YES! AND… CREATIVE GORILLA # 55

Flexing your style can help you to relate better to others, influence them more and so help in your creative endeavours…

Flex Your Style…

I am a man of fixed and unbending principles, the first of which is to be flexible at all times.

Everett M. Dirksen (1896 - 1969) US politician

"I'm flexing"

How easy is it for you to flex your style? Would your creative efforts improve if you flexed it more?

Have you ever driven a left hand drive car? Or for those of you that drive on the wrong side of the road from us in Britain, (just teasing!) a right hand drive car? For those that have, you will probably realise that you have to flex your style.

Driving in Spain recently, I realised that I had not even thought about the fact I was driving on the right, the change seemed totally natural. I had flexed automatically, even though it had been some months since I had last driven on the right.

Some other analogies which may be more relevant for you could include eating a meal with chop sticks or knife and fork (I'm sitting in an oriental restaurant writing this), swimming alternate breast stroke and front crawl (just had a swim) or, like the Dutch aircrew nearby, switching between English and Dutch at bewildering speed.

The driving analogy struck me as I was preparing for a section of a course on flexible communication whilst in Spain. The training related to work done by Robert Bolton and Dorothy Grover Bolton (you can find out more by reading their book *PEOPLE STYLES AT WORK: MAKING BAD RELATIONSHIPS GOOD AND GOOD RELATIONSHIPS BETTER*.

The crux of their work (with thanks to my colleague Caroline Harvey for introducing me to it) is that sometimes it can be difficult to work with your colleagues and when it is, it takes some effort to get on their wavelength and adapt to their style.

In this case (I'm not referring to their innovation style), a person's style is his/her pattern of assertive and responsive behaviour. People are less or more assertive and either more task oriented or people oriented. The pattern is useful in predicting how the person prefers to work with others. There are four elements to the style people have:

1. **BEHAVIOUR:** what a person does - the outer expression of a person's life
2. **BODY LANGUAGE:** gesture / pace of walking / loudness and speed of speech / words they choose / ask or tell conversation/ task or relationship
3. **PATTERNS:** a person's style is based on patterns of behaviour
4. **HABIT:** habitual behaviours

As you might expect, the authors assign these elements to four different types of people to:

Amiable – less assertive, more people driven

Analyst – less assertive, more task driven

Driver – more assertive, more task driven

Expressive – more assertive, more people driven

The author's assert (and it's easy to concur) that people who are very different from one another: -

Find it harder to establish rapport

Miscommunicate more often

Are less likely to be persuasive with one another

Annoy each other – just by being themselves

Do you know anybody like this? Do your difficulties help the creative process?

SO

If you are an "Expressive", how can you relate well to your opposite, the Analyst? I have the same question for "Drivers" and "Amiables".

The answer is to flex your style. Style flex is how you present your ideas in ways that are comfortable to you and the other person. It is about changing yourself, not the other person and getting into synch with them.

ALL it takes is a temporary adjustment of a few behaviours. When a relationship isn't going well, don't do more of the same – try something different.

Here's one change you can make for each type. (If you would like a one page summary of how you can flex your style to other types, please send me a note).

Amiable – make suggestions not statements

Analyst – give them time to think about your idea

Drivers – present the main points of your idea and only essential details

Expressive – Build on their ideas

ACTION

Identify someone whose behaviour annoys you. Try and identify their style (remember, less or more assertive, task or people focussed.) Flex your style to theirs and gauge the response.

TO CLOSE

Running the course with a client, one of the delegates Rob (now a Gorilla) reminded me of a good way to flex your style when you are very internally focussed (as I am when writing an article).

Simply flick your eyes upwards and this quickly relates you to the external world, (perhaps my wife could call "John, flick your eyes up" before she calls me for dinner!). If this tip doesn't work for you, flick your eyes in other directions and see if that works, as "up" may not be "external" for you.

Flex with style this week!

.John Brooker | Facilitate, Innovate, Transform.

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