

DISC Exercise

- Purpose:** To speed up a team's understanding of DISC
- When to use:** You'll need at least 4 people to use this exercise and you may need to play the part of one of the DISC profiles if the team is missing a High D, I, S, or C. You can have up to 200 people for this exercise; you simply need more physical space and more time to do the processing and debrief.
- Tools required:** You'll need a flipchart, a room people can easily move around in and you'll need to be familiar with DISC yourself!!
- Setting the scene:** Introduce the DISC flipchart and spend about 5 minutes explaining it.

Key points to cover include:
outgoing versus reserved;
task versus people;
3-4 quick points about each profile;
antagonistic versus favourable;
we are capable of each behavioural type, we simply have a preference for one or two over the others.
Tell (high Ds and Is) versus Ask (high Cs and Ss)

Normally I will have profiled all team members prior to training so they know their DISC profiles. If this hasn't been done you can get people to decide first "Are you outgoing or reserved?" And second "Are you task or people focussed?" This will give them a broad sense of where they fit. The debrief will then help them decide if they chose the appropriate group.

Time required; It's up to you! You'll need at least 30 minutes but you can keep drawing out gems for 2 hours or more!

The Exercise

Step 1: Divide the group into High Ds, Is, Ss and Cs (ie 4 separate groups) and get each group to stand or sit in a different corner of the room. (I match the corners of the room to the flipchart so I always know which group is seated where.)

Make sure at least one person has pen and paper to act as scribe.

Step 2: Give them the following task: "You have 8 minutes to plan a **THEIR COMPANY NAME** picnic to be held on May 1" –or any date and activity that's at least 4 weeks away.

You need a date at least 4 weeks away to bring out the strengths of the High Cs and Ss and I like the picnic because it highlights the people focus of the high Is. Remember the more people you have, the more time you'll need to complete the exercise. 8 Minutes is good for up to 20 people.

Watch out for the Ss and Cs who may feel they need to ask more questions to get started. Avoid giving them more info and reply something like 'Do whatever works for you'.

Then when you process the exercise, make sure you ask them how they felt with the level of instruction they were given. You'll also need to watch out for the Ds, who will finish way ahead of the others, and ask them to be patient. The process will soon make sense to them.

Step 3: Get everyone back together again. Say, "The purpose of this exercise is to see how different profiles go about completing a task." Refer back to DISC flipchart and say, "From what we've discussed who do you think we should ask first?" The group will laugh and probably say the High Ds! If they don't you can lead them there....

Get the High D spokesperson to read out how they organised the picnic. Then ask the rest of the group (not the High Ds) to reflect back what they heard. You'll get things back like "not enough detail", "everything gets delegated", "Doesn't sound like much fun", "It sounds already decided" etc. You can draw out a few traits as well eg "How much focus was placed on the people side?"

As words and phrases are called out, write them in the corresponding spot on the flipchart. Go through this process with the remaining profiles.

High I You'll hear a strong element of FUN, extended families get invited, there's an obvious focus on entertainment and socialising, committees get formed. Not much detail, deadlines are not realistic, no/little mention of money/funding

High S Very even, inclusive, sounds logical, step by step, safety issues addressed. It will have bored the high Ds and the High Is won't think it sounds like much fun etc

High C Detail, detail, detail!!!! Everything considered- even an alternative venue/date if it's raining, analytical, not much focus on people, high expectations, they probably ran out of time to complete the task as well! May sound too slow and/or blunt to the other types.

Step 4

Debrief what this means in a business/team context.

“What would happen if all systems were written by a High D?”

“What roles would a High I be best in?”

“What’s the best profile?” (Each has their strengths!)

“What’s missing in your team?”

“Who does most of the talking in your meetings?” (Normally high Ds and Is) “

What can you do to improve communication with your team?”

You can draw out whatever you want with your questions. I use it as a tool to deal with team issues that were raised at the diagnostic meeting.

I always end with “Please share at least one gem you got from this session” and I’ll ask an I or a D to go first...explaining that that gives the Cs and Ss a chance to process the question which always gets a laugh 😊

I’ve found this exercise makes DISC immediately meaningful to team members and it’s a lot of FUN.