

TRACOM Sneak Peek

Excerpts from

Achieving Higher Versatility

 TRACOM GROUP

The creator of SOCIALSTYLE



RESOURCE GUIDE



Table of Contents

Introduction	1
What Is Versatility and Why Is it Important?	2
Why Is Versatility Important?	2
Exactly What Is Versatility?	2
The Four Sources of Versatility	3
Versatility In Depth	5
Image	5
Presentation	7
Competence	9
Feedback	12
What Do Low and High Versatility Look Like?	15
Driving Style	16
Expressive Style	19
Amiable Style	21
Analytical Style	24
Doing Something for Others: How to Achieve Higher Versatility	26
Doing Something for the Driving Style	27
Doing Something for the Expressive Style	29
Doing Something for the Amiable Style	31
Doing Something for the Analytical Style	34
Conclusion	36
Appendix: Frequently Asked Questions	37



Introduction

In your SOCIAL STYLE training program you learned about four distinct behavioral Styles: Driving, Expressive, Amiable, and Analytical.

People of each Style approach work, and life in general, in different ways. As you learn more about Versatility, you will see how Style plays a significant role in how people interpret the behaviors underlying Versatility.

Versatility is not a set of behaviors that stand completely apart from Style. People view Versatility through the lenses of their Styles. This is why it is important for you to learn about Versatility, along with your knowledge of Style.

There are two key steps to understanding the relationship between Style and Versatility.

First, you need to understand your own Style and the Style of those you work with. You may have learned this in your training as “know yourself” and “know others.”

Second, equipped with this knowledge about Style, you learn how to meet other people’s needs, as well as your own. At this stage you adjust your behavior and add or subtract some behaviors to work more effectively with others. In training this is called “control yourself” and “do something for others.”

When you’ve done these things, the people you work with will give you some sort of feedback on your behavior. It might not be immediate, since it sometimes takes time for people’s perceptions to catch up with behavioral change. It might not even be spoken, at least not initially. But somehow they will give you their opinions on your behavior. This is an indication of your Versatility.

As you will see, Versatility goes beyond this general definition. But essentially, this is what it is. Acting in certain ways towards others leads them to show respect and support for you, and this is what we refer to as Versatility. How you respond to that respect and support is also an aspect of Versatility. Versatility is ongoing.

The purpose of this guide is to show you how others evaluate your behavior, and how you can adjust your approach to improve your effectiveness with others. In the pages that follow, we will dig much deeper into Versatility and how it interacts with Style. The goal is for you to learn more about yourself and others, and most importantly to be more fulfilled and work more effectively with others.



What Is Versatility and Why Is it Important?

Why Is Versatility Important?

Do people enjoy working with you? Are they comfortable talking with you and exchanging information? Can they rely on you? Do you have valuable ideas or input? Do you present yourself well? The answers to these questions are some indicators of your Versatility — a measure of how effectively you work with others, leading to their respect and support.

You are probably technically skilled at your job, thanks to your education and on-the-job experiences. However, your technical job skills have little to do with how well you communicate and interact with others. These interpersonal skills depend on how you choose to behave when interacting with your co-workers, and they are critical for working effectively with others.

In fact, research has shown that interpersonal skills are highly predictive of success, particularly as one progresses through a career. A study of emotional intelligence (behavioral skills that parallel Versatility), found that managers high in emotional intelligence develop more attachment to their organizations, are more committed to their careers, and have greater job satisfaction.¹

TRACOM's own research has shown that managers with high Versatility perform significantly better than their peers in critical business areas.² For example, they are 27% better at leading teams, 25% better at coaching others, and 19% more likely to be promoted.

We also found that Versatility is a strong predictor of job performance, comparable to other measures, such as intelligence, education, and personality.

In short, the behaviors that lead to high Versatility are highly valued in the workplace.

Exactly What Is Versatility?

Versatility is a measure of how well you work with others, regardless of your Style or their Style. Many years ago, Dr. David Merrill and Roger Reid, creators of the SOCIAL STYLE Model™, determined that Versatility can be measured along four dimensions: Image, Presentation, Competence and Feedback. These four sources of Versatility form the basis for adjusting your behavior to increase your interpersonal effectiveness with others. These will be described in detail later in this guide, but before discussing specific behaviors, there are several important things to keep in mind about Versatility.

- **First, working to increase Versatility is a choice.** Unlike your Style, the behaviors that lead to high Versatility are within your control. People of all Styles have a range of Versatility. Once you learn about Versatility, you will be able to consciously think about your behavior and work on skills that lead to higher Versatility. For some people, just learning about these behaviors is an eye-opener, since they have simply never thought about such things. By applying the new behaviors, people can often see immediate results.

¹ Carnelli, A. (2003). The relationship between emotional intelligence and work attitudes, behavior and outcomes: An examination among senior managers. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 18 (8), 788-813.

² Documenting the relationship between Versatility and job performance. TRACOM Corporation, Highlands Ranch, CO. Available for download at www.tracomcorp.com

- **Second, people’s perceptions of your Versatility often remain unspoken.** For example, when giving a presentation to a potential new customer, if you included slides that were cluttered, illegible and unclear, the customer would instantly form an impression about you. You would likely be perceived as unprepared, confusing and unprofessional. However, the customer might not actually tell you what she is thinking. She could keep it to herself, but this first impression could affect her opinion of you and your abilities in the future.
- **Third, perceptions of your Versatility fluctuate with different groups of people.** For example, imagine a person who leads two teams. At his job he supervises a team of software engineers. During his off hours he coaches a grade school basketball team. With both teams, he is very communicative about goals and priorities. However, the engineers are given a great deal of freedom to work in ways that are most effective for them as individuals and to offer creative solutions to problems. On the other hand, the basketball team members are told very specifically what they need to do and how best to accomplish their goals. The coach is not making any adjustments for this team or their individual preferences. This man is likely to score higher on Versatility by his team of engineers than he would from his basketball team.
- **Fourth, it is not always possible to display high Versatility consistently.** Even people with very high Versatility occasionally slip up. This is expected and normal. The goal is to try to act with high Versatility as often as possible, though this is not always possible.
- **Fifth, Versatility is perceived differently by people of different Styles.** For example, people with Expressive and Analytical Styles sometimes approach priorities differently. An Expressive Style person might judge dependability by placing emphasis on getting information quickly, whereas an Analytical Style person might emphasize accuracy over speed. It is important to pay attention to people’s Styles when applying Versatility.
- **Finally, Versatility is different from likeability.** A person can be well liked by others, but not necessarily display high Versatility. The opposite can also be true. It is important to distinguish people’s intentions from their behavior. We sometimes have very good intentions in mind when working and interacting with others, but our behavior can be interpreted as derogatory or unconstructive.

You are probably starting to get the idea that Versatility is all about working well with people of all Styles. In fact, high Versatility is the result of applying appropriate behaviors effectively in different scenarios. The behaviors underlying Versatility can be applied in situations such as coaching employees, selling to customers, and building effective teams.

This guide includes specific suggestions for improving your Versatility in a variety of situations. It also provides specific Style-related tips for interacting effectively with people of each Style. It is intended to be a helpful reference when you need advice about working productively with others.

The Four Sources of Versatility

People consciously and subconsciously observe and evaluate each other’s behavior as they interact with one another. Four key categories of behavior often evaluated by others are Image, Presentation, Competence and Feedback. Taken together, these behaviors form the sources of Versatility.



Feedback

Feedback consists of verbal and non-verbal communication skills that affect how well you understand others and make yourself clear to them. This includes how well you listen and attempt to understand other people's points of view, respond accordingly, and develop mutually beneficial relationships.

Keep in mind that Feedback is a two-way process. You both send and receive verbal and non-verbal signals when interacting with others. Though some tension is inevitable and even desirable, dealing with it appropriately and successfully as you communicate with others is key to developing good Feedback skills.

Effective communication is clearly important, not only in the workplace but in all aspects of life. Good Feedback skills help people to truly understand what is being communicated by another person, often going beyond what is verbally said to non-verbal cues in the speaker's behavior. Just as important is the ability to make oneself clear and well understood. Finally, the ability to form good relationships and networks of people is vital for effective performance in most organizations.

Are you an active listener?

Feedback is crucial for "knowing others." Do you truly listen to what others are saying? And if you are listening, do you make sure that you accurately understand what the other person is saying? Taking the time and effort to accurately understand others in a meaningful way is essential for developing better and more effective relationships.

When communicating with others, do you foster mutual understanding by asking questions and summarizing conversations? Oftentimes, after a conversation or other form of communication, two people might assume that there is mutual understanding when, in fact, perceptions can vary greatly. Asking clarifying questions and summarizing conversations to ensure that you and the other person are on the same page can lessen this type of misunderstanding.

Do you adapt your communications for other Styles?

Your ability to communicate effectively with others can be more or less challenging depending on your Style. For example, Driving Style people's growth action is "to listen." They may need to pay particular attention to this aspect of their behavior during interactions with others. On the other hand, Amiable Style people are naturally attuned to relationships and are more likely to already be good listeners.

Your Style preferences influence how you communicate, and this can cause tension for a person with a different Style. For example, Expressive Style people often prefer to tell others how something makes them feel, while Driving Style individuals think that sharing personal feelings is somewhat irrelevant and possibly irritating. To ensure that you are fully understood, keep in mind the Style of the other person when communicating.

You can think of your Feedback skills as a personal radar system that you use to monitor the communications that you give and receive. By accurately assessing the impact you are having on others based on the verbal and non-verbal feedback others give you, you can adjust your communications as needed.

Do you attempt to see things from other people's points of view?

Recognizing the needs, wants, and concerns of others is important. Understanding how others feel does not necessarily mean that you agree with them. However, making the effort to understand others' perspectives can contribute to building better working relationships.

Your ability to empathize impacts your skill to fully understand and appreciate the needs of others. For example, when a salesperson understands a client's or customer's need, that salesperson is more likely to offer ideas or services to help meet that need.

Do you have good interpersonal relationships with co-workers?

Your desire to associate with others and to cultivate relationships may be quite different from the next person's. If your desire to be approachable is a low priority for you, consider how such behavior might cause others to believe that you are somewhat indifferent toward them. This can cause others to give less Feedback to you, and this can make it difficult for you to accurately read and understand important relationships. Making an effort to build stronger interpersonal relationships will help you increase the quantity and quality of Feedback from others.

How Does Style Impact Feedback?

Each Style of person approaches Feedback in unique ways.

As mentioned earlier, listening is the growth action for Driving Style people, so they are going to have a natural challenge in this regard. When they are listening and understanding another person, they will usually state that they have heard what was said, or give some other indication that they understand. These people are often brief in their interactions (and patience), so they tend to communicate using as few words as possible. This can sometimes make it difficult for other people to decipher exactly what the person wants or is really saying. The relationships they form with others tend to be formal and professional, yet they can be open to more personal involvement. Their primary need is to get results, so once a person has established his or her competence and abilities, a Driving Style person is more open to forming a personal bond or friendship. This need for results also often drives the skilled use of professional networks for these individuals, since they understand that they can get things done by knowing key people.

Expressive Style people are oriented toward personal relationships, so in some regard they are naturally advantaged in their use of Feedback skills. Because they have behaviors that are more Emote Responsive, in combination with Tell Assertiveness, these individuals may be able to communicate their intentions in ways that are apparent to others. In other words, they talk a lot and they are physically animated, which makes their feelings clear. Likewise, these individuals tend to be very outgoing, which may aid them in developing relationships at work. They seek personal approval, so these individuals might use their networking skills to their advantage by getting to know important people within the organization. While their natural tendencies might assist them in these areas, the degree to which they actively listen and understand others might be less apparent. For example, during a conversation an Expressive Style person might do the majority of talking, and this can leave the other person feeling a bit overwhelmed and uncertain as to whether he was heard or understood.



Driving Style

Low Versatility

Driving Style people's growth action is to listen, and this deficiency is a key characteristic among those who are behaving with low Versatility. They often listen only at a superficial level, without understanding the underlying messages that others are communicating.

Related to their poor listening skills, these individuals often come across as insensitive or uncaring. They do not display interest in matters that are important to others, such as personal issues, career goals, or feelings about work. Though it may not be their intent, they are perceived as discounting what other people say or want. They often will not remember personal information about their co-workers, or at least will not bring it up in conversation. It is as if this personal information goes in and out of them. Personal details about others tend to get pushed aside, since they consider it less important than other information. In the short-term, the Driving Style person might get what she needs, but this focus on short-term needs will often result in long-term consequences. For example, remembering and caring about other people's personal interests and lives is critical for building relationships.

These people are often highly impatient. They are constantly trying to move things along, without waiting for others or for information they might need. For example, when leading a new group a Driving Style person will not allow time for the group to get to know one another or develop rapport before launching into the work. They consider their own priorities to be the most important, and will push to achieve their agendas. Of course, this often backfires because they don't have buy-in or commitment from others. They also might rush into a decision, only to realize later that the decision was faulty because they didn't have all the information they needed.

One of the key characteristics of Driving Style people who are displaying low Versatility is their extreme need to control. They will try to control processes, outcomes and people. For example, during meetings they will dominate discussion, trying to control the conversation so it goes in the direction they desire. They will freely interrupt others without apology. This can have both short- and long-term consequences. In the short-term, people will feel run over and disregarded, while in the long-term they might not support the Driving Style person's agenda or expend any effort to help the person.

These individuals are often very secretive. They keep information to themselves, and this frustrates other people because they may need this information in order to succeed at their jobs. Related to this, they don't disclose their feelings. This makes it difficult for other people to form meaningful relationships with them. Some Driving Style people struggle to understand their feelings, so in a very real sense they are unable to reveal their emotions to others.

Driving Style people tend to be formal, and this can make others uncomfortable. This is especially true when the person is in a position of power or authority. Their formality makes them hard to read, and since they are reluctant communicators, other people are left feeling as though they don't understand what the person is thinking.

Similar to Analytical Style people, these individuals tend to be very rational, to the point where they discount other ways of approaching issues. They inherently see the logical approach as the most valuable. This can result in two problems. First, the person does not take into account other approaches that are equally valuable to their own. Second, it leaves others feeling as though their input is not valued.

These individuals sometimes put others through trials in order to evaluate their competence. For example, during a meeting a Driving Style person might ask an individual to respond to very difficult questions, or to otherwise prove his or her abilities. This Style will often use public settings to put others on the hot seat. Of course, this can cause resentment among the people who are being put through this treatment.

There are other more subtle ways that Driving Style people will show low Versatility. For example, when on the phone with someone, the person might read e-mails or attempt to do some other task that distracts him from paying attention to the conversation. This is another form of impatience. Like some of the other behaviors described above, this can leave other people feeling like they are not important or that their time is not as valuable as the Driving Style person's time.

High Versatility

When behaving with high Versatility, Driving Style people are real assets to organizations and are helpful to their co-workers. They are able to keep projects moving ahead, but instead of taking all control they get input and buy-in from others. In particular, they display good Feedback skills by actively listening to others, understanding their viewpoints and why they have them, and responding to them. The skilled use of Feedback is particularly noteworthy among Driving Style individuals because it involves a high degree of listening, which is their growth action.

Like all people who are using high Versatility, these individuals are aware of the impact they have on others and consciously monitor their behavior. They make an effort to work on their listening skills, as well as getting to know others on a personal level. This benefits them by helping others to be more comfortable, which in turn affects their working relationships and ability to get things done.

Instead of being secretive, these people are upfront in sharing their knowledge and opinions. This is not done in an aggressive manner. Rather, they provide their opinions directly but not bluntly. They let others know where they stand, and by displaying their openness, they allow others to express themselves and to trust them. Further, they make sure to gather input from people prior to making decisions. This helps not only the other people who are involved, but almost always results in more informed decisions.

While Driving Style people are always oriented toward taking action, when displaying high Versatility they are able to maintain patience. They keep things moving along without unnecessarily rushing others. They understand the different skills and value that their co-workers bring to projects, and they allow them the time and focus they may need to succeed at their tasks.



Doing Something for Others: How to Achieve Higher Versatility

Based on what you've just read, you have a pretty good idea of what Versatility looks like; how it is similar in some ways across all Styles, and how it is displayed in Style-specific ways. Perhaps you recognize some of these behaviors within yourself or those you work with. Now, the most important thing for you to discover is how you can improve your Versatility.

This section offers advice for improving your Versatility with people of each Style. This advice is given in the context of each of the four sources of Versatility: Image, Presentation, Competence and Feedback. This section describes how people of each Style view the four sources of Versatility, and how you can increase your effectiveness in those areas.

Doing Something for the Amiable Style

Anticipate This Behavior:	This Person Wants To Be:	To Strengthen This Relationship Support:	Use Time To:	To Get Action Provide:
<i>Warm</i> <i>Agreeable</i> <i>Cooperative</i> <i>Careful</i> <i>Quiet</i>	<i>Sure</i>	<i>Feelings and Relationships</i>	<i>Be Agreeable</i>	<i>Security with Assurances</i>

Image

Amiable Style people prefer a personable and friendly image. They generally prefer appropriate attire that is casual and comfortable. To build rapport with them, especially during an initial encounter, it may be helpful if you dress less formally. It also might be appreciated if you can create occasions that allow for casual attire.

These individuals often create an inviting and homey environment, which may include pictures of family and friends, or significant events with work teams. They are less likely to display awards, degrees, or other items that self-promote their personal accomplishments. When you are in their environment, it will usually be appreciated if you recognize these personal touches and comment on them. Of course, you should not do this merely because you think it's important. These individuals will recognize your lack of sincerity.

Presentation

At the beginning of a presentation, address the Amiable Style audience member's need for connection on a personal level by briefly describing some bit of personal information that helps these individuals get to know and relate to you.

Personalize your presentations by involving them. By involving them in the discussion, and in particular in any actions that result from the discussion, you will help them feel comfortable and nurture their sense of being valued.

Ask them their opinions about the topic at hand, and demonstrate active listening. Be alert to any non-verbal signals that they are experiencing doubt or insecurity about the information you are presenting. Because they most likely will not be willing to come right out and disagree with your points, you might have to ask them questions to get the concerns out in the open.

When stating your goals or desired outcomes for the presentation, include a statement about how you anticipate the outcome to affect the audience or other employees. In addition to any facts you need to relate about the outcomes, be sure to also mention the positive benefits for people in relation to their work lives.

If appropriate, ask for the Amiable Style person's personal commitment to the outcomes you are trying to achieve from the presentation. Openly state your own actions and future commitments and make assurances of your intent to follow through. This will enhance their sense of security.

If disagreement arises among audience members during the presentation, avoid arguing or personalizing the conflict. Keep the discussion cordial to appeal to these people's need for harmony and accord. Stress that the disagreement can be resolved in a mutually satisfactory way, even if you feel that doing so might be difficult.



Competence

With Amiable Style co-workers, emphasize your relationship and how you will work together toward common goals. Instead of emphasizing tasks and your process for accomplishing them, underscore the positive impacts your approach will have on people and the organization.

While you may be used to approaching situations and solving problems as an individual, with Amiable Style people you should adapt more of a group approach. They will think more highly of you when you offer ideas to them, rather than working out everything on your own. This allows them to be a part of the process, which is an important need for them.

Get to know their perspectives on work issues. Use personal, friendly language that conveys your desire to collaborate, and stress that you want all members of the team to succeed. Reassure these individuals that issues will be resolved and work will be completed with the best interests of the organization and group in mind.

Invite these individuals to share their personal opinions on projects, tasks and problems. To the extent that you agree with them, verbally support those opinions. It is very important to follow up on your commitments, particularly since this builds trust. Be aware that failure to follow up on your commitments in a timely manner can cause a great deal of tension in your relationship with these people.

Finally, show enthusiasm when working with Amiable Style people. They are very personable and group-oriented, so let them know that you're a part of the team and want to work with them. They appreciate sincerity and optimism, and perform best when working with people who display these.



Feedback

When communicating with Amiable Style people, do three things: listen actively, show empathy, and adapt your communication style.

Listen for their feelings, sensitivity and awareness. They want you to see their helpfulness and cooperation. Avoid behaviors that could be seen as unfeeling, tough-minded, or unnecessarily competitive. Allow time to build a relationship. Slow down, talk less, and show concern for them, colleagues or other personal relationships that they reveal to you. Ask about their interests and concerns. Don't interrupt and avoid completing their sentences. They sometimes need time for reflection so be patient during long pauses or silence.

Show empathy by giving Amiable Style individuals sincere and genuine personal attention. Always starting discussions with work issues or action items can suggest that you don't care about them personally, so be sure to take a moment to touch base with them on a personal level. Acknowledge their feelings, and share your own. Give them time and create a relaxed atmosphere. Notice when they might be feeling conflict. Encourage them to express it directly—even though they may be uncomfortable doing so. Show that they're important by giving them your undivided attention. Give