

THE HISTORY OF THE BEHAVIOR MODEL DISC

The best way to judge the effectiveness of a behavior-modification program based on inner 'style' is to sit down and watch one in action. But there's a bit of history behind what you'll be watching.

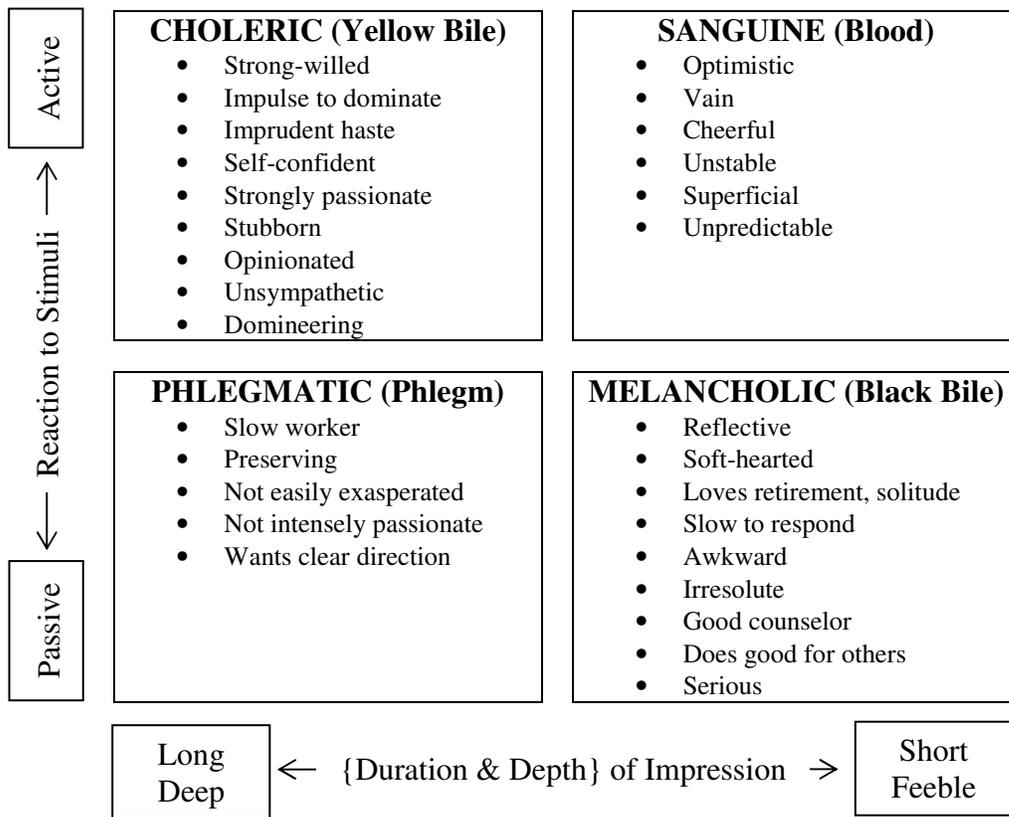
BLOOD AND BLACK BILE: FOUR-STYLE BEHAVIOR MODELS IN TRAINING

By Roger T. O'Brien

Since the Middle Ages, sages have taken delight in dividing human behavior into four clearly defined styles. The only problem with the medieval version of the Four-Style Behavior Theory (called the Four Temperaments) was that it was based on the questionable assumption that each temperament was determined by which particular humor (inner juice) dominated an individual: yellow bile = choleric; blood = sanguine; black bile = melancholic; phlegm = phlegmatic. Not very appetizing – or accurate.

However, the *specific characteristics* of the Four Temperaments made eminent sense then and have been taken seriously in some quarters even in this century. They are summarized in Figure 1 and bear an amazing resemblance to modern theories.

FIGURE 1
THE FOUR TEMPERAMENTS
MEDIEVAL FOUR-STYLE BEHAVIOR THEORY



For the past half-century, human behavior has been divided into quadrants in increasingly compelling and useful ways. Fifteen of the most prominent modern systems were listed in the November 1982 issue of TRAINING and an abbreviated version is reproduced in Figure 2. Some of the authors, to be sure, would disagree with this broad categorizing of their systems, but the similarities to the ancient style are nonetheless striking.

Figure 2
Some Modern Sources of the Four-Style Behavior Theory

| | High Assertiveness Low Responsiveness | High Assertiveness High Responsiveness | Low Assertiveness High Responsiveness | Low Assertiveness Low Responsiveness | Combination |
|--|--|---|--|---|-------------------|
| 1. BASIC SYSTEMS | | | | | |
| Medieval Four Temperaments | Choleric | Sanguine | Melancholic | Phlegmatic | |
| William M. Marston, <i>Emotions of Normal People</i> | Dominance | Inducement of Others | Steadiness | Compliance | |
| David W. Merrill – Roger H. Reid, <i>Personal Styles & Effective Performance</i> | Driver | Expressive | Amiable | Analytical | |
| Stuart Atkins, LIFO® (Life Orientations) | Controlling-Taking | Adapting-Dealing | Supporting-Giving | Conserving-Holding | |
| 2. CONFLICT RESOLUTION | | | | | |
| Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument | Competing | Collaborating | Accommodating | Avoiding | Compromising |
| Donald T. Simpson, “Conflict Styles: Organization Decision Making” | Power | Integration | Suppression | Denial | Compromise |
| Jay Hall, Conflict Management Survey | 9/1 Win-Lose | 9/9 Synergistic | 1/9 Yield-Lose | 1/1 Lose-Leave | 5/5 Compromise |
| 3. PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL | | | | | |
| Robert E. Lefton et al., <i>Effective Motivation Through Performance Appraisal</i> | Q1 Dominant-Hostile | Q4 Dominant-Warm | Q3 Submissive-Warm | Q2 Submissive-Hostile | |

Four-Style Behavior Theory has been a most helpful training tool, and you can use it with measurable success in a number of subject areas.

- Interpersonal communication
- Improving meeting skills
- Conflict resolution
- Team building
- Performance appraisal
- Time management
- Situational leadership

Teaching the Four-Style Behavior Theory

Figure 3
Four-Style Behavior Questionnaire & Model

Step One

In each of the five boxes below, examine the four descriptive adjectives as they may or may not describe you. In each box, rank the adjective that most nearly describes you as “7”, the next closest adjective as “5”, the next closest adjective as “3”, and the word that least closely describes you as “1”. Each box should have four adjectives ranked 7, 5, 3, and 1 (no ties).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 3. ___ a. stubborn ___ b. persuasive ___ c. gentle ___ d. humble | 2. ___ a. competitive ___ b. playful ___ c. obliging ___ d. obedient | 1. ___ a. adventurous ___ b. playful ___ c. obliging ___ d. obedient |
| 4. ___ a. determined ___ b. convincing ___ c. good-natured ___ d. cautious | 5. ___ a. assertive ___ b. optimistic ___ c. lenient ___ d. accurate | |

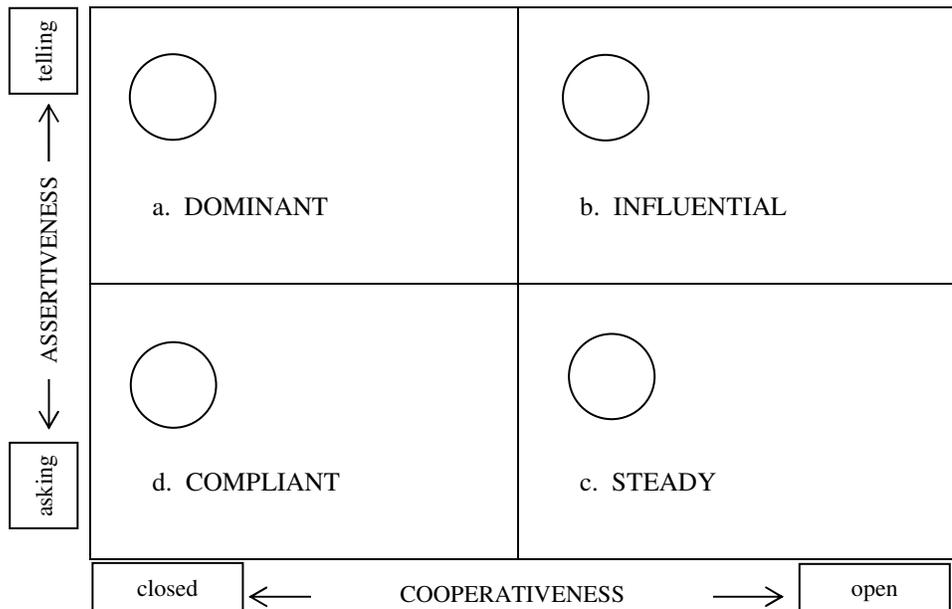
Step Two

Transfer your responses to this answer sheet, and then total columns a, b, c, and d.

| | a. | b. | c. | d. |
|---------------|----|----|----|----|
| 1. | | | | |
| 2. | | | | |
| 3. | | | | |
| 4. | | | | |
| Total: | | | | |

Step Three

Transfer the totals for each column to the circles in each corresponding quadrant marked a, b, c, and d.



Ask your trainees to fill out the form, “How Do You Describe Yourself?” (Fig. 3); give no explanation other than directions on how to fill it out. The whole group should wait until everyone has finished one step before going on to the next.

After your group members have tallied their responses (step 2) but before going on the next step, you can present some background to the Four-Style Behavior Theory.

Consider:

Sally sits tensely at the far end of a conference room. She glances at her watch, restacks the neat pile of paper in front of her, and says to herself: Where’s that damn Charlie, anyway? . . . Seventeen minutes late – again! . . . I put a note on the seat of his chair . . . His desk is so messy, he’d never find it there . . . Said specifically on the note that we were to meet at 1:30 today . . . He knows we have to finish the first draft of the Emerson report by close of business today . . . He’s downright thoughtless! . . . Twenty minutes now . . .

“Oh, hi, Charlie. Hey, let’s get down to work.”

Charlie peeks in at the front door of the conference room, adjusts his bow tie, smiles broadly as he makes his way to Sally’s corner, thinking to himself: Uh, oh, Sally looks peeved . . . Well, George just had too much of a problem to unburden at lunch . . . First things first . . . Besides, I’m sure we can get an extension on the Emerson report, anyway – whenever that deadline may be . . .

“Hi, Sally! Sorry I’m a couple of minutes late. That Lazy Bee Restaurant service is getting worse by the day!”

A Middle-Age sage would have described Sally as phlegmatic and Charlie as sanguine; the late William M. Marston would have said that she shows compliance behavior while he shows inducement behavior; David Merrill and Roger Reid would call her Analytical and him Expressive; Stuart Atkins would claim she is Conserving/Holding and he is Adapting/Dealing. The labels, of course, are not as important as the underlying concepts. If you view “Assertiveness” as a continuum with “Asking” at one end and “Telling” at the other, you will be able to place yourself somewhere along that line, based on your perception of your behavioral style. Are you more of an asker or a teller? Or are you just about in the middle?

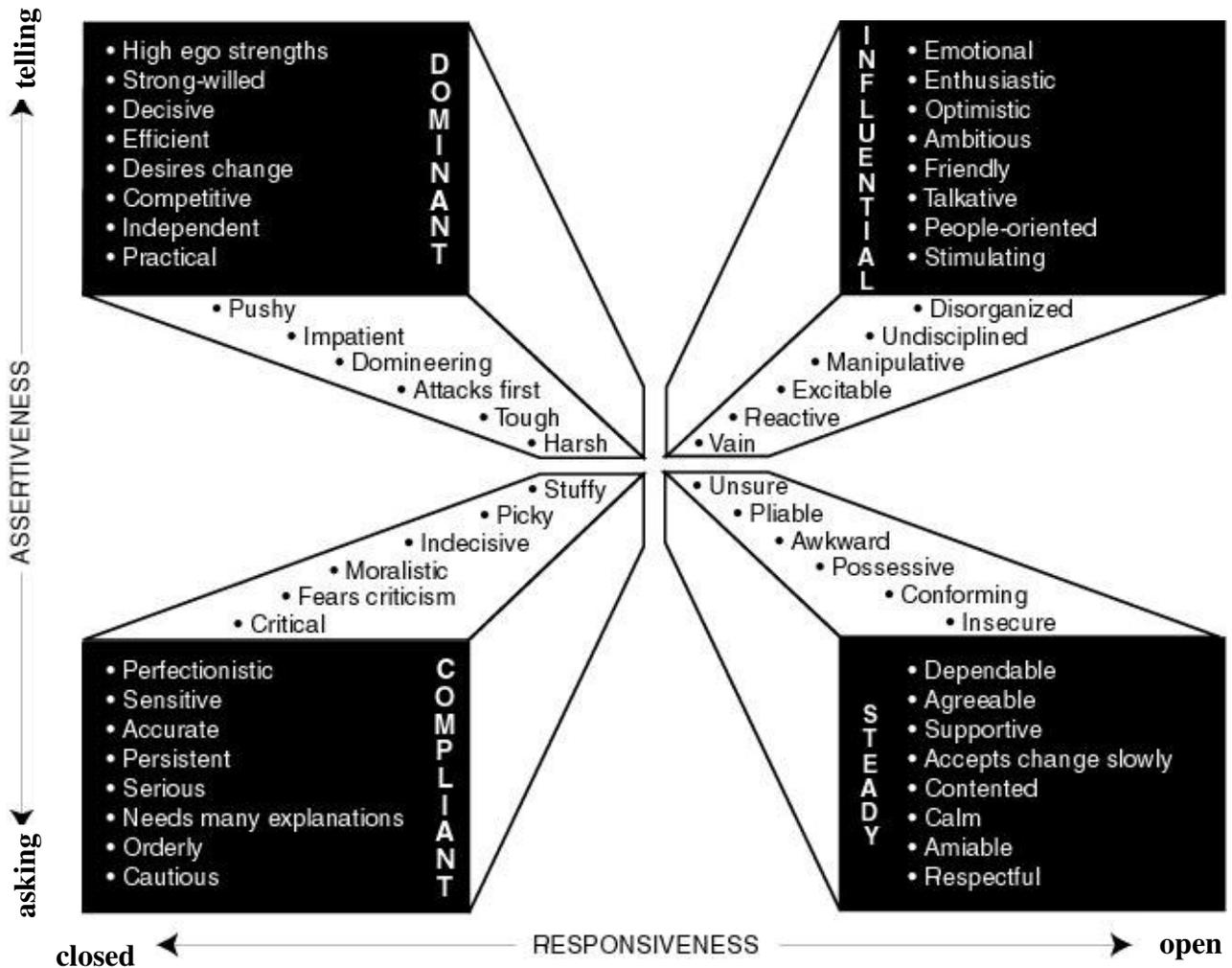
If you take another continuum, call it “Responsiveness” with the extremes marked “Closed” and “Open,” you will be able to place yourself on that continuum at a particular point, based on your knowledge of yourself.

The Four-Style Behavior Questionnaire is designed to help you do that. Returning to Figure 3, transfer the totaled figures under columns a, b, c, and d to the circles in the corresponding quadrants. You have now identified your own perceived predominant behavior style.

If one of the four numbers is significantly higher than the others, it represents your most characteristic style; if two or three of the high numbers are the same or very close, it simply means that you tend to share two or even three styles.

Figure 4 presents descriptive words that characterize each style. For a full explanation of the four styles, refer to any of the sources in the accompanying reading list. Merrill and Reid, in particular, have written a very detailed account of personal styles.

Figure 4
Tri-Dimensional Model of the Four Behavior Styles



An important contribution Merrill and Reid have made to the Four-Style Behavior Theory is a third dimension, *Versatility*. They define it as that “dimension of behavior that indicates the extent to which others see us as adaptable, resourceful and competent . . . It reflects the effort that a person makes to have a relationship succeed, the skill shown in this effort, and finally, the endorsement that he or she earns as a result of it.”

Atkins’ *The Name of Your Game* uses the unfortunate analogy of game playing (which extends even to the book’s title). But his volume is probably the most practical of the lot. Chapter Six, “Overplaying Our Game,” is alone worth the effort of reading the book. In it, Atkins develops the observation that “our so-called weaknesses are nothing more than strengths pushed to an excess.”

John G. Geier rightly points out that there is no “best” or “ideal” behavioral style. Our style (which may be a combination of more than one quadrant) is not rooted as physically and rigidly in us as the Four Temperaments were thought to be. Nevertheless, our style represents a *manner of dealing with life’s tensions*, which we have learned to use from early childhood. It’s our characteristic way of coping.

Learning to Adapt

What is important, therefore, is learning to adapt, modify and harness negative aspects of our style and build on the positive aspects.

The tri-dimensional model in Figure 4 is an attempt to highlight the need for developing versatility. The receding dimensions of the four quadrants indicate the negative characteristics of each style. As you learn to adjust and modify those qualities, you can move forward on the scale of versatility.

For instance, a “Steady,” by learning to set clear priorities, can begin to say “no” to the unimportant requests of others without feeling guilty. On the other hand, a “Dominant” would have little trouble saying no, but might have to work on softening the harsh tone of “Bug off, buddy!” responses.

The Four-Style Behavior Questionnaire as an assessment instrument obviously is limited and superficial. But in many cases, it has helped people attain a very real “aha!” in understanding how their behavior affects others, and vice versa. You can distribute extra copies of the questionnaire so that trainees can fill them out with respect to one another – to check self-perceptions against the perceptions of others. Merrill and Reid – in fact most of the experts – insist on the primary need for others’ descriptions. Geier, however, has designed his form from self-description.

If the needs of the training session require it, such as in team building, you can use a comprehensive format such as Geier’s Personal Profile System.

Seven Applications

Interpersonal communication. The most obvious use of the behavior style concept helps people understand why they act the way they do and helps them learn to modify their communication

styles (without denying their basic style-orientation) to become more effective communicators. To understand the fullness of the theory and to test it out, participants should use a commercial program.

Improving meeting skills. If you are conducting a skill-based course and want to help the participants understand and practice specific task and maintenance functions, then it helps a “Compliant,” for example, to realize that he or she may not have a problem giving information or clarifying what has been said, but needs to “stretch” in order to initiate the roll of gate-keeper. A “Dominant” will easily summarize and give opinions, but may have to work hard on harmonizing and encouraging. Exercises can thus be tailored to the needs of individual participants.

Conflict resolution. One of the essential points stressed in the Thomas and Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument is that the four styles (see Fig 2) – as well as “Compromise,” a combination of two modes – all have their place and specific uses in peace-keeping. It is a genuine insight for “Dominants” to realize they have a natural tendency to use the Competing mode in cases where, say, an Accommodating mode would be more effective. Zoll and Simpson use slightly different terminology, but the quadrants are almost identical. Learning to deal with conflict is one of the hallmarks of versatility, but first one has to learn to deal with oneself. That is why I suggest that the Four-Style Behavior Theory should be the foundation for training in conflict resolution.

Team Building. Depending on the identified team-building needs, it is probably better to use a comprehensive approach, such as Merrill and Reid’s Style Awareness Training, Wilson Learning Corporation’s Managing Interpersonal Relationships, Leo McManus/American Management Association’s Management and Motivation, or Stuart Atkins’ LIFO®. John Geier’s Personal

Profile System is relatively easy and extremely effective to use in teambuilding workshops. His programs can be adequately covered in a half-day, with an equal amount of time applying the learning to specific team problems such as poor communication or ineffective learning.

Performance Appraisal. Robert E. Lefton, president of Dimensional Training Systems, has coauthored a very interesting book that outlines four styles of management (See Fig. 2). The book deals comprehensively with each style’s characteristics and concludes that Q4 (Dominant-Warm) is the most productive style for appraising employees’ performance.

Leadership. Knowledge of your own behavioral style will add insight into why you may tend to gravitate naturally toward one particular quadrant or corner of the grid. If you concede that no other single style works best in every management situation, it obviously is helpful to be aware of the style you are likely to adopt “automatically” so that you can modify it when the situation demands.

Time Management. While teaching this old standby, you can emphasize the golden rules of time management (write a daily to-do list, set goals and priorities, bunch telephone calls, hold stand-up meetings, etc.). But a “High-Dominant” probably does not need to make a to-do list, while “High-Influential” and “High-Steadies” certainly do! By knowing your own basic behavioral style, you can deal more easily with the underlying problems of your own management of time.

You can, for instance, examine Kahler's list of the major types of compulsive behavior (Be Strong, Be Perfect, Please Me, Hurry Up and Try Hard) and personalize an action plan with specifics instead of soporifics.

Which system is best?

No one has produced an ideal theory of behavioral style that can fit all needs. To select one suitable for your needs, good starting points would be Marston's *Emotions of Normal People*, Merrill and Reid's *Personal Styles and Effective Performance* and Atkins' *The Name of Your Game*.

You will find that some commercial programs include computerized and personalized printouts; some have excellent video examples; a few have sales-oriented versions. But the best way to examine the effectiveness of a behavioral style program is to sit in, if possible, on a workshop offered in-house by a nearby company. It is an excellent way to catch the flavor of a program, to see how participants react to it, and how they pick up and apply the principles.

If that can't be done, then call *several* training directors of companies that use a particular program. Ask hard and concrete questions. Only you can be the judge of how well the program would work in your own environment.

If you were a knight or a lady in the Middle Ages, you would have had to guess at your bile or phlegm levels to identify your predominant behavior style. The means for identifying that style today are much more accurate, scientific and helpful in promoting self-understanding and improving your relations with others

TRAINING/HRD – January 1983

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READING LIST AND SOURCES

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