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WORKSHOP ONE

Exercise 1.1 | Planning for Progress

Considering this investment in you leader development . . .



What are three areas of learning that you hope to master over the next 5 years?

How will these areas improve your performance?

World-Class Performers

Our research into World-Class Performers remains an ongoing process. We use formal and informal methods to gain input from world-class actors, actresses, athletes, business executives, musicians, non-profit pioneers, police officers, and just about every other area where we can find and document excellence. Over the years, we have been fascinated by the similar reactions and responses we receive from all walks of life and all World-Class Performers. A decorated policeman tends to say the same things as a multiple Stanley Cup winner, Super Bowl Champion, or even an Emmy Award-winning actress. We want to make two vital points: first, there are certain things the truly world-class do that set them apart. Second, one does not need to be famous to be world-class. World-Class Performers are all around us. You may even be one – or chances are you know one.



Exercise 1.2 | Your Identified World-Class Performers

When you think of World-Class Performers, you are likely to have a couple of people pop into your mind.

Who do you consider to be World-Class Performers, and why do you identify them as such?

Who?	Why?

Beyond technical proficiency, what additional skills make them world-class performers?

The goal in sharing our research about what sets the genuinely world-class apart from the merely average is to help leaders everywhere look in the mirror and see areas for improvement. If one wants to be world-class, it stands to reason that one could get there faster and easier by adopting what the world-class do to set themselves apart. If one is already world-class, they can continue to improve.

While we will talk about the nine characteristics of the world-class, each shares a specific aspect: they possess a certain amount of talent in their field. They may not be the most talented or, in some cases, had to work hard to develop their skills, but they possess talent.

Over the past decades, we have seen another universal truism: World-class performers work on their people skills. It is not enough to be talented; that will only get you so far. Folks who work to get on top – and stay on top – realize they need to work on their people skills. This used to be considered a “soft skill.” Now, the best of the best realize its importance and how essential it is to success.

Behavior #1: Use Performance Feedback or Game Film

Every World-Class Performer uses feedback to uncover tendencies that might keep them from reaching the next level.

In every profession, people who desire to improve their performance know they must reflect on what they have done to do it better in the future. Athletes review game film, actors study videos of their performances, and musicians listen to recordings of themselves.

Teachers are observed and evaluated by their supervisors, doctors have peer reviews, police officers are filmed while practicing firearms use, and lawyers read depositions and trial transcripts. Every World-Class Performer has a tool that enables them to examine and evaluate their behavior, see what they are doing well or poorly, and pinpoint areas for improvement or growth.

World-Class Performers then make the conscious decision to address their areas for improvement.

Next Leader Now provides performance feedback continuously through your experience. We begin with your *Work of Leaders* profile because it is one of the best tools we know of to increase your awareness by identifying behavioral tendencies, personality traits, and types.

These tools help in two ways. First, they help you understand yourself, and second, they allow you to recognize behavior patterns in other people to understand them better. As a leader, you need to work with a variety of people on various levels. It will help you do your job better by identifying how different team members think, react, and want to be treated.



Perhaps you unknowingly dominate conversations, ask questions without listening to the answers, or have little patience. Maybe you are too critical, uncomfortable with change, or overly concerned about details.

Everyone has blind spots – areas where they need to improve. Performance feedback makes those blind spots visible and, by extension, correctable.

Behavior #2: Turn Unconscious, Negative Tendencies Into Conscious, Positive Choices

Most areas for improvement are blind spots. World-Class Performers seek to uncover these unconscious tendencies and develop conscious triggers that control them.

According to Jack D. Hodge, author of *The Power of Habit*, 90% of what we do is rote. We have routines, habits, and everyday practices that become essentially automatic. But outstanding leadership is not a passive, un-thinking activity. It must be the opposite of routine and rote. It must be thoughtful, dynamic, and proactive.

As discussed above, some of our unconscious habits, practices, and tendencies can be negative. Successful people tend to eliminate the significant habits that would otherwise get in the way.

World-Class Performers differ in that they identify the nearly invisible things they don't even realize they are doing that might disproportionately impact their performance.

For instance, how often have you been in a situation where a colleague or friend checks their mobile phone while you are in the middle of a meaningful discussion. You are not likely to feel like that person is listening to you. If you see that tendency in yourself, what might you be communicating by glancing at your phone instead of directly engaging in a discussion?

World-Class Performers seek to uncover these unconscious tendencies and develop conscious triggers that control or direct them. This is why performance feedback has been baked into Next Leader Now. Each workshop, coaching session, and online interaction provides crucial performance feedback you can use to identify these tendencies and improve on them.



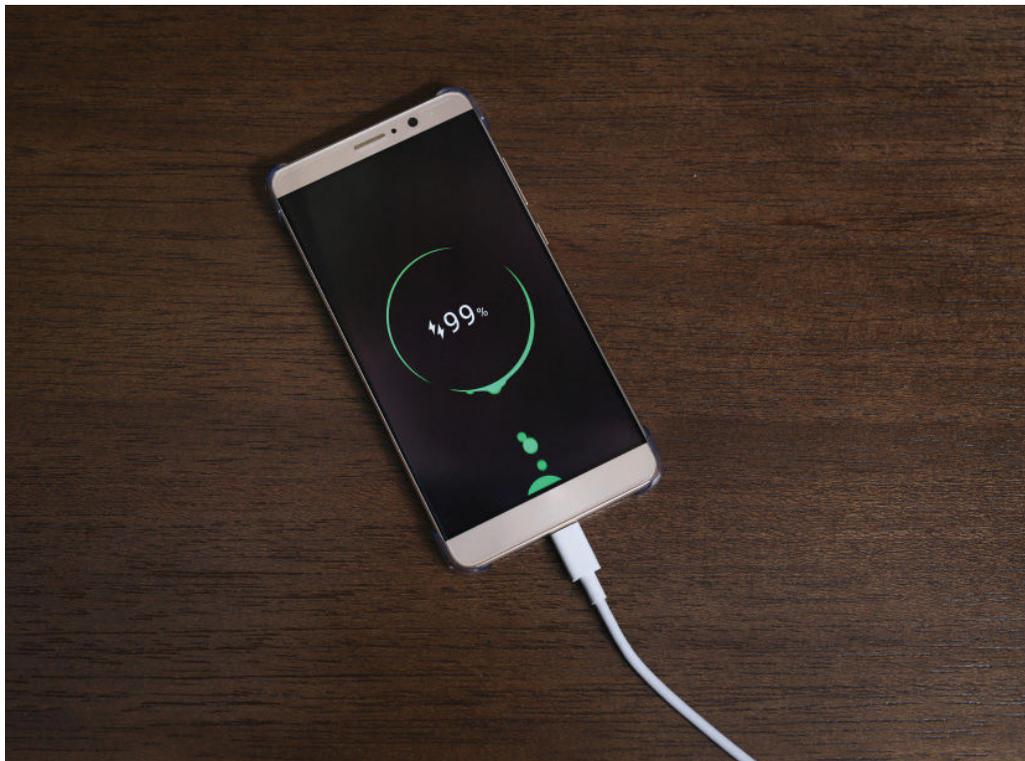
Behavior #3: Practice Energy Management

World-Class Performers learn that energy is a finite resource. How to spend that energy becomes a critical decision, and not taken lightly.

Every World-Class Performer we have ever met practices some sort of energy management. Further, they learn that energy is also a finite resource. How to spend that energy becomes a critical decision, and not taken lightly. They invest maximum energy in areas that can improve performance and waste little or no energy on events or situations beyond their control. As a leader, it remains critical not to waste energy on circumstances beyond your control, nor to continually rehash the same issue or wish a challenge away.

One of the most significant areas where leaders tend to waste energy regards defensiveness. World-Class Performers do not waste their energy on being defensive about situations. If a coach, director, conductor, or mentor offers challenging advice, World-Class Performers stop and listen, even if they ultimately decide it may be unhelpful.

Likewise, when faced with new members on the team – members who ultimately want to contribute and maybe even take their jobs – World-Class Performers waste no energy being insecure or defensive. They recognize it as a drain on precious resources. They improve their execution. They don't sabotage the new person. They accept their presence as a challenge and strive to get better.



Behavior #4: Realize That What Is Required For Improvement May Be Counterintuitive

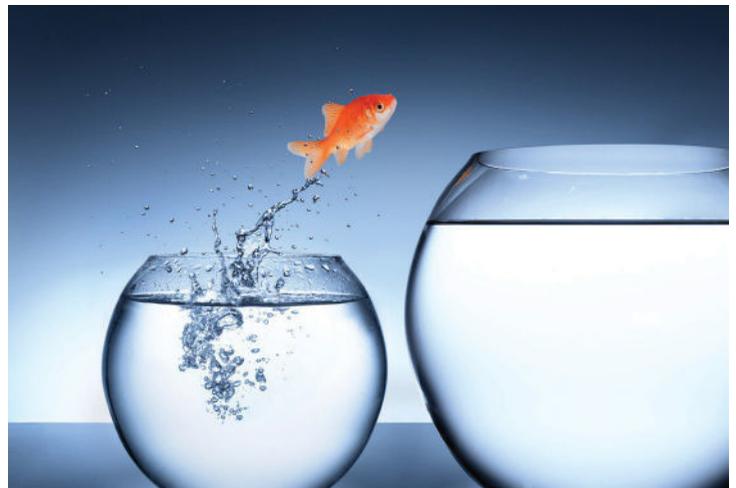
Very good performers do many things well – naturally. World-Class Performers realize that what is required to reach the next level may not be intuitive or natural but counterintuitive and involves developing skills that don't come naturally.

World-Class Performers think creatively about challenges and are willing to change direction, even in ways that do not feel natural, to improve. They recognize that everything will not come to them naturally, and many times they may need to do things counterintuitively.

As you will learn with DiSC, some people tend to be more people-oriented while others tend to be more task-oriented.

Those more people-oriented can sometimes struggle with accomplishing tasks in the face of adversity due to their concern about the comfort of their teammates. Conversely, task-oriented people might struggle to maintain team harmony because their task focus is placed ahead of efforts to build team cohesion. In these cases, people-oriented folks may benefit from playing more of a taskmaster role in situations, even if it is counterintuitive. And task-oriented people might make more efforts to establish relationships with their team, even if those efforts feel like an unproductive use of time.

In our work with skilled leaders, many behaviors required in decision-making roles are counterintuitive to those who have been successful as individual contributors. The availability of performance feedback will help you, your coach, and your cohort develop strategies to overcome your tendencies and provide a more comfortable framework for your more counterintuitive improvements.



Behavior #5: Develop A Clear Vision

World-Class Performers have a vision. They can see what others can't long before it happens.

Perhaps the most crucial attribute of World-Class Performers is having a clear vision. They can see what others can't long before it happens. World-Class Performers develop a picture of their improved, imagined future. They can visualize this future in specific, tangible, and incredibly motivating ways, even in the face of significant challenges. The vision remains so essential and clear that overcoming any obstacle to achieving it becomes worth the effort.

So crucially, World-Class Performers can develop a vision both for themselves and their teams. Research shows that structure and outcomes might differ between a personal and a team vision, but the processes are similar.

Personal Vision

World-Class Performers have a clear picture of what they want to achieve in their careers and are less wedded to the process of getting to those goals. Most importantly, this vision might be primarily personal, but professional goals are still essential to achieve that personal vision. World-Class Performers know how these elements interplay and adapt accordingly.

Team Vision

Research shows that crafting a vision represents overwhelmingly what the best-rated leaders do to drive their organizations forward. After all, the most fundamental role of a leader is to guide people from one place to another. Most, if not all, employees want to know where they are going.



In the book *Work of Leaders: How Vision, Alignment, and Execution Will Change the Way You Lead*, the authors address the myth of “Crafting Vision.” They point out that most employees believed crafting a vision was the sole responsibility of the C-Suite in the past.

The Executives, or more often the President and CEO, sat “high atop a mountain, deep in contemplation until inspiration hits, and bam, the vision appears.” This concept has been in practice for many years. As time went on, a select few organizations created a compelling vision that drove actual results.

Connecting Others’ Visions

The practice of crafting a vision and the need to do it collaboratively now stand as a vital element for an organization and a leader’s success. No longer does the ivory tower approach work. Skilled leaders now expand their ability to guide team performance by understanding each team member’s vision. Ultimately, people want to have a say in where they are going and will not blindly follow a set of platitudes.

Behavior #6: Seek Out Coaches And Mentors

Even though the performer may be better at the actual activity than the coach, World-Class Performers know it takes an outside set of eyes to uncover areas for improvement.

Coaching demonstrates comparisons between how public performance (athletics, the arts, etc.) and typical career roles align. In athletics, acting, music, or other public performance careers, those individuals have a built-in coach. However, most business professionals go their entire careers without a meaningful coaching relationship.

We have paired you with a Solutions 21 coach because our research shows its imperative value in identifying challenging tendencies, overcoming those tendencies, and building muscle-memory habits.

Our research also provides a few interesting things about your relationship with a coach.

The coach is there to make you better. The coach does not have to be better than you to be influential; it only has to make you better. While it might be counterintuitive, your coach does not need superior career experience in your field to make you better. The coach simply needs to apply knowledge and training to your efforts to improve.

A mentorship relationship differs from one with a coach. With coaching, the entire relationship centers around improving your performance. Mentorship, on the other hand, often has an emotional component to it.

Mentors tend to be people who care deeply about you and your development and relationship over the long term. While mentors can certainly provide coaching help, the personal nature of the relationship can impact the feedback you receive.

Our experience has shown that World-Class Performers surround themselves with coaches *and* mentors, balancing their feedback for maximum improved performance.



Behavior #7: Develop A Tactical And Measurable Action Plan

Not only do World-Class Performers set goals, but they also break each goal into measurable, bite-size chunks each committed to a plan. World-Class Performers commit to action steps that achieve their goals.

World-Class Performers set goals and break each goal into measurable, bite-size chunks that they develop into plans. They do not hope to get better, but instead, they break everything down into action steps that they measure against timelines.

World-Class Performers develop their personal development plans and choose areas for improvement. Using their game film, they will pick a few places to build and create actionable tactics. Here is where coaches help.

Often, World-Class Performers cannot see the tendency to be addressed, even with game film. Often, things *look* and *feel* correct, and uncovering ways to improve is impossible if people believe they are already doing it correctly.

While the adage “practice makes perfect” may be widely known, it remains incomplete. “Perfect practice makes perfect” is more accurate. Unfortunately, in the absence of game film and a coach, people often perfect the wrong behaviors. Since it felt correct and they did not know their technique was flawed, while they may be practicing, they are flawed in their approach. A coach, using game film, can help World-Class Performers develop plans to take a step-by-step approach to continuous improvement.



Behavior #8: Get Over Losses Quickly

World-Class Performers can be highly competitive. They want to win and work hard to achieve results. A loss is an affront to all they have worked and prepared for. The best of the best get over a loss quickly and move on.

World-Class Performers can be some of the most competitive people on Earth. They want to win and work hard to achieve results. A loss represents an affront to all they have worked and prepared for. It hurts.

With that said, the best of the best move on from those mistakes. While something can be learned from a loss, it should be limited to gathering data to improve future performance.

With another deal to make, project to complete, or action item to achieve, there is simply no extra time to stew over past mistakes. Any effort expended on a past loss, instead of driving a future win, can be viewed as a waste.

And not just a waste of time, either; this also links directly to energy management. It is a waste of energy to dwell on the past. It is far more productive to look at what is and, even better, what can be. Nothing can be done about what has happened, but everything can be done about what can be.



Behavior #9: Use Positive Self-Talk

World-Class Performers know their actions tend to follow their thoughts. Negative thoughts produce negative outcomes. Positive thoughts create positive results. Changing how you talk to your inner-self can help shift your perspective.

World-Class Performers know that their actions tend to follow their thoughts. Negative thoughts produce negative outcomes. Positive thoughts create positive results. What we “see” in our minds sets the stage for what happens.

The Mayo Clinic defines self-talk as “the endless stream of unspoken thoughts that run through your head every day.” Psychology Today tells us that “those inner voices talk incessantly. And we should be paying attention, because what we say to ourselves has a direct impact on our success – or failure.” Plenty of research indicates that positive self-talk creates positive results. An analysis of 32 different studies of self-talk in sports suggests that the specific words we use when talking to ourselves also play a role in how well we perform.^{vi}

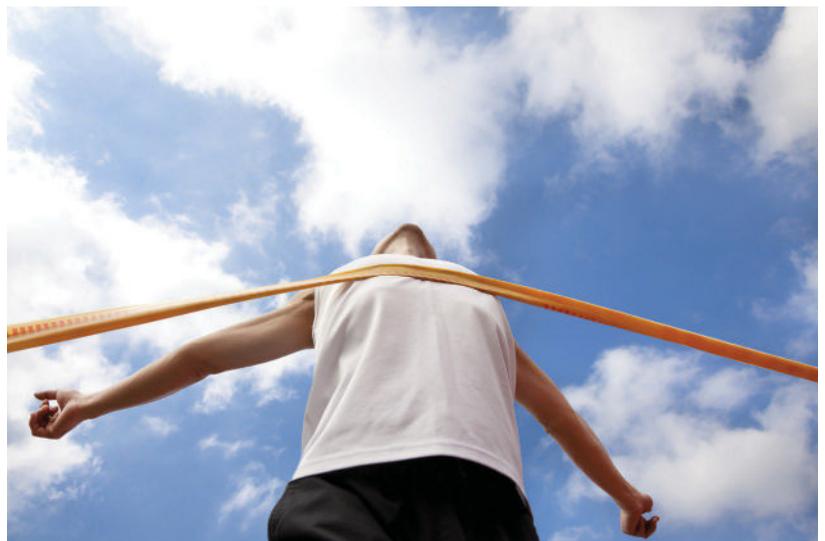
World-Class Performers intentionally develop, practice, and study positive self-talk as a discipline – one of those things in life that appears simple, but not easy. It takes work and discipline.

Writing for WebMD, Joanne Barker says, “The process of shifting your language is a lot like getting in shape.^{vii}” If you have not worked out in some time, you will need to get your muscles in shape. It makes sense that developing this essential skill would take work and discipline. It is a simple concept, but if it were easy, more folks would be world-class.

The Mayo Clinic has possibly one of the best tips we have ever seen to help people build these self-talk muscles. They suggest, “Start by following one simple rule:

Don’t say anything to yourself you wouldn’t say to anyone else. Be gentle and encouraging with yourself. If a negative thought enters your mind, evaluate it rationally and respond with affirmations of what is good about you.”

Unfortunately, some may interpret this advice as being “soft” when, in fact, it is crucial for maintaining a competitive mental edge.



Performance Feedback

We have discussed the importance of performance feedback to identify unconscious tendencies that might hold us back and turn them into conscious, positive choices.



Exercise 1.3 | Current Performance Feedback Opportunities

Considering the discussion about World-Class Performers . . .

What are your current sources of performance feedback?

What specific ways can you use those sources more effectively?

What are other sources of performance feedback that you are not yet using?

How might you adjust your approach based on the feedback you received?

Understanding Human Behavior with DiSC®

What Shapes Human Behavior?

Research shows that three primary factors shape human behavior.

Genes

Not surprisingly, genetics play a role in the way we behave. What might be surprising is that specific traits can be predicted by genetics. In studies of twin children, 40-60% of the variance in personality can be explained by heritability.^x

Personality

Merriam-Webster defines personality as “the totality of an individual’s behavioral and emotional characteristics.” In practice, personality, or how we discuss it, are the tendencies that drive differences in our behavior. This trait-based approach to personality is at the core of the work we do with DiSC.

Experience

While we might have specific behavioral tendencies, our experience significantly shapes our actual behaviors. Our experiences impact our core beliefs, allowing us to change our perspectives and, ultimately, behave in a new way when provided another opportunity.



Why Do We Use DiSC?

With many personality assessment tools available, we have chosen Everything DiSC® for the following reasons.

Awareness

In developing an ability to improve your skills as a leader, you must acknowledge three truths.

1. People are different.
2. It is helpful for leaders to know about those differences to improve performance.
3. You can use knowledge of individual differences to improve performance.

Validity

For an instrument to be valid, it must meet various standards that the scientific community established. Validation asks two fundamental questions:

1. How reliable is the tool? That is, researchers ask if an instrument measures consistently and dependably. If the results contain much random variation, it is deemed less reliable.
2. How valid is the tool? That is, researchers ask if an instrument measures accurately. The more that a tool measures what it proposes to measure, the more valid the tool is.

By both definitions, the scales have internal consistency and show high test-retest validity.

Simplicity

The DiSC model is simple to learn and understand, making it that much easier to apply.

Expertise

Solutions 21 has been implementing DiSC tools for more than two decades. We know the instrument expertly and have seen it positively impact organizations worldwide.

Introduction To DiSC

The DiSC Theory centers on the interaction of two dimensions of human behavior: the level of activity of a person, which ranges from active to thoughtful, and the level of acceptance, which ranges from questioning to accepting.

We visualize these models using a circle, which helps to conceptualize better how these dimensions interact.

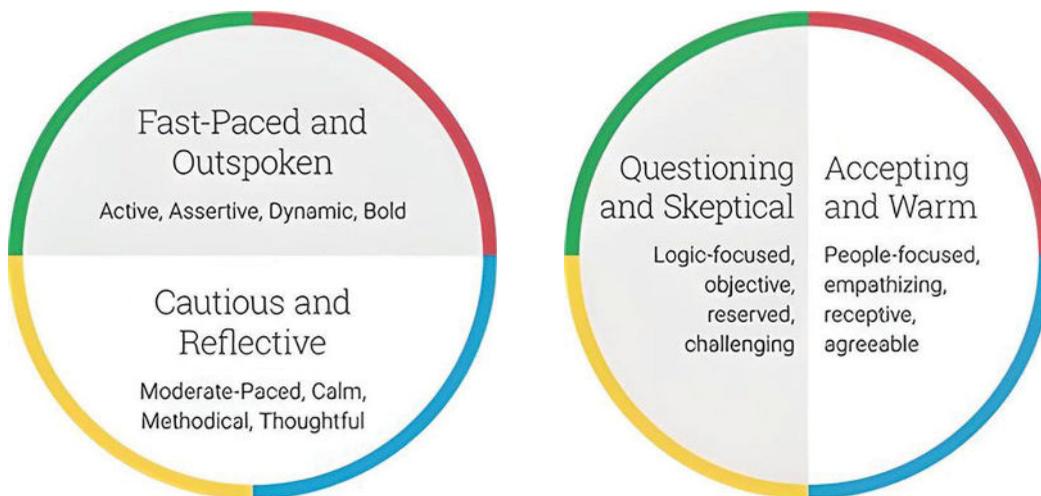
The Two Dimensions Of Human Behavior

Vertical: Level of Activity

The vertical dimension is best described as the level of activity, ranging from active to thoughtful. People with DiSC styles at the top of the circle tend to be fast-paced and are often described as assertive, dynamic, and bold. Traditional explanations of the model suggest that these people perceive themselves as more powerful than the environment. Because of this perception, they tend to exert effort to change their circumstances. Conversely, people with styles that fall toward the bottom of the circle tend to be more moderate-paced and are often described as calm, methodical, and careful. Traditionally, these people are thought to perceive themselves as less powerful than the environment, and thus they are more inclined to adapt to existing circumstances.

Horizontal: Level of Acceptance

The horizontal dimension ranges from questioning to accepting. People with DiSC styles that fall toward the left side of the circle are naturally more skeptical and often described as logic-focused, objective, and challenging. A traditional explanation of these characteristics states that these people see the environment as antagonistic. In other words, they instinctively withhold trust from people and ideas until those outside elements can be thoroughly vetted. On the other hand, people with styles on the right side of the circle are naturally more receptive and often described as people-focused, empathizing, and agreeable. Traditionally, they see the environment as being aligned with their interests. In essence, they are biased to see the people and ideas around them as favorable and trustworthy.



The Four DiSC Quadrants

DiSC is an acronym made up of the four primary styles the tool measures: Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness. Understanding your personality style, and developing the ability to discern, understand, and adapt to someone else's personality style, are invaluable skills that will help you achieve your goals.

<p style="text-align: center;">D Dominance</p>	<p>This describes people who are direct, forceful, and outspoken with their opinions</p>	<p>High ego strength, Goal-oriented, needs results and variety</p>	<p>Being taken advantage of or a loss of control</p>	<p>May show lack of concern for others' views/ feelings</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">i Influence</p>	<p>This describes people who are outgoing, enthusiastic, and lively</p>	<p>Motivated by challenges, Optimistic, People-oriented, Motivated by social recognition</p>	<p>Social rejection</p>	<p>Can become disorganized</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">S Steadiness</p>	<p>This describes people who are gentle, accommodating, and patient with others' mistakes</p>	<p>Consistent performance, Team-oriented, Motivated by maintaining the status quo</p>	<p>Loss of stability</p>	<p>Can become overly willing to give in</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">C Conscientiousness</p>	<p>This describes people who are analytical reserved, and precise</p>	<p>Analytical attention to details, Motivated by correctness and quality</p>	<p>Criticism of their work</p>	<p>Can be overly critical of self and others</p>

The Importance of “Style”

You may also notice that when discussing DiSC, we go out of our way to say “a person with the D style” rather than simply calling someone a “D.” This subtle difference in language is meant to minimize the natural temptation to pigeonhole people. Although a person with the “D” style predominantly demonstrates “D” traits, she has elements of the other four styles in her as well. For example, she is likely capable of patiently listening to a coworker describe his hurt feelings, even though this is more of an “S” quality.

Blending vs. Distinct Styles

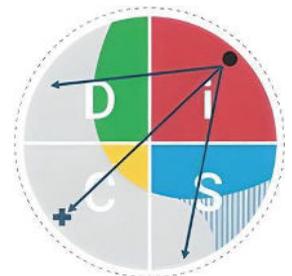
Although the DiSC dimensions form four distinct styles, it is more helpful to think of the DiSC circle in continuous terms. Consider that each of the four styles blends into its neighboring styles much the same way that colors blend into one another on the color wheel. Red and yellow are distinct colors, but they both combine to form a new color, orange. In the same way, the “D” and “i” styles are separate, but the space between them on the circle represents an equally distinct set of traits.

For instance, people with a “Di” style are more likely to describe themselves as daring and convincing than people with the “D” style. A person with an “iD” style is more likely to describe himself as charismatic and dynamic than someone with the “i” style. In both cases, these two styles (“Di” and “iD”) share something with the “D” and “i” styles, but they also have characteristics that differentiate them from those singular styles.

The Idea of Stretch

The continuous nature of the DiSC circle also helps people understand the idea of “stretch.” It is helpful to think of your style as your home base or comfort zone. Someone with a “C” style may be very comfortable working alone on analytical projects that require accuracy. However, this person may be called on to mingle with strangers at a professional function. In this case, the person is being asked to stretch across the circle toward the “i” style. Now, someone with the “C” style who has a dot close to the circle’s center will probably find this mingling distasteful but manageable.

On the other hand, someone with a “C” style whose dot is located on the edge of the circle is more likely to find this mingling highly stressful. In the second case, the person has had to travel farther outside their comfort zone, and that will require more energy. So, as a general rule, people with dots located close to the center usually have a somewhat easier time adopting different DiSC styles when the situation calls for it.



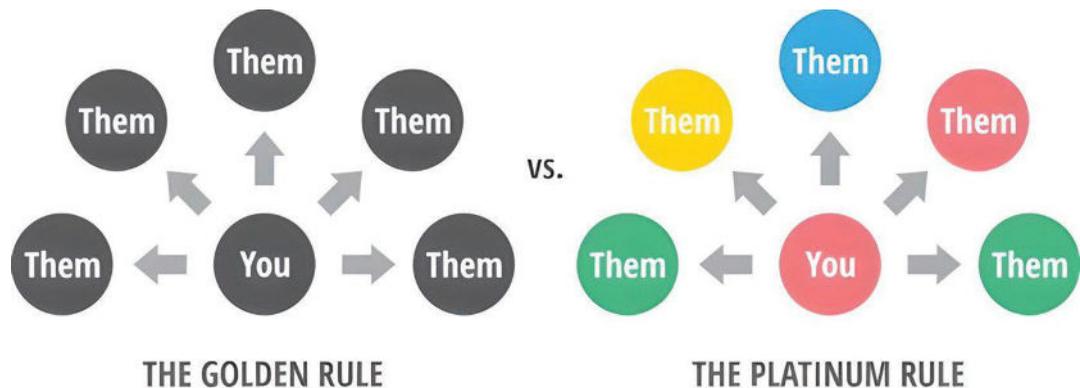
People whose dots are on the edge of the circle may have to stretch more (and experience more stress) if they want to adopt another style. On the other hand, because these people have more pronounced DiSC styles, those styles are often accompanied by some very distinct strengths.

Adapting to Other DiSC Styles

Everyone knows the Golden Rule, right? “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” It is a model to which many aspire to live, and rightly so – it is an excellent sentiment.

The Platinum Rule, however, is a little different. It acknowledges that what works for you might not work for someone else. The Platinum Rule is:

“Treat others the way they want to be treated.”



With what you know about DiSC, it makes sense, right? Someone with an i style might be inclined to build a relationship quickly, which might not fit well with the C style. Alternatively, the deliberate nature of the S style might frustrate someone who is a D style.

The crucial opportunity of DiSC is not understanding your behavioral tendencies but having the ability to recognize the behavioral tendencies of others and adapt to them. Building muscle-memory habits to put these skills into practice will fundamentally change the way you communicate, manage, and lead.

Exercise 1.4 | People Reading Using DiSC

Read the following scenarios and identify the primary DiSC personality style (Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness of the person described). Discuss your reasoning with your group.

Alex is a project manager who is known for being very direct and results-oriented. They often take charge in meetings, set ambitious goals, and push the team to achieve them. Alex values efficiency and is not afraid to make tough decisions.

D **i** **S** **C**

Jordan is a sales representative who is very outgoing and enthusiastic. They enjoy networking, building relationships, and are often the life of the party. Jordan is persuasive and likes to motivate others with their positive energy.

D **i** **S** **C**

Taylor is a customer service representative who is very patient and a good listener. They are known for being reliable, supportive, and always willing to help others. Taylor prefers a stable and harmonious work environment.

D **i** **S** **C**

Morgan is an analyst who is very detail-oriented and methodical. They enjoy working with data, following procedures, and ensuring accuracy in their work. Morgan values precision and often double-checks their work to avoid errors.

D **i** **S** **C**

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WORKSHOP TWO

The Work of Leaders

Nearly any time leadership becomes a discussion topic, the conversation quickly moves to the philosophy of how to do it well. That discussion is not new, and not going away; in fact, if you want to be overwhelmed, browse the leadership section of any bookstore or surf through the nearly 35,000 titles currently listed under “Leadership” online.

In *Next Leader Now*, we avoid discussing philosophies with a bias on looking at practical, research-based methods that get things done, which is why we have chosen *The Work of Leaders*.

Published in 2013, *The Work of Leaders: How Vision, Alignment, and Execution Will Change the Way You Lead* represented the culmination of an extensive review of leadership research, thousands of surveys, and work with hundreds of companies. The conclusion? The actual work of leaders, what leaders do to accomplish their goals, boils down to three activities.

The Moonshot

On May 25, 1961, in a joint session of Congress, President John F. Kennedy declared it a national goal to land “a man on the Moon and returning him safely to the Earth” by the end of the 1960s. The following is an excerpt of the speech: Put a “P” next to items that describe possibilities, and an “R” next to statements that articulate realities.

With the advice of the Vice President, who is Chairman of the National Space Council, we have examined where we are strong and where we are not, where we may succeed and where we may not. Now it is time to take longer strides-time for a great new American enterprise-time for this nation to take a clearly leading role in space achievement, which in many ways may hold the key to our future on earth.

I believe we possess all the resources and talents necessary. But the facts of the matter are that we have never made the national



decisions or marshaled the national resources required for such leadership. We have never specified long-range goals on an urgent time schedule, or managed our resources and our time so as to ensure their fulfillment.

...

I therefore ask the Congress, above and beyond the increases I have earlier requested for space activities, to provide the funds which are needed to meet the following national goals:

First, I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth. No single space project in this period will be more impressive to mankind, or more important for the long-range exploration of space; and none will be so difficult or expensive to accomplish.

...

In conclusion, let me emphasize one point. It is not a pleasure for any President of the United States, as I am sure it was not a pleasure for my predecessors, to come before the Congress and ask for new appropriations which place burdens on our people. I came to this conclusion with some reluctance. But in my judgment, this is a most serious time in the life of our country and in the life of freedom around the globe, and it is the obligation, I believe, of the President of the United States to at least make his recommendations to the Members of the Congress, so that they can reach their own conclusions with that judgment before them. You must decide yourselves, as I have decided, and I am confident that whether you finally decide in the way that I have decided or not, that your judgment – as my judgment – is reached on what is in the best interests of our country.

Exercise 2.1 | Vision Trivia

Organizations use vision statements as tools to tell employees, customers, and other stakeholders what world it hopes to create.



Can you name the companies from which these vision statements come?

Vision Statement	Company
To make people happy.	
To bring inspiration and innovation of every athlete* in the world. *If you have a body, you are an athlete.	
[To be] developing the social infrastructure for community.	
To become the world's most loved, most flown, and most profitable airline.	
To provide access to the world's information in one click.	



Creating a Vision

At any level of leadership, a vision is an imagined condition – a future state in which the organization or team creates something of unquestionable value, serves customers in unparalleled fashion, or reinvents the way it does business. It expands assumptions about what can be done; it provides purpose for organizations, teams, and individuals (including the leader); it drives the development of specific, vision-supporting goals; and it unifies people.

Additionally, three drivers support creating a vision: exploration, boldness, and testing assumptions.

Exploring Possibilities

Although a great vision often sounds simple and elegant, a good deal of effort and insight has usually gone into developing it. A discipline in exploring new ideas involves thinking at a big-picture level. It also involves resisting the temptation to choose the “right” idea too quickly. In short:

- Leaders need to be intentional about exploring new directions.
- It may help to suspend judgment and consider a variety of ideas.
- Exploration involves giving oneself the time to weigh options

This continuum highlights the spectrum between those who are more innovative and open to exploring new ideas, and those who are more practical and prefer to work with established facts and proven methods. This continuum helps teams balance the need for creativity with the need for reliability in problem-solving and decision-making.

Facts and Feelings

Creating a vision requires exploring ideas and being bold, but it is also crucial that the vision be grounded. Leaders can test their assumptions through several means, including seeking others’ advice and doing more formal research. This is not about looking for support, but about soliciting objective input and surfacing potential problems. In short:

- Leaders need to look beyond their thinking to test assumptions.
- It is important to recognize obstacles when developing a vision.
- Consider a variety of methods in checking your hypotheses.

Understanding where team members fall on this continuum can enhance communication and collaboration by ensuring that both logical and emotional perspectives receive consideration in team interactions.

Exercise 2.2 | Crafting a Vision

Consider your natural tendency in comparison to the group.



When it comes to crafting a vision as a group, what advantages does your inclination to be accommodating or strong-willed bring? What risks does it bring?

Does your team have a tendency toward discussing feelings and possibilities or realities based in logic? How does this impact your team's decisions or decision-making process?

Building Alignment

Alignment refers to the act of getting buy-in for the vision from everyone who will have a role in making it a reality. Alignment ensures that people are on the same page, both from a task and an emotional perspective.

Alignment requires ongoing one-way and two-way communication. In fact, the failure of a vision, no matter when it happens, can often have more to do with a lack of alignment than with the strength of the vision or the efficiency of execution.

Too often, leaders treat alignment as something to check off a to-do list. In reality, alignment must be a dynamic, ongoing process that requires the leader to continually monitor and realign as conditions and needs change. In fact, it sets the stage by proposing a plan for effective implementation, provides a forum for questions and concerns, brings people together behind the vision, and generates excitement for the vision.

Gaining and maintaining alignment represents a critical role for leaders at all levels. Alignment requires attention to upward, downward, and lateral communication.

Leaders in certain positions may need to use more time and energy to maintain alignment at all levels.

Three things drive building alignment: clarity, dialogue, and inspiration.



Inspiration

How do leaders get people truly excited to start a new project or initiative? They inspire others by painting an exciting picture of the future, sharing their own passion, and showing confidence in the team's ability to succeed. Leaders who are able to inspire others in this way achieve greater success in gaining and maintaining buy-in. In short:

- Real buy-in is not just getting people to go through the motions.
- When you express your passion, others become more committed.
- People need to see how their efforts will contribute to success.

Building Alignment

1. *DiSC Catalyst Homepage*
2. *Navigate to Build a Group*
3. *Create a Group Map*
4. *Once your Group Map is built, explore Group Insights*

What did the “Group Insights” reveal?



Communication

When communicating with others, it is essential to deliver a rational, structured message. Some leaders have trouble translating their great ideas into words. Others struggle to stay on topic or fail to relay the most critical points. When people do not understand your vision, how can you expect them to get on board? In short:

- Clear communicators explain the reasoning behind their ideas.
- When people understand a message, they can more easily buy in.
- Consider thinking the message through all the way to the end.



Exercise 2.3 | Communication in Action

Watch the first video of Charles introducing a new organizational vision.

What wasn't working in Charles's communication?

What signs did you see that it wasn't working for the team?

What would your recommendations be to Charles to improve?

Watch the second video and consider the differences. What did Charles do differently?

Execution

At the most basic level, execution makes the vision a reality. The leader must ensure that all conditions are in place so that everyone can do the work necessary to fulfill the vision.

Often people think of execution as something that happens in the trenches while the leader sits in an office thinking up the big ideas. But the truth is that the successful execution of a vision cannot happen without the deep commitment and support of the leader.

Execution is crucial because it propels the development of concrete strategies, makes the vision actionable, gives people a sense of achievement, and fulfills the promise of the vision.

The leader at every level needs to make sure the strategies and people are in place for the vision to become a reality. However, certain aspects of this role may look different depending on where you are in the organization.

The drivers of execution are momentum, structure, and feedback.



Pace

Refers to the speed at which we prefer to move through tasks and interactions. Some people are fast-paced and like to move quickly, while others prefer a more deliberate and methodical approach. Recognizing where we and others fall on this continuum can help in adjusting our pace to match the situation or the preferences of those we're working with, leading to more effective collaboration.

- Leaders often set an example when it comes to momentum.
- People tend to perform to the level of momentum that's expected.
- Without a sense of momentum, projects can stall out and fail.

Tactfulness

To execute a vision effectively, leaders need gauge the degree of sensitivity they bring to their communications and actions. It involves being considerate of others' feelings and perspectives, choosing our words and actions carefully to avoid offense. Tactfulness is particularly important in maintaining positive relationships and creating a respectful work environment. Understanding our own level of tactfulness and that of our colleagues can help us navigate interpersonal interactions more smoothly.

- To work productively, people need to know what is expected.
- Effective leaders respond to the structure needs of their teams.
- Structure helps to produce predictable, reliable outcomes.

Dialogue

One of the simplest ways to get others aligned around the vision is to engage them in a rich dialogue about the “who,” “what,” “why,” “where,” “when,” and “how” questions. When leaders involve others in two-way conversations like this, it not only increases buy-in but also gives leaders invaluable information. In short:

- True alignment requires openness to others’ ideas and concerns.
- People want the chance to ask questions and share their insights
- Dialogue helps leaders identify potential problems or disconnects.



Exercise 2.5 | Execution

Consider the discussion of pace and tactfulness.

Are there times when you should be more tactful or frank, but aren't? What makes it hard? What would make it easier?

Think of a time when the group disagreed on a decision. How did tactfulness help the discussion? How did frankness help?

Reflection & Action

Considering the discussions we had on World-Class Performers and DiSC . . .



What are specific actions you want to take to develop your personal leadership brand?

