



Using Style Assessments to Become a Better Leader

By Sally McGhee, Founder & CEO

As a leader, my ultimate goal is to have my staff be leaders. I want them to be able to lead projects and implement effectively without me. I strive to create a team that is self-motivated and generative.

One of the most useful skills I've found that I need for this is to have an understanding of my staff's tendencies, preferences and personality. This understanding allows me to adjust my communication with them and the way I manage so that I can help enable them to be as successful as possible. Each individual on a team is unique and requires a different management style to ensure they are working as effectively as they can.

I utilize behavioral style assessments with my team to help me better understand them and in turn, help to better manage them. Regardless of whether or not a leader uses behavioral style assessments, a good leader is going to be analyzing their staff. They will look at how to best leverage their team's individual skills, analyze how to best communicate to minimize conflict and work to understand how to create alignment and effective implementation.

One place that an understanding of individual personalities is useful is in 1:1 meetings. Every individual on a team is unique and, therefore, every 1:1 meeting is going to be different. If a leader approaches a 1:1 with their direct from a place of wanting to make it as effective as possible, he or she will need to take some time to understand the person that they are meeting with. Communication, vision, how they manage, how they implement new things, what causes them to push back; each individual will be different and therefore require a different management style. If a leader has an understanding of the personality traits of the person that they are talking with, it makes it much easier to successfully manage.

I had a high-level client who worked closely with an Operations Manager. In their 1:1 meetings, it often appeared that the Operations Manager was pushing back and resisting change. This was annoying to my client and often caused conflict between them. I sat down with my client and we reviewed her Operations Manager's profile. It became obvious that the Operations Manager was very focused on standards, procedures, consistency and compliance; change was not a primary focus. I worked with my client to help her change her approach when meeting with the Operations Manager based on her style. My client began to give the Operations Manager more runway when it came to upcoming change. They would discuss it early on to give her plenty of time to wrap her head around it. My client spent more time paving the way for change to occur and in turn reduced conflict with her Operations Manager. They were able to create more alignment and the Operations Manager actually began driving change on her own.

Another leader I worked with had a direct report that was very strong in his opinions. The leader found himself getting into arguments with his direct and conversations that were full of justifications. We looked at the direct's profile and helped the leader create better understanding. The leader changed his approach and communicated very directly with his direct report. If he made a decision, he made it 100% clear that this was the decision that the team was going with

and left no back doors open. The direct report needed this clear communication and stopped arguing or trying to position his point of view among the team. This direct report needed clear and authoritative communication from the leader and once he received this, it decreased conflict between him and the leader.

It's important to understand that while behavioral style assessments are useful, they are not the end all, be all. A good leader will learn, in time, how to adapt their communication and management styles to their direct reports with or without the style assessments. These profiles are dynamic. As people become better leaders, they change. People are always growing and developing new skills, so often times the results of these assessments change.

It's also very important not to label people. I never discuss my staff's profiles with them or let them know that I may change my communication style based on their assessment. While these profiles are helpful, they should *not* be used as a label. People grow, people change and people often surprise you.

I have found behavioral style assessments to be surprisingly useful in my management career. The more that I try to adapt my communication to better leverage my staff's skills, the more I realize it's becoming an ingrained skill. Developing these understandings have made me a better leader. They help me become more aware and identify subtleties. I've been able to reduce conflict, increase alignment and decrease action cycles. I communicate more effectively with my team.

If you strive to continually better yourself as a leader, these style assessments can be a very valuable tool. If you're not sure where to start, or are interested in coaching on the subject, please contact us at info@mcgheepro.com, we would love to be of service to you!