from having a better understanding of who people are and where they are coming from. Just like in improv, communication goes two ways, so the better we understand others—including their pet peeves and their hot buttons, their likes and dislikes—the better we will get along and can feed off of one another. It always comes back to listening carefully to what people need and want, adapting readily to the situation, and taking your own agenda off the table.

Peter Margaritis is an author, keynote speaker, trainer, and CEO of The Accidental Accountant, an organization committed to helping business leaders strengthen their business success skills and to create positive results. As a speaker and trainer Peter has delivered hundreds of seminars, conferences, workshops, and keynotes on both technical and non-technical topics to clients that include Fortune 500 companies, large and national regional accounting firms, state CPA associations and the American Institute of CPAs. In addition, he currently teaches select courses for the American Institute of CPAs and The Mind Gym.