

## Managers Spend Almost 20% of their Time Resolving Personality Conflicts

**Executives polled in a recent survey say that almost a fifth (18%)** of managers' time is spent dealing with personality conflicts between staff members. That's startling news – nearly one full day of each manager's week, every week.

The survey, sponsored by Accountemps, includes responses from 150 senior executives, employed by many of the largest companies in the U.S. and Canada. Read their press release, dated Oct. 16, 2006, at [www.accountemps.com](http://www.accountemps.com)

The survey asked, "what percentage of management time is wasted resolving staff personality conflict?" The average response was 18%.

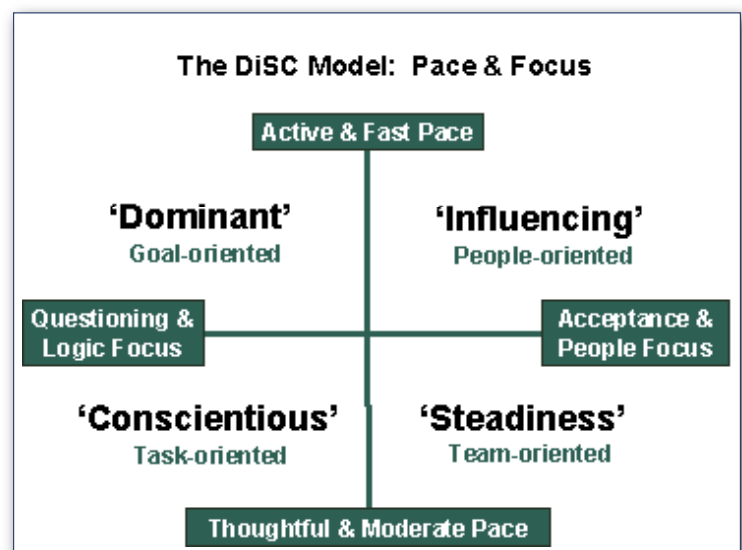
**There's no rule that says your co-worker needs to be your best friend**, but even if you don't have anything in common or even like each other, treating co-workers positively, with respect, is a must for successful business results.

Personalities are a reflection of what motivates us. Motivation is a reflection of getting our needs met. When our needs are met, we feel good about ourselves and others and self-esteem increases.

**Conflict exists when one or more parties are not obtaining what they need or want**, and are actively seeking their own goals. Much of this is caused by a simple lack of understanding. Why do our perspectives and intentions conflict with some co-workers, but not with others? Failure to consider the motivating reasons for our co-workers' behavior is most often the cause of conflict. **It's easier to assume they are careless, insensitive or just plain wrong than to examine their underlying motivation for the action.** When our co-worker's personality style is similar to our own, it is easy to share common perspectives. As the difference between our personalities grows, our views and perspectives diverge more often.

Some examples of opposing personality needs are:

- **Speed and pace.** Some people prefer to work at a moderate, even pace. Others like to work at a fast pace or with short bursts of activity.
- **Questioning focus vs. acceptance focus.** Some people have the need to question events and data to satisfy their need for correctness. Others are accepting of events and data and do not have the same need to question.
- **Logic/data focus vs. people focus.** Some focus on analysis, information, data and logic. Others have a natural inclination to focus on the person, relationships and interaction with others.
- **Goal-oriented vs. task-oriented.** Some have the need to see the big picture and focus on the goal at the finish line. Others get their energy from putting their attention on the sub-set of daily or weekly tasks.



These are just a few examples of root causes of personality conflicts. Personality conflicts and disagreements are a normal (and expected) part of business interactions. It's not if they occur, it's how we navigate through them that is important.

We believe in two types of solutions for personality conflicts, both preventive and contingent.

**Preventive Solutions:** A preventive action reduces the probability that an event will occur and takes place *before* the problem happens. We believe understanding of co-workers' motivating personality needs is the most important action to prevent personality conflicts. The best way to develop this understanding is through the DiSC Behavioral Profile. Have each co-worker or team member complete the profile and share their results with others, in a structured, classroom environment. The DiSC process examines the motivations for peoples' behaviors based on four dimensions of their personality. These behavioral traits are present in everyone, and knowing which tendencies are predominant is the key to understanding behavior, personalities and motivations.

Focus Performance Systems offers a class entitled, "**What is My Style? Understanding DiSC Behavioral Characteristics and Impact on your Team's Results.**" It's a 1-day classroom experience and is an excellent solution to prevent personality conflicts in your workplace.

**Contingent Solutions:** A contingent action reduces the seriousness of the problem and occurs *after* the problem happens. It's impossible to prevent all personality conflicts, and the way we handle them is very important. It's the moment of truth – in best cases, it has the capability to cement and even build relationships. At its worst, it can destroy relationships, reduce morale and cause people to quit their jobs. Examples of inappropriate ways to handle conflict are avoiding, accommodating or competing.

Many people just do not have the skills to discuss a sensitive personality conflict with another co-worker, without becoming accusatory, blaming or defensive. So what happens? One party goes to the manager, divulges the issue from their singular perspective and expects the manager to take care of it. Or both parties avoid the issue and the manager observes the negative effects of the conflict. The manager talks to them and tells them to resolve it. They try, become defensive and the conflict goes further underground. The result? The manager now has to spend time engaging in activities that should have been handled solely by the two parties involved.

What *is* needed is a *collaborative* process where both parties approach the conflict as a *mutual* problem allowing them to discover options that satisfy both their concerns. It's not easy, but it's a necessary, and under-appreciated, business skill.

Employees need to learn and use a conflict/disagreement process which invites non-defensive responses, encourages respectful discussion and creates mutual benefit to solve the conflict. We call this process the "Commit-Disagree-Commit" process - employees learn it in a 1-day classroom workshop entitled, "Positive Business Interactions with DiSC".

**We believe the ability to respectfully and maturely discuss personality conflict issues is a mandatory business skill**, but one that far too few employees possess. Teach and show them first, then hold all accountable to use a collaborative and relationship-preserving process to resolve personality conflicts themselves.

**Even better is to provide all employees with preventive action** – the knowledge of their co-workers' motivation and personality styles. This knowledge develops respect, trust and flexibility between co-workers, which combine to prevent personality conflicts.

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