

Opposites Should Attract

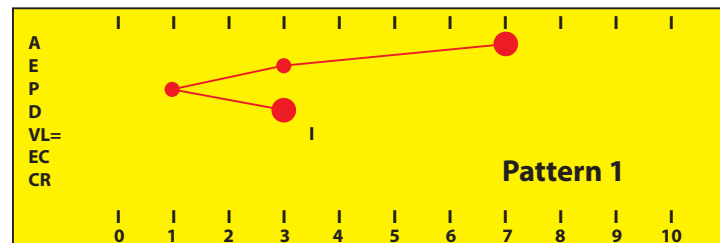
Developing a profitable organization means recruiting, managing, and motivating a diverse group of people. Just as effective performers contribute a variety of skills and experiences, differing temperaments are also needed. Much has been written recently about the necessity of homogeneity of an executive team. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Can you imagine every executive in the company having the same personality as the vice-president of sales or the vice-president of manufacturing? Common orientations lead to a narrow understanding of the marketplace and the purpose of the organization. Every organization needs different leadership and communication styles at various levels and departments – from the boardroom to the shop floor. It is these different synergisms that create everything from a new product to the best way to lay out the shipping room. Outstanding people know how to recognize and take advantage of the strengths of others, even if those others may drive them crazy.

Let's explore some personality opposites. Why they need each other, and why they can irritate each other with their temperamental differences.

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First there are *substantive* differences in how people look at their world –

Higher A/Lower D versus Higher D/Lower A



In the world of work there cannot be two more opposite personality types with fundamentally different orientations than the Higher A/Lower D people (see Pattern 1) versus the Higher D/Lower A people (see Pattern 2).

Risk v Safety -

The Higher A's are venturesome people who are comfortable with risk. The Higher D's are more comfortable when outcomes are known.

Ambiguity v. Clarity –

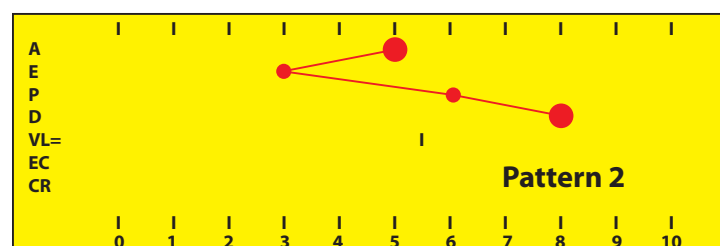
The Higher A's are comfortable in an environment where many things might not be clear, well-defined, or quantifiable. Conversely, the Higher D's are most comfortable in an environment where there are clear precedents and guidelines.

Abstract v. Concrete –

The Higher A's think in terms of conceptual ideas, often with a broad brush, and *what* can be achieved. The Higher D's think in more practical terms, determining *how* something can be achieved.

Delegative v. Hands-on -

Higher A/Lower D's don't like to get involved with much detail work or follow-through. Higher D/Lower A's, conversely, enjoy detail work and are attentive to follow-through.



It can be “interesting” to watch these two individuals (or departments) work with each other. They can drive each other crazy. One considers the other a fussy “stick in the mud” who always points out how hard it will be to accomplish just about anything. The other often considers his colleague a bull in a china shop, and who makes unrealistic demands or promises often on someone else’s behalf, usually the Higher D’s.

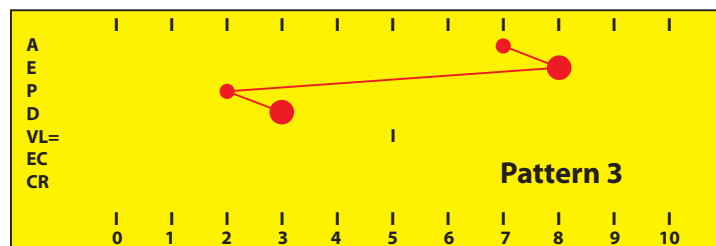
However, these people need each other. The Higher D/Lower A acts as a brake or compass for the Higher A/ who, left unchecked, can get too far ahead of herself. The Higher D/ brings structure and order to an organization or department that needs these qualities in order to properly function. It is the Higher D/ that is being brought to the forefront to manage costs and define focus.

Conversely, the Higher D/ needs the Higher A/ to initiate new business/strategic plans, new products or services, acquisitions, or developing a vision in a changing, uncertain market.

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Then there are the *communication style* differences –

Higher E/Lower D versus Higher D/Lower E –



While the above Pattern 3 also illustrates the Higher A/Lower D combination, it also illustrates a Higher E/Lower D combination describing a distinct communication style. His opposite is the Higher D/Lower E seen in Pattern 4.

Selling v. Telling –

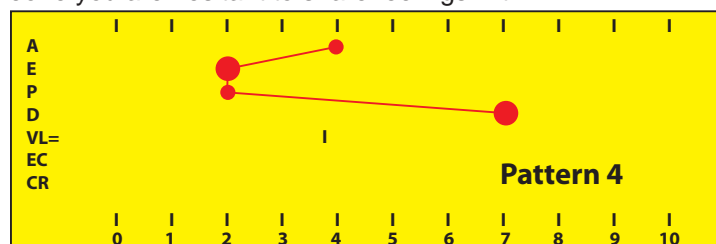
The Higher E/ personality employs a communication style based on persuasion, friendliness, and emphasizing the benefits of a product, service, or course of action. His Lower E/ counterpart speaks in a direct, straightforward, and occasionally blunt fashion. Ask him a question, he gives you an answer – end of story.

Impressing v. Informing –

The Higher E/ wants to influence others by making a good impression. This can be done by physical appearance in addition to manner of speaking. Her communication style is often labeled “enthusiastic.” The Lower E/, conversely wants to influence a decision or belief based upon facts, data, and probabilities. Her communication style is often labeled “dry.”

Open v. Reserved –

The Higher E/ “open” personality invites familiarity. This person has a demeanor of friendliness; someone you feel comfortable with. The Lower E/ reserved individual, on the other hand, appears slightly distant; someone you are hesitant to share feelings with.



Observing these two personalities can be entertaining. I have heard the Higher E's say that their counterparts "have no personality." The Lower E/ response is often a good-natured jibe about how the Higher E/ could carry on a meaningless conversation with a tree stump.

Each communication style serves the other's needs. The Higher D/Lower E's forte is providing the necessary information to the Higher E/ so the Higher E/ can "package and sell." This "selling" can be as basic as selling a product or service or communicating a strategic vision to employees or the marketplace.

Within the various areas of the organization people respond more effectively depending on management's communication style. In their daily activities people are generally responsive to supervisors who "speak my language." Areas such as sales and administration are responsive to the Higher E/Lower D style; finance and research, on the other hand, to a Higher D/Lower E style – and a good executive knows how to shift between the two styles.

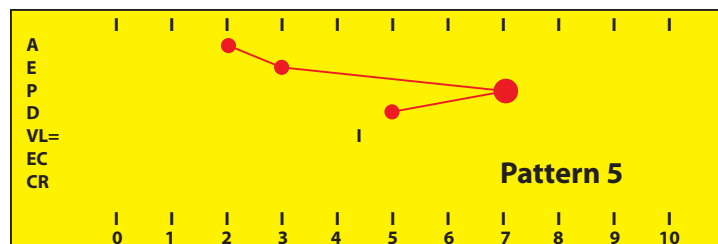


The last primary trait, the P, describes how people actually do their work.

Higher P versus Lower P

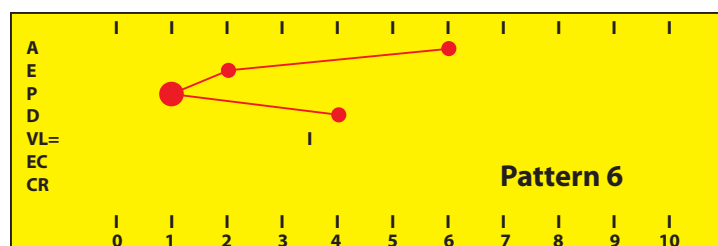
Patient v. Impatient –

The Higher P person is physiologically relaxed and temperamentally patient. He or she likes to approach and complete work in a deliberate and methodical way where there is a minimum of disruption and maximum predictability (Pattern 5). Their Lower P compatriots are physiologically tense and temperamentally impatient. They like to quickly move among different tasks and, while they rarely admit it, thrive on disruption and unpredictability (Pattern 6).




Systematic v. Shotgun –

Higher P's are systems people. They are most productive and efficient when doing one or many activities in an organized, sequential fashion. They are effective in areas like accounting, production, and customer service where a systematic, sequential flow is critical. Their counterparts are more effective in areas where there is comparatively little flow, where immediate urgency and response to pressure to a variety of simultaneous activities are required. These might include outside territory sales, plant managers, and many executive positions.



Lower P's have called their counterparts "slow," mistaking speed and a relaxed demeanor for inefficiency. Higher P's call their counterparts "erratic" or "impulsive," like water bugs on a summer pond.



Again, consider what each brings to the table.

Accounting, computing, production, and many other areas have to be set up in organized and systematic ways. And employees and supervisors who are most successful in these activities are usually Higher P's. In fact a Lower P shotgun/crisis-management approach in a Higher P job environment creates a stressful environment resulting in little work actually being completed and a lot of errors.

Conversely, in a stressful environment where problems pop up unexpectedly and solutions have to be immediately implemented, a deliberate and systematic response can result in missed opportunities. Here the Lower P personality is needed.

Education, skills and experience are three essential variables of the organization team, but the temperament to properly execute and manage is often overlooked. Recognizing others' characteristics as complementary strengths for effective organization building is a mandatory management skill. Different perspectives result in more intelligent decisions. Different communication styles result in higher commitment. And, finally, knowing when to get involved and when to mind your own knitting increases productivity.