



Why Do They Do That?

Solving the Mystery of Workplace Personalities

 **Upward Solutions**
coaching and consulting

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Solving the Mystery of Workplace Personalities

By Lori Gorrell, Upward Solutions Coaching and Consulting

Have you ever looked at a co-worker (or two) and wondered “why do they do that”? Maybe they procrastinate endlessly. Or perhaps they seem to be so social that they lack focus. Are you someone that “says it like it is” and yet you don’t seem to get the reaction you are looking for? After all, you are being straightforward, what don’t they understand?

In this e-book, we are going to take a glimpse at four work styles to see what makes them tick.

Chapter 1: The Bold and the Blunt

For this first chapter I am going to take the veil off the person that tends to be bold and blunt.

Do you work with (or live with) a person that wants immediate results? They may consider themselves the “idea” person and rely on those around them to execute. Qualities that you may recognize in this person are self-confidence, directness, risk-taking and energized by competition. They may describe themselves as fast-paced, assertive, bold and even skeptical. Does this description sound like someone you know - or does it sound like you?

Let's be clear, this style is not me. And because it is *not* me, I have spent considerable time learning about people like this because I find them to be a challenge. The challenge is that their boldness can send me running for cover! They like conflict ... I do not, so if I see them coming, I want to go the other direction. I can take their blunt comments very personally and walk away feeling crushed.

I need to work with people that are different from me, so I couldn't go trotting off into the landscape to avoid this work style. The short version of what I learned about the “bold and blunt”:

- Give them the bottom line! They don't want to hear all of the back-story about why you did what you did and what color you prefer to wear on Tuesday.
- It's not personal. It is not about you (usually), it is just their style to “say it like it is.”
- They hate not being in control. Enough said.

Tips for working with a “bold and blunt” person:

- State your point confidently and clearly.
- If they try to rush you, give them a reasonable date for completion and tell them, directly, if you need anything from them.

- Don't use emotion to get your way or make your point.

The bold and blunt work style is a **valuable asset** in any organization or group. They are often the visionaries that can see the big picture and have daring ideas that will force us out of our comfort zone. We need to be forced out once in a while - and we need them to keep us on our toes.

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Chapter 2: The Social Animal

Now that you understand the “bold and blunt” style, I am going to uncover the Social Animal. Walk into my world!

Have you ever been surprised to learn that the officemate you thought was a bit flakey was actually quite intelligent? Maybe you work with someone that you consider to be a little “over the top” and wonder how they get anything done because it seems they are always talking or planning the office party. We all know someone that is lively, active, make quick decisions and on the outer edge, a bit disorganized. This is our “Social Animal” and it is wise to take a minute to get to know them.

I am down-the-middle, one-half Social Animal! You will learn about my other “half” next month. Right now, the most important thing I can tell you about my animal side is to not mistake my enthusiasm for flakiness, please and thank you. Other attributes that you may recognize about the Social Animal is that they (we) are encouraging, collaborative, sociable, optimistic and sometimes impulsive. They (we) tend to get our feelings hurt when ignored or when we think someone doesn't like us, our ideas or what we believe in.

What do you do when you need to work with this Social Animal and you are frustrated with their seemingly endless good cheer or that they wear their heart on their sleeve?

The short version of what would be helpful to know:

- They (we) don't particularly enjoy being in a dull environment.
- If it seems like they are being too “cheerleader” it is because they want you to succeed!
- You may judge their enthusiasm, and you are being judged on your level (lack) of enthusiasm ;)

Tips for working with a “Social Animal” person:

- Give them opportunity to bring a group together to problem-solve. You won't be disappointed.
- If you are concerned with the job being completed on time, state your objectives, expectations and give a timeline.
- Take the time to be thoughtful about giving feedback or constructive criticism. You will get a better and more effective response.

As with all work-styles, the Social Animal brings tremendous value to an employer, organization or household. They will be THE one to sell your visionary idea or revolutionary product! Their boundless energy will keep the team moving when energy is low and bring some fun into the project. Don't underestimate the magnetism of this style when it comes to igniting passion around your workplace.

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Chapter 3: Steady and Supportive

I am one-half Social Animal and the other half Steady and Supportive.

Do you know someone in your workplace that enjoys supporting others more than shaking things up? By that I mean they enjoy coming to the meeting, collaborating with everyone, and then will go away and tackle the list and make sure that it all gets done on time...and they make everyone around them look good. I call this third workstyle in this series the Steady and Supportive, S&S for short. The S&S group is probably most affected by the Bold and Blunt (BB). They run for cover when a BB is in a “mood” and that’s because this style really *really* dislikes conflict.

The Steady and Supportive style can appear to be indecisive and change-adverse. There are a couple of reasons that this may seem to be the case, but I’ll explain a bit further. The S&S likes to make sure that they hear all sides of a story, project or idea before they come to a conclusion. They do not want to disrupt the harmony or upset anyone. You may see how these aspects can come across as wishy-washy, when really they are quite important in making us slow down and not get too far ahead of ourselves.

What do you do when you need to work with a Steady and Supportive co-worker and you want to push them along? The short version of what would be helpful to know:

- Recognize that they want to do things well and make you look good – this is the supportive side.
- They tend to work at a steady pace – remember the Tortoise and the Hare?
- S&S will strive to maintain comfortable, stable environments – there is value in this for everyone!

Tips for working with a “Steady and Supportive” person:

- Ask them directly what kind of support they need – they may not speak up and become overwhelmed trying to do everything on their own.
- Share your expectations early and clearly and do it in a friendly way – you will definitely get more from them when being kind. (You don't have to be sugary sweet, kind will do.)
- Encourage them to take chances and even reflect on some of their successes in the past when they did step out of their comfort zone.

As with all work-styles, the Steady and Supportive brings tremendous value to an employer, organization or household. They will be THE one to do the leg-work on a project, and do it well! They are a team player and typically far calmer than the Social Animal when it comes time to collaborate and get the work done – this creates a nice balance. EVERY team needs an S&S or two ... or three.

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Chapter 4: Data Driven

Step into the world of the Data Driven person. This is the group that I had always assumed didn't much care for me; learn why it felt like that below...

She's reserved, maybe appears a little (or a lot) aloof and seems to take a long time to get back to you with an answer. Do you know her?

He's a cool one; it's obvious he doesn't enjoy your small-talk, wants all the data possible to analyze before taking a step forward and it usually won't be a risky move.

Sound like one of your customers?

You may remember that I am half "social animal" and half "steady and supportive" so this detached, less sociable style doesn't always connect with me. They seemed skeptical, snobby and annoyed when in truth they are just different than me and prioritize accuracy, stable conditions and a challenge and not collaborative work and enthusiasm.

While I thought they didn't like me, now that I understand them more, I can give them the detail and facts that they need and not take their pragmatism personally. Likewise, when they take the time to understand my style they are less likely to mistake my enthusiasm for flakiness. No matter what style you may be, understanding and communicating is a two-way street.

What do you do when you need to work with a "Data Driven" co-worker? The short version of what would be helpful to know:

- They feel that there are rules for a reason, will tend to follow the rules and get frustrated when others don't
- Precision and accuracy are very important to the Data Driven person

- Privacy Please! They prefer to keep their private lives to themselves.

Tips for working with a “Data Driven” person:

- Allow them to work independently when possible
- Compliment them privately – do not make a big production of acknowledgement or reward
- If you need to debate, argue or disagree with them, use hard facts, not emotion

As with all work-styles, the Data Driven brings tremendous value to an employer, organization or household. This is the person that will help the rest of us see a rational and objective side of an idea. They are also going to find a streamlined, efficient way of doing something that will save time and keep the cost within budget. They will appreciate the effort you make to give them as much detail as possible so that they can get right to work.

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Chapter 5: Bridging the Gap

We've had fun with these personalities and work styles. Every one of us has a view of OUR OWN world. My intention has been to share key tidbits so that we have a glimpse of how OTHERS view the world.

The four types of people that I have described are:

- The Bold and Blunt
- The Social Animal
- The Steady and Supportive
- The Data Driven

These four types are only the tip of the "social style" iceberg. There are blends of styles (I am half Social Animal, half Steady and Supportive) and to varying degrees.

The point is to encourage you to see the world beyond your own personal view, to engage with people in a way that speaks to you both.

My passion is inter-personal communication so this information brings me JOY – primarily because I now have more fun! I no longer avoid or tip-toe around certain styles and I know when to be a bit more sensitive, direct, conscientious, detail-oriented...the list goes on. I also know considerably more about myself and what makes me tick (or ticked).

I have had the pleasure of being with a fantastic group of people at a multi-day workshop; there were ten of us in all. I decided to watch how they each interacted from the beginning of the first day until the end of the last day. What a trip! For me, it was an interesting viewpoint. I would venture to say that everyone in the group was a blend of social styles. [It is important to note that we are all a blend of the styles, but primarily we have one or two very dominant styles.] I had three Data-Driven – Steady/Supportive combos, FIVE Steady/Supportive – Social Animals, and two

Bold/Blunt – Social Animals. What a motley crew (or “cruel” – depends on your teenage decade)! For three days I was able to practice my adaptive prowess as I watched and trained these individuals.

Field Notes:

- No matter what “style” a person, everyone has a desire to do well and make a difference.
- Style characteristics are not meant to pigeon-hole or be an excuse for behavior.
- The most important thing in interacting with all styles is to treat everyone with dignity and respect, no matter what!

Final tips:

- Give any style a mirror and support them to come up with their own path for improvement.
- ALWAYS point to something that is going well – where improvement is noted - and balance out with strategies for further development.
- Offer supportive feedback often, both physically and emotionally.

Humans are a complex species: We have opposable thumbs (dogs everywhere are envious), we blush, and we have a large variety of emotions, habits and tolerance levels. People watching is fascinating, but human interaction is a rich and wonderful experience – and it can be done with a lot more ease if you are willing to learn more about your co-workers.

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More on Social Styles

I'm always available to help guide you and help you adapt to all styles. Here's how!

Visit the website.

www.UpwardSolutionsCC.com

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