

Unique Working Styles: What's Yours?

To get more out of your team, first figure out how your employees (and you) work best--and then assign tasks accordingly.

There is nothing more frustrating than listening to people haggle over different definitions of what constitutes "work." Catty conversations about who's working harder, who's working smarter, or who's not working at all are more about judging others than solving inefficiencies.

I'd like to steer you away from this all-or-nothing dialogue ("I work all the time and you never work") to a more robust conversation about what work *really* is. And, in the process, help you to appreciate not only your own unique working style, but also the working style of others on your team.

As my thinking has developed over the years, and after perusing many, *many* personality tests, I believe that there are four basic working styles: Doing, Leading, Loving, and Learning.

The best teams have a balance of all four styles. And the best organizations have many well-balanced teams who are confident in their working style and understand the necessity of divergent types or work. So, what's your style?

Doing

Doers execute. They come alive when tasks are complete, lists are checked, or projects are tackled. They typically have intense focus and are detailed in their efforts.

Doers are usually so focused, however, they may forget to look up and communicate *what* they're doing. Doers also tend to dive into work with little forethought. They believe that everyone should "Shoot, Fire, Aim" and tend to devalue the important work of planning.

Leading

Leaders create the vision and inspire others to believe in it. You can't help but listen to, admire, and follow the Leaders. Without Leaders, we would be spinning in a hamster wheel with no real vision.

Leaders can be detached from others, not completely understanding *all* that goes into executing their vision. Because they're out in front, they sometimes forget to check in with the people following them.

Loving

Lovers are relationship-builders. Believing that we're stronger together, they thrive in harmony and work hard to manage relationships and build consensus.

People strong in the Loving working style are sensitive and empathic. They have an unconscious finger on the pulse of every other person on the team. If you want to know how others on your team are *really* feeling, ask the Lover.

But Lovers can suck at follow through and more detail-oriented work. Left to their own devices, they can out-empathize anyone and make people feel great, but not provide "tangible" work.

Learning

Learners are the researchers. These engineer types love learning and meticulously understanding the nuances of a problem.

They are deliberate, disciplined, and tend to think more strategically than most people.

Without others, however, Learners wouldn't get much done. In order to execute their best-laid plans, they need a team ready to act. Their strategy is only as good as the problems they *actually* solve--not in theory, but in reality.

Theologian [Howard Thurman](#) says, "Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive."

So, let's get over the notion that all work looks one way. It does not. Nor should it. You need many people doing many things to accomplish many goals.

Everyone has unique strengths that become super-charged once they're aligned with other people's strengths. Rather than critique someone who you believe "isn't working," make sure *you're* living out your unique contribution in a powerful and sustainable way. Just do what makes you come alive.



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