

# TRACOM Sneak Peek

Excerpts from

## Managing Conflict

with  
**STYLE**



Working with SOCIAL STYLE™ Series

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## The Four SOCIAL STYLES and Conflict

You will recall from your SOCIAL STYLE training that there are fundamental differences in the preferred way each of the four SOCIAL STYLES behaves, talks, uses time, works with others and makes decisions. While it may not yet be apparent to either Jay or Sarah, they have different SOCIAL STYLES and thus, different preferred patterns of behavior.

During the best of times, when stress is not too high and things are generally running smoothly, our Style differences don't cause major issues. We and our co-workers can go about our business, relying on our comfortable ways of getting things done. In fact, we are barely aware of these differences, and we may consider other people's behavioral Styles as only minor inconveniences to our own way of doing things. However, as stress mounts, especially when we have to work closely with others, our Styles become more noticeable and more apt to enhance conflict.

When a tense situation arises or an interaction becomes uncomfortable, people will rely even more on their preferred patterns of behavior to solve the problem at hand. If both parties are focused on their own needs and not the other person's needs, tension will grow. This mounting tension will often lead to or greatly contribute to a conflict between individuals. The specific triggers of tension vary by SOCIAL STYLE.

Be aware that even if you do not perceive a conflict, but another person believes there is a conflict, then a conflict exists. Even if the conflict did not begin as an interpersonal dispute, behavioral Style differences can turn a minor issue into a much more difficult situation. Your ability to effectively use SOCIAL STYLE skills can remove personal behavioral preferences from a situation, allowing you to focus on the underlying issues at hand.

## What Does Conflict Look Like with Each of the SOCIAL STYLES?

Let's now review each SOCIAL STYLE to see how they deal with conflict through their preferred actions toward others, use of time and approach to decision-making. By doing this you will begin to understand how to use your knowledge of Style to prepare for potential conflicts, thus minimizing or even averting them. For those conflicts that are inevitable, you will be able to use Style awareness to more effectively manage the tension while in the heat of the moment, and create productive outcomes.



## Driving Style

Need: **Results**  
Orientation: **Action**

Growth Action: **To Listen**  
Backup Behavior: **Autocratic — Takes Control**

*Driving Style people are focused on achieving results and believe that action is the best way to succeed. They are typically not seen as concerned about relationships and people except as they relate to the overall goal. Other people may consider the Driving person to be impersonal, practical and dominating.*

*Driving Style people have little tolerance for discussions they deem a waste of time. They prefer getting to the point and staying on target. They like to have an agenda and stick to it. Straying from a focus will cause frustration and tension. Though always focused, Driving people may “warm up” to others after real progress has been achieved.*

*When making a decision, Driving Style people prefer to be provided with the facts and viable options. They enjoy having control and making their own decisions. They are likely to choose options with a good probability of success, but are willing to accept risk to advance a project.*

*In times of tension, Driving Style people are likely to attempt to take control. They may say things like “I’ll just do it myself” or they might start making autocratic decisions. These efforts to take control represent their Backup Behavior as a result of the tension they are experiencing.*

### What Does Conflict with a Driving Style Person Look Like?

Driving Style people will not hesitate to tell you that there is a problem. They will be direct and, potentially, verbally confrontational. Because they are feeling a need to be in control, they might try to take charge of the situation by telling you what to do or what needs to be done, according to them. Driving Style people are likely to be brusque and come across as not very concerned with you as a person, or the impact that the confrontation has on you. Their method of telling you what needs to be done can often come across as highly critical and even personal. They are likely to dominate the conversation, at least initially, and will want to say what is on their mind before giving you a chance to speak. If highly stressed, Driving Style people tend to raise their voices and will use forward body posture while making their points. Their eye contact will be direct, and though Driving Style people don’t often use their hands when talking, in such circumstances they may point fingers or tap on tables when making their arguments.

# Smart Planning Worksheet

The following worksheet can help you assess potential conflicts and plan appropriate steps.

## Section I: Who Is Involved

### Yourself

Your Style: ..... Your Style Need: .....

What will cause your tension to increase? .....

.....

.....

.....

**Name:** .....

SOCIAL STYLE: ..... Their Style Need: .....

What will cause this person's tension to increase? .....

.....

.....

.....

**Name:** .....

SOCIAL STYLE: ..... Their Style Need: .....

What will cause this person's tension to increase? .....

.....

.....

.....

## Section II: Likelihood of Conflict

Current Status of Relationship:  Good  Poor

Perceived Criticality of Issue:  Not Critical  Critical

Describe the potential for conflict: .....

.....

.....

.....

## The Steps to Minimize Conflict

Below is advice for managing conflict with people of each Style. By following these steps, you should be able to minimize the impacts of conflict and move towards productive outcomes.

### 1. Pay Attention to the Communication Needs of Each Style

By knowing the Style of the person in advance, you know what their communication needs are. Pay attention to the flow of the conversation to make sure you are meeting the needs of others. In this type of situation, one aspect of Versatility — Feedback — is very important. The skilled use of Feedback allows you to adjust the quality and amount of communication, as well as your non-verbal behaviors. On the following pages we will provide tips for communicating with individuals of each Style, particularly when starting a conversation or meeting.

### 2. Recognize Backup Behavior

When your co-workers experience tension, they will start to show their Backup Behavior. If unchecked, this tension can lead to full-blown conflict. On the following pages we will provide tips for identifying and alleviating tension for each Style.

### 3. Help Others Understand All Sides of the Situation

Sharing bad news or discussing a topic where parties have fundamental differences can be challenging. But it doesn't have to disintegrate into full-blown conflict. On the following pages we will provide tips to help others understand your perspective or share potentially negative information.

### 4. Verify that You Have Agreement

You've now focused your interaction in a way to minimize tension and redirected the situation away from behavioral issues toward the business at hand. It is also important to clarify that you have achieved agreement with the other person or people. On the following pages we will provide tips to verify you have agreement with people of each Style.

## Applying the Steps to Each of the SOCIAL STYLES

Let's now review how these steps apply to each of the SOCIAL STYLES. By doing this you will understand how to use your knowledge of SOCIAL STYLE to help head off conflicts before they escalate. By applying your Style knowledge when you sense conflict beginning to occur, you will more effectively manage the tension in the heat of the moment and create more productive outcomes.



## Amiable Style

### 1. Pay attention to their communication needs

| Anticipate this Behavior                             | This Person Wants to Be: | To Strengthen This Relationship Support | Use Time To: | To Get Action Provide:   |
|--|--------------------------|---|--------------|--------------------------|
| Warm<br>Agreeable<br>Cooperative<br>Careful<br>Quiet | Sure                     | Feelings and Relationships              | Be Agreeable | Security with assurances |

*To establish rapport with an Amiable Style person, it is usually appropriate to open the discussion with a people-related topic in an area where you have previously established common ground. For example, ask a question about common interests or family. This will help assure the person that his or her relationship with you is okay, and facilitates your moving into the purpose of the interaction. As a word of caution, it is generally only appropriate to talk about personal matters if you have already established a solid relationship with the Amiable Style person. If you are unfamiliar with the person, or worse, not genuine in your interaction, an Amiable Style person will not respect your attempts to establish rapport.*

*Close-ended questions can make an Amiable Style uncomfortable. If you observe the Amiable Style individual's discomfort, be sure to ask them to tell you what is on their mind. Open-ended questions allow this person to answer in a way that allows them to provide the "answer" and the context of their response. Amiable people are typically quite comfortable with hypothetical questions.*

### 2. Recognize Backup Behavior

*Amiable Style people are likely to withdraw and become even less assertive as their tension grows. They may acquiesce to the group or individual, simply stating that everything is okay without verbalizing their viewpoint or actively committing to the identified next steps. They may avoid eye contact and will sometimes become fidgety as they become more tense.*

*To help reduce tension, actively discuss any implications that decisions will have on the people who are involved. Be upfront about your own needs or commitments, while reassuring the Amiable Style person about his or her concerns. Explain that disagreements on business issues do not necessarily indicate deteriorating personal relationships. Allow them to*

*express themselves by actively giving them the floor to air any grievances and concerns. Make it safe for the Amiable Style person to disagree.*

### **3. Help them understand all sides of the situation**

*Amiable Style people are more open to hearing other viewpoints when you first acknowledge their feelings and opinions about the topic at hand. They can accept other perspectives and decisions contrary to their own, as long as you have shown that you empathize with them and their situation. By doing this you will also open the door for them to consider other points of view that they may not have taken into account before. It is also helpful to clearly discuss any impacts that decisions will have on them or their relationships with their co-workers.*

*When delivering difficult information, keep in mind that Amiable Style individuals tend to focus on relationships and they really do aim to please. If a decision has to be made that is initially disagreeable, clearly explain the reasons why the decision is being made. Point out any opportunities that might be inherent in the new situation for them to contribute. If providing feedback about personal performance, give examples of how the person is performing well prior to bringing up areas that need improvement. Be open to discussing emotions, but keep the conversation on solutions and not on other people, unless these people are an important component. Try to avoid pressing hard for immediate change or coming across as impersonal. Let Amiable Style people know that the feedback is about their performance in a particular situation or area, and is not about your personal relationship with them. Ask open-ended questions about how they feel they might be able to improve the situation, and work cooperatively with them to identify specific next steps.*

### **4. Move toward agreement**

*Verify that the Amiable person is ready to proceed before forcing a decision. Discuss the implications for others. Reinforce the long-term relationship as well as near-term business issues. Check back periodically to make sure the Amiable person is still comfortable. You'll know the conflict with an Amiable person is over when the relationship returns to its pre-conflict level. The relationship will be good. Be cautious, though, because this individual may not tell you that anything is amiss when in fact he or she is still actively involved in the conflict. Remember that establishing a safe and trusting environment is important for minimizing conflict.*

## Don't Stop Here... There's More to Discover

A wide variety of additional SOCIAL STYLE<sup>SM</sup> resources are available to further improve your performance. SOCIAL STYLE is the best-known Interpersonal Effectiveness Model in the world and TRACOM offers tools to help any organization, team or person.

Guides in the Working with Style series teach how individuals can apply SOCIAL STYLE to specific workplace issues. These include:



**Managing Conflict with Style** – Studies have shown that managers spend up to 42% of their work time dealing with conflict and non-productive behavior in the workplace. *Managing Conflict with Style* provides specific advice on how to use Style to anticipate conflicts, reduce their occurrence, minimize their impact and repair damage after a conflict occurs.



**Coaching with Style** – Many organizations have adopted “coaching” as an important part of their development efforts. *Coaching with Style* shows how to apply SOCIAL STYLE techniques to any coaching process. It provides specific advice to help the coach build better relationships, improve communications, reduce tension and improve workplace productivity. It’s a must-read for anyone starting a coaching relationship.



**Working in Teams with Style** – The use of “teams” has gained widespread use in most organizations. A study of Fortune 1000 organizations showed that 90% used teams to conduct business. This has resulted in an increased interdependence on others to achieve results. *Working in Teams with Style* is the first book to teach how SOCIAL STYLE skills can improve team performance. It provides specific advice to help teams quickly and effectively take form, undertake their responsibilities and ultimately operate at optimal performance. The lessons of this book can be applied to any team structure or purpose.

These and additional books in the *Working with Style* series are available at [www.tracomcorp.com](http://www.tracomcorp.com). See the back cover of this book for additional tools to teach SOCIAL STYLE techniques for Managers and Sales Professionals.