

# OPTIMIZING MILLENNIALS' COMMUNICATION STYLES

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*Millennials, those individuals born between 1980 and 2000, compose the largest cohort of college students in the United States. Stereotypical views of millennials characterize them as technologically sophisticated multitaskers, capable of significant contributions to tomorrow's organizations, yet deficient in communication skills. This article offers insights for business educators to help millennials understand the influence of communication styles when optimizing communication effectiveness. Developing style-typing and style-flexing skills can serve as building blocks for millennials' subsequent interpersonal skill development in key areas such as audience analysis, active listening, conflict management and negotiation, and effective team building. An in-class exercise highlighting communication style-typing and style-flexing is included.*

**Keywords:** *millennials; communication skills; style-flexing*

MILLENNIALS, THOSE INDIVIDUALS born between 1980 and 2000, compose the largest cohort of college students in the United States. Stereotypical views of millennials characterize them as technologically sophisticated multitaskers, capable of significant contributions to tomorrow's organizations, yet deficient in communication skills.

According to jobweb.com (n.d.), a career development and job search website for new college graduates, effective communication skills continue to be the top-ranked criterion for managerial success. Although this has been the case since at least 1964 (Bowman, 1964), today's employers conclude these skills are most lacking in recent graduates (jobweb.com, n.d.). Therefore, a key question is what should business educators do to better prepare today's students in this important skill area? Communication skills, including the ability to problem solve, work in teams, and adapt to various audiences, are critical when developing solutions in today's workplace (Levy & Murnane, 2004). These interpersonal skills must be honed for today's student population in order for them to succeed in the 21st-century workplace.

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The purpose of this article is to offer some perspectives on today's millennial student population that may be influencing (inhibiting) their communication skills development and to provide some suggestions for how to address these acknowledged shortcomings in this next generation of workplace leaders. More specifically, we articulate key characteristics of today's undergraduate and graduate students, provide evidence of the importance of effective communication skills for both individual and organizational success, and offer several recommendations for how to improve millennials' communication skills. We believe that educating students about the concepts of style-typing and style-flexing will help them become more effective communicators by deepening their understanding of the communication process. We describe a specific assessment tool and an in-class exercise that, as business educators, we have successfully used to address the interpersonal communication skills shortfall among our undergraduate and graduate students as well as participants in executive development programs.

After having studied millennials and having worked with them closely during the past several years, we believe there is a gap between where these students are and where they need to be in terms of effective interpersonal communication skills. Understanding the implications of those acknowledged differences can help overcome millennials' communication deficiencies. We believe an appropriate place to begin this task is to understand more about who millennials are.

## **TODAY'S STUDENTS: A.K.A. THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION**

The millennials, those individuals born between 1980 and 2002, are characterized as technologically sophisticated multitaskers, who are accustomed to working in teams and who rely on their parents for guidance as they struggle to make decisions independently (Tyler, 2007). Common perceptions about this generation include the following:

- They crave feedback and praise, which can be perceived as high maintenance.
- Their parents continue to insinuate themselves into their children's lives, leaving others to question the millennials' independent thinking abilities.

- Their job-hopping ways can lead employers to question millennials' loyalty, and diminish employers' desire to want to invest in them. Only one fifth of millennials anticipate staying in a job for more than 5 years (Robert Half International, 2008).
- They are overconfident, opinionated, and expect to be heard (Alsop, 2007).
- They believe that they do not have to "pay dues" when they enter an organization.
- They are uncomfortable with criticism and can become aggressive and even caustic when criticized (Tyler, 2008).
- They enjoy structure and dislike ambiguity.
- They prefer clear rules, well-defined policies, and responsibilities.
- They claim to be committed to social responsibility and desire work-life balance.
- They see themselves as indispensable beings with high expectations and a desire to be sought after (Alsop, 2006).
- They see technology as something that is part of their lives, not something they adopt or try to integrate. It is inseparable from who they are and what they do (Beckstrom, Manuel, & Nightingale, 2008).

Milliron (2008) concludes that "college students place relatively low importance on some of the factors most emphasized in the literature as key to work success such as development of analytical and communication skills and the ability to work effectively with others" (p. 406). All their lives millennials have been with cell phones, pagers, computers, personal electronic entertainment, and most recently are constantly connected to social media outlets. They have more technology exposure than any previous generation. Yet this very fact of constant, informal, technology-based "connectedness" may have resulted in their acknowledged shortcomings.

What do these characterizations mean for educators and for those who are tasked with both educating and managing the millions of people who compose much of tomorrow's global workforce? To answer this question, educators should first understand what the workplace requires and then align millennials' needs with those requirements. Gould, Unger, and Bacon (2008) purport that the critical skills millennials need are those associated with communication, management, and leadership. Few would argue that any college graduate does not need these skills to be able to successfully navigate all organizational levels. We contend

that for this new generation to be successful, the development of communication skills, especially interpersonal communication skills, is even more imperative because of the millennials' reliance on technology.

## **COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS AND INDIVIDUAL SUCCESS**

When asked "What are the three most important things you have learned to perform your role as an executive?" CEOs from 5,000 U.S. companies across a wide range of industries and sizes ranked communication as number one (Margerison & Kakabadse, 1984). Madlock (2008) concluded that a supervisor's communication competence was found to be the greatest predictor of employee job and communication satisfaction. A survey of Fortune 500 vice presidents (Olney, 1986) concluded that 97.7% of them believed that communication skills had affected their advancement to a top executive position. Clearly, for individuals to stand apart from their competition in the marketplace, newly minted college graduates must demonstrate effective communication skills. Effective communication skills, including oral, written, and interpersonal skills, establish a minimum threshold for new employee success. In addition, effective communication has been directly linked to organizational success.

## **COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS AND ORGANIZATION SUCCESS**

Sinickas (2001) pointed out that over a 5-year period, companies with higher scores on communication (i.e., information sharing) had higher return on investment and higher return on sales than companies with low scores. Sinickas also reported on findings from employee attitude surveys at Hewlett-Packard and GE found a strong correlation between improved two-way communication and increased productivity and employee retention. Additionally, at Sears, analysts found that a 5-point improvement in employee attitudes, a factor often tied to information sharing, drove a 1.3% increase in customer satisfaction and a 0.5% improvement in revenue growth (Rucci, Kern, & Quinn, 1999). A Towers Watson 2009/2010 Communication ROI Study Report concluded the following:

- Communication effectiveness is a leading indicator of financial performance; “Companies that are highly effective communicators had 47% higher total returns to shareholders over the last five years compared with firms that are the least effective communicators” (p. 2).
- Firms that communicate effectively are 4.5 times more likely to report high levels of employee engagement versus firms that communicate less effectively.
- Companies that are highly effective communicators are 20% more likely to report lower turnover rates than their peers (Ambler, 2006).

Finally, according to a survey by the International Association of Business Communicators (Dodd, 2004), chief executive officers reported that effective communication skills yielded a 235% return on investment.

Well-developed communication skills enhance both individual success and organizational success. Our role as business educators, therefore, is to be sure that we fill the millennials’ tool box with communication choices and strategies capable of augmenting their existing capabilities as we endeavor to prepare them for success in the workplace. Given the culturally diverse, global marketplace in which 21st-century leaders will function, millennials must be able to successfully communicate across multiple cultures and multiple generations of workers (Slate, 2007).

However, in a study of millennial student values and societal trends in a course selection context, Milliron (2008) concluded that students place “relatively low importance on developing the skills associated with professional success,” and further that “millennial student response appears even further out of alignment with the global labor market reality by placing a significantly higher value on low workload and less importance on analytical and computational assignments” (p. 405).

In light of these conclusions, the business educator’s challenge becomes that of devising strategies to help align millennials’ skills with the needs of today’s global marketplace and its culturally diverse organizations. As business educators, we must teach millennials to communicate more effectively by helping them learn how to process information in a variety of ways to accommodate the extensive diversity (i.e., age, gender, cultural) that exists in the workplace today, together with the global nature of business.

Oblinger (2003) addresses an additional dilemma. Millennials have zero tolerance for delays, which are inherent when processing information

differently. Therefore, it is incumbent on educators to address these deficiencies with the millennials *before* sending them into the workplace.

## **WHAT SHOULD EDUCATORS DO TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS AMONG AND WITH MILLENNIALS?**

When helping the millennials develop their interpersonal communication skills, it is critical for educators to understand that millennials need to feel engaged and to participate in the learning process. Simply being presented with information is insufficient; they should enjoy the process (Beckstrom, Manuel, & Nightingale, 2008). Millennials are described as social learners and tend to work best in a team environment, using peer-to-peer and cooperative learning strategies (Matulich, 2008; McGlynn, 2005; Raines, 2003; Tucker, 2006). They respond to methods that are more horizontal and informal, rather than formal and vertical (Hanna, 2003). It is important for millennials to be involved in their learning as they have been catered to and expect a “student-centered” experience rather than a “teacher-centered” one. More than ever, we as instructors will prosper from varying our teaching style based on our audience.

## **A POSSIBLE SOLUTION: TEACHING COMMUNICATION STYLE-TYPING AND STYLE-FLEXING**

We need to help millennials hone their interpersonal communication skills to successfully engage with people of all ages and backgrounds. One strategy for achieving that objective is by teaching students about the dual concepts of communication style-typing and style-flexing. Although style-typing and style-flexing are not the only tools that will enhance millennials' communication skills, together they compose an important skill set for every leader. We believe that educating students about the concepts of style-typing and style-flexing will help them become more effective communicators by deepening their understanding of the communication process. Although these concepts were originally discussed nearly 40 years ago, their relevance today is no less important. The extensive use of technology-mediated communication

by millennials can lead to distortions in meaning due to the lean nature of the channel choice. We believe that teaching millennials the dual concepts of style-typing and style-flexing will enrich their ability to communicate as they learn to use richer channels.

Communication is an interactive process—a two-way sharing and understanding of information. Improving this process can be accomplished by improving the “fit” between communication styles of senders and receivers. Ideally, one should adapt his or her communication style to the various communication styles present. This is accomplished by helping millennials recognize and understand their own (preferred) communication style, and to recognize that others also have a preferred style of communicating that may not be one and the same.

At this juncture, there are two important points to be made: (1) business educators must help millennials move toward a more audience-focused orientation and away from a primary focus on themselves, and (2) business educators must help millennials become more focused on people rather than just focusing on technology. Ultimately, the goal is to help millennials develop their interpersonal skills to a greater extent than is currently the case. Through understanding the dual processes of communication style-typing and style-flexing, millennials will be able to do just that.

*Style-typing* is a technique used to understand one’s own communication style as well as the styles of others in the communication process. Of course, we know that no person embodies all the attributes of a particular style; we are all a mixture of various styles. Each of us tends to have a preferred or dominant style, while others may have different preferred styles. The art of effective communication style-typing is to be able to recognize in ourselves and in others the predominant tendencies that may define our preferred communication style.

*Style-flexing* is a follow-up to style-typing. It is based on the concept of reciprocity, which stresses mutual understanding of one another’s communication processes and the development of effective communication relationships. When one realizes that the person with whom he or she is communicating has a different style, it becomes necessary to modify one’s dominant style in order to effectively communicate or to flex to another style to arrive on the same wavelength.

One should understand the dominant style as well as the mix of the four styles present in the way one communicates. Employing a communication assessment such as Marston's (1970) DISC Survey, Mok's (1975) Communication Style Technology, or Merrill and Reid's (1999) Behavioral Style Questionnaire is useful. These assessments all make similar key assumptions, which have not changed over time and which aptly apply to the millennials:

- Everyone uses a blend of communication styles.
- Most people have a dominant style.
- Styles are reflected in behavior and are observable and identifiable.
- Most people are quick to respond to communication that is similar to their dominant style.
- It is possible to alter one's individual style to adapt to others' styles.
- There is not one best style.

Most people rely on their preferred communication style—the style that is most comfortable to them. They may assume that all others communicate in the same way, yet this is not the case. Such differences create communication barriers.

In our experience, millennial students grow not only by learning about different communication styles but also by watching others using varying styles. A communication assessment tool and corresponding student exercise illustrating style differences is an excellent way for instructors to uncover communication style differences and to accomplish the training of style-typing and style-flexing. In the following paragraphs and in Appendix A, we describe just such an assessment tool and provide specific instructions on how to conduct a classroom workshop in which students cannot only identify their own style but also practice the style-flexing component in a realistic context.

## **DETERMINING YOUR COMMUNICATION STYLE**

In our classes, we use an updated and modified version of Mok's (1975) communication style survey (Hartman & McCambridge, 2010) to help our students determine their communication style (see Appendix A). We have modified the Mok survey using insights from Alessandra and Hunsaker (1993) and Merrill and Reid (1999) to teach



the process of style-typing and style-flexing. Our modified survey (Hartman & McCambridge, 2010) has been successfully used in both undergraduate and graduate communication classes and in executive development programs over the past 10 years.

As Merrill and Reid (1999) indicate,

No one behaves in one way all the time [for] we all exhibit a range of behaviors, and this variability, combined with the other elements that constitute personality—such as our abilities, attitudes, ideas of what we are and of what we would like to be—make each of us quite unique. (p. 39)

Yet all of us behave in predictable ways most of the time, allowing us to generalize about others and for others to generalize about us. These generalizations have enabled scholars such as Mok (1975), Alessandra and Hunsaker (1993), and Merrill and Reid (1999) to identify four categories of communication styles: *Analytical*, *Driver*, *Amiable*, and *Expressive*.

Each of these styles is modified by the following dimensions: assertiveness, responsiveness, priority (task vs. relationship orientation), and pace (fast vs. slow). *Assertiveness* is behavior exhibited by those who feel the need to control a situation and are comfortable starting an interaction quickly. It is characterized by one talking more than listening and exists on a continuum of high assertiveness to low assertiveness. *Responsiveness* is behavior exhibited by those who feel the need to express their emotions, feelings, and impressions. It is characterized by one listening more than talking and exists on a continuum of high to low responsiveness. *Priority* refers to a primary focus on people or on the task to be accomplished. *Pace* is a behavioral attribute that refers to speed of communication, and exists on a continuum from fast to slow.

## COMMUNICATION STYLE DESCRIPTIONS

A description of each style, including adjectives describing behaviors characteristic of that style, is presented in the following paragraphs and in Figure 1. The goals of each style, as well as typical questions posed by dominant members of that style, are also included. Of course, the adjectives used to describe each style can be considered both blessings and curses. Whereas people possessing similar styles describe one

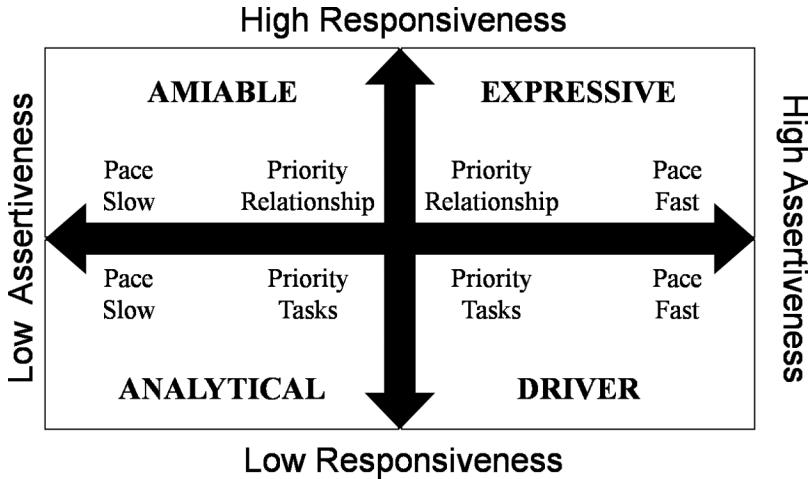


Figure 1. Comparison of the Four Communication Styles

another based on their positive attributes, people with differing styles tend to describe others based on not-so-positive attributes.

The four commonly used communication style descriptions and their attributes are described below.

*Analytical.* An Analytical is a technical or systems specialist. He or she is not very assertive or responsive. The analytical prefers to remain in the background. Analyticals are industrious, persistent, serious, vigilant, and orderly and at the same time can be uncommunicative, indecisive, stuffy, exacting, and impersonal. The Analytical's pace is slow and his or her priority is task-related. The Analytical asks "why" questions (e.g., "Why do you do it that way?" "Why didn't you use this process?"). The Analytical's goal is to work within the system. Analyticals tend to be comparatively low on responsiveness and not very assertive. When stressed, the Analytical retires to his or her comfort zone, which is dwelling on facts and figures.

*Driver.* A Driver is a control specialist. He or she is very assertive and not as responsive to differing viewpoints. Drivers are generally determined, demanding, thorough, decisive, and efficient but can also be seen as pushy, severe, tough-minded, dominating, and harsh. The Driver's pace is fast and his or her priority is task related. The Driver

asks “what” questions (e.g., “What can I do for you?” or “What is the purpose of your plan?”). The Driver’s goal is to obtain results. When stressed, the Driver dictates.

*Amiable.* An Amiable is a support specialist. He or she is very responsive and not very assertive. For the most part, Amiables are supportive, respectful, willing, dependable, and personable. They tend to be conforming, retiring, noncommittal, undisciplined, and emotional. The Amiable’s pace is slow, and their priority is people. The Amiable asks “who” questions (e.g., “Who agrees with your plan?” or “Who have you considered when making this proposal?”). The Amiable’s goal is to cooperate. When stressed, the Amiable conforms.

*Expressives.* An Expressive is a social specialist. He or she is assertive and responsive. Expressives can be enthusiastic, dramatic, inspiring, stimulating, and personable, yet they can be opinionated, excitable, undisciplined, reacting, and promotional. The Expressive’s pace is fast and his or her priority is people. The Expressive asks “how” questions (e.g., “How can we work with other departments to achieve our goals?” or “How can we make this happen within our allotted time frame?”). The Expressive’s goal is to create alliances. When stressed, the Expressive attacks.

When reviewing the quadrants in Figure 1 in a clockwise or counterclockwise direction, notice that each style/quadrant has something in common with the adjoining quadrant. To the extent that similarities exist on one or more characteristics (dimensions), communication effectiveness tends to be facilitated. For example, both Analyticals and Drivers are low on the responsiveness scale and both have task as a priority. Both Drivers and Expressives are high on the assertiveness scale and both are fast paced. Both Expressives and Amiables are high on the responsiveness scale and have relationships as a priority. Both Amiables and Analyticals are low on the assertiveness scale and both are slow paced.

In contrast, when there are no common elements present, communication effectiveness is diminished. The styles that represent the diagonal quadrants have nothing in common. For example, the Analyticals and Expressives do not have responsiveness, assertiveness, pace, or priority in common. The same holds true for the Drivers and Amiables. As a result, these styles have more difficulty flexing to one another.

It is worth noting that no individual is exclusively a single style (i.e., only a Driver, with no Analytical attributes, or only an Expressive with no Amiable attributes). For the most part, each person is a mix of all four styles. The challenge for each individual is to determine to what extent he or she has a dominant style (and what that dominant style is) and to learn to recognize in others what their preferred styles seem to be.

The concepts of assertiveness, responsiveness, priority, and pace have not changed and remain as key constructs in understanding communication practices among all individuals. These concepts are as applicable today as they were when they were originally proposed and should be used when interacting with (or flexing to) a person with a different style.

## **HOW DO YOU “FLEX” YOUR COMMUNICATION STYLE?**

To style-flex to accommodate others' communication styles, one might consider the wording of questions. For example, if you are dealing with a Driver, ask something similar to “What does this mean to our return on investment?” with the focus being on the bottom line (a task-based focus). When dealing with an Analytical, a non-Analytical might ask, “Why did you analyze the system as you did?” with the focus on “why” and a systems approach designed to elicit the Analytical's serious and exacting orientation. A non-Expressive might say to an Expressive, “I have spent a lot of time thinking about the proposal, but I'd like to know what those in other departments think of my ideas.” Here, the focus is on building relationships with other people in other departments, capitalizing on the Expressive's preference for building alliances. To effectively communicate with an Amiable, a non-Amiable might ask, “What is your reaction to my proposal and how do you think others will feel about the proposal?” with the focus on people and on developing/maintaining relationships. Moreover, when style-flexing, consider adjusting your pace to meet the needs of others. Pace may be adjusted by moving one's audience through a more deliberative process of problem diagnosis rather than quickly skipping over the details to get to the key recommendations of the issue being considered.

How do these communication styles play out in the classroom and what can we expect of our millennial audience? By definition, the Driver and the Expressive communicators will be the more active in class participation. The Amiable will avoid talking at the risk

of offending someone, and the Analytical will desire and/or provide information in a linear fashion. As previously mentioned, style types are not generally black or white; people are a mix of styles with a dominant style. One of many questions an instructor should encourage millennial students to address is whether the quiet person in class is an Amiable or an ill-prepared Driver. Or perhaps the quiet person is a mix of an Amiable and an Analytical who is not comfortable speaking up and who is comfortable dwelling on the details of the topic at hand in his or her head.

It is important for students to be involved in the identification of their own dominant style. In addition, it is also useful and necessary for them to focus on identifying strategies whereby they can predict the various communication styles of those with whom they will interact. In other words, educators themselves must style-type and style-flex to be successful when coaching the millennials to do the same. A classroom exercise that will help millennial students understand and enhance their communication skills is described in the following paragraphs.

## **COMMUNICATION STYLE-TYPING AND STYLE-FLEXING EXERCISE**

A useful exercise to demonstrate style-typing and style-flexing while enhancing the millennials' communication effectiveness takes approximately 150 minutes and may be conducted in one 150-minute class session, two 75-minute sessions, or three 50-minute sessions. Step-by-step instructions for this exercise, which include specific tasks for the instructor and for exercise participants, are provided in Appendix B. Using an exercise like this will not only help participants to see the full range of communication styles but also foster discussion about how teams might be constituted to optimize the style variability that can strengthen rather than inhibit communication effectiveness. Participants may apply this knowledge to help them better understand the communication dynamics in their classrooms and workplaces.

During the initial session, the students should complete the Communication Style Survey (see Appendix A) to analyze their personal mix of styles and to determine their dominant style. The instructor should explain the four styles using the previously described criteria of assertiveness/responsiveness, pace, and priority (see Figure 1). This classroom interaction will help students see actual examples of

communication style differences and enable them to practice their communication style-flexing abilities.

The exercise capitalizes on the millennials' documented learning style preferences by involving them initially in a focus on themselves and how they prefer to communicate. Subsequently, it provides specific steps for having them focus on others and the differences between themselves and others in terms of communication preferences. The exercise is primarily conducted through small groups or teams in which discussion by each person is emphasized. The relative informality of the session emphasizes students learning at their own pace rather than being "lectured to" by the course instructor.

Students and instructors should take away the following key points about effectively communicating with millennials:

- Communication style differences can best be understood through discussions about the various styles among students themselves, through instructor and student modeling, and through observations during classroom exercises and other activities. By identifying the different styles of individuals and by interacting with others during the multiple opportunities built into course work, the millennials will gain increased understanding of the usefulness of communication style-typing. Identification of millennials' own communication style and those of their classmates can be used to predict where and with whom communication barriers may occur.
- While most students have a preferred (i.e., dominant) communication style, for the most part, they reflect a mixture of the four styles described here.
- Students do not all have the same communication style; they do not all process information in the same way.
- Like all of us, millennials need time to assess their own and others' preferred styles in order to communicate effectively.
- Because of the socialization processes of millennials, taking the time to engage in that learning effort is a particularly difficult task for them.
- Instructors (of millennials) need to recognize millennials' communication preferences as well as their own and adjust to those differences in order to effectively engage these students in the learning process.

## CONCLUSION

Academic and business researchers have concluded that the development and use of effective communication strategies is a critical

skill set for all managers. These skills have been directly linked to both individual effectiveness (e.g., opportunities for promotion, special assignments, team effectiveness) and to organizational effectiveness and bottom line performance.

Today's university students, the millennials, have been characterized as being technologically sophisticated and capable of multi-tasking, yet seriously deficient in oral, written, and interpersonal communication skills. As business educators, our responsibility is to address these shortcomings in ways that are both appealing to the student and ultimately effective in the global marketplace.

We believe that educating students about the concepts of style-typing and style-flexing will help them become more effective communicators by deepening their understanding of the communication process. While communication style-typing and style-flexing are not the only communication tools that could be emphasized when educating millennials, they encompass many of the essential skills that addresses the millennials' communication challenges. By understanding and employing the practice of style-typing and style-flexing, a sense of camaraderie among communicators is built and some of the barriers to effective communication can be eliminated. Millennials will benefit from developing a broadened understanding of the multiple styles of communication that are personally available to them. Additionally, they will benefit from learning that others might very likely have a different preferred style. Therefore, in order to become more effective communicators, millennials should use multiple styles to supplement their toolkit with these available resources, knowledge of the different styles, and the ability to apply that knowledge as they endeavor to communicate with others.

Developing style-typing and style-flexing skills will serve as building blocks for millennials' subsequent interpersonal skill development in key areas such as audience analysis, active listening, conflict management and negotiation, and effective team building. Style-typing and style-flexing require individuals to attend not only to their own preferred communication practices but also to those of the individuals with whom they are interacting, serving, and leading.

## APPENDIX A

### What Communication Style Are You?

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Put a number 1 (one) by each statement you feel describes you.

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- 1 I am an aggressive person.
  - 2 I change my mind often. I zigzag through life rather than plodding down one monotonous path.
  - 3 I don't worry about the past or the future. I live for today.
  - 4 I am not very spontaneous or emotional. I believe the head should guide the heart.
  - 5 I have been called impractical.
  - 6 I don't like people who live for today without regard to the future. I look ahead and prepare for the rainy days.
  - 7 My workspace looks very orderly and fairly stark.
  - 8 I rather like to be different: to dress differently from other people, to go to strange and exciting places, to do the unusual.
  - 9 I do not mind having people do sloppy work over as many times as necessary until they do it right.
  - 10 I sometimes go to extremes. My "highs" are very high, and my "lows" are very low.
  - 11 I am very sociable.
  - 12 I believe that the best technique for achieving results is through thorough, objective analysis.
  - 13 I like being in charge.
  - 14 I think that I would succeed as an accountant.
  - 15 I am sensitive to the feelings of others.
  - 16 I believe that the best technique for achieving results is through freedom and individual motivation.
  - 17 I value relationships. Getting along well with others is very important to me.
  - 18 My workspace looks somewhat messy but it does have a "homey" charm.
  - 19 It is important to me to feel that I "belong." I want very much to be accepted by the people with whom I work, my friends, my family.
  - 20 I like to compete.
  - 21 I believe the majority is right. I usually go along with the group. Whatever they think and do usually suits me.
  - 22 I am a dynamic, high-drive person.
  - 23 When people begin to get upset, I try to calm them down. I don't like for people to be upset with each other.
  - 24 I have a vivid imagination. I can see all sorts of possibilities that others can't see.
  - 25 I love to be complimented and recognized.
  - 26 I am neat. I'm bothered by messy people.
  - 27 I play hard to win and I hate losing.
  - 28 I enjoy meeting new people.
  - 29 I am very practical. I believe in and value "what works."
  - 30 My workspace is a showcase for awards, plaques, posters.
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*(continued)*



## APPENDIX A (Continued)

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- 31 Sometimes I overlook details in implementing my big ideas and sometimes my ideas seem ahead of their time.
  - 32 Sometimes people say I am a perfectionist. I guess I am because I believe that anything that is worth doing is worth doing well.
  - 33 I like to learn by experience, by actually doing it rather than reading books about it.
  - 34 I think that I could be a social worker.
  - 35 I like people like Vince Lombardi, Clint Eastwood, and Oprah Winfrey.
  - 36 I think through and try to do everything on a logical basis.
  - 37 I have a “take charge” attitude.
  - 38 I feel that I have great destiny. I know I am going to amount to something.
  - 39 I am very goal or task oriented. I like to have specific goals or tasks to accomplish.
  - 40 My favorite colors include black, white, and silver.
  - 41 Sometimes people say I am visionary, that I am a dreamer, and maybe I am.
  - 42 I believe in myself, particularly my physical strength and ability.
  - 43 I believe in doing things because of principles—hard work, efficiency, morality, justice. I believe the world would be a much better place if everyone would live by the great principles of religion and justice.
  - 44 My favorite color is red.
  - 45 I am very orderly. I believe “there is a place for everything, and everything belongs in its place.”
  - 46 I am very excitable.
  - 47 My workspace is precisely organized and displays diplomas and other signs of achievement.
  - 48 I believe that the best technique for achieving results is through deadlines and managed schedules.
  - 49 My life is well organized. There is an appropriate time and place for everything, which is important.
  - 50 I like to deal with people and be dealt with in a very direct manner. I “tell it like it is,” and I expect others to do the same.
  - 51 I love to go to parties.
  - 52 I am very creative.
  - 53 I have many friends.
  - 54 I admire people like judges and religious leaders who put principle above everything else.
  - 55 Sometimes I am extravagant.
  - 56 I believe in rules—in the home, at work, and in society. I am for law and order.
  - 57 I like to read about great explorers and inventors. People who accomplished great feats against seemingly insurmountable odds.
  - 58 I like people like Tina Fey, Ellen DeGeneres, and Jay Leno—friendly, nice people who laugh a lot.
  - 59 I think that I would enjoy being a creative designer.
  - 60 My favorite colors are earth tone.
  - 61 My favorite colors are vibrant/mixed combinations.
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*(continued)*

## APPENDIX A (Continued)

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- 62 I am punctual. I get my work done on time. I am never late for appointments. I expect others to do the same.
- 63 In my work and social life, I try to be very cooperative. I like to get along.
- 64 I hate weakness in myself or others.
- 65 I believe that the best technique for achieving results is through nonthreatening encouragement.
- 66 Things to me are right or wrong, “black or white,” never gray.
- 67 I never spend time thinking of the past. I think very little about the present. My thoughts are on the future—the great things that are going to happen to me!
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SCORING: Count one point for each of the items associated with the different communication styles as listed below and enter the total for each style in the space provided.

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- **DRIVER** (Items: 1, 3, 7, 13, 20, 22, 27, 29, 33, 35, 37, 39, 42, 44, 48, 50, 64)
- **AMIABLE** (Items: 11, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 28, 30, 34, 43, 51, 53, 58, 60, 63, 65)
- **ANALYTICAL** (Items: 4, 6, 9, 12, 14, 26, 32, 36, 40, 43, 45, 47, 49, 54, 56, 62, 66)
- **EXPRESSIVE** (Items: 2, 5, 8, 10, 16, 18, 24, 31, 38, 41, 46, 52, 55, 57, 59, 61, 67)
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## APPENDIX B

### Style-Typing and Style-Flexing Exercise Instructions

The following exercise will enable exercise participants to determine their own predominant communication style(s) and the styles of their classmates. The exercise includes suggestions for helping instructors facilitate the interpretation of those style similarities and differences. Finally, several application ideas are also included to provide the participants with the opportunity to work with the styles and to become more familiar with how to apply them in the workplace. The exercise is designed to be completed in a single 3-hour class session, in two 75-minute class sessions, or three 50-minute class sessions. It utilizes the Communication Style Inventory (Hartman & McCambridge, 2010) included as Appendix A in this article.

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| <i>Task</i>  | <i>Students</i>   | <i>Instructor</i>  |
|--|---|--|
| 1. Complete and score <i>Communication Style Inventory</i> (see Appendix A) (25 minutes) | 1. Complete and score inventory. Enter personal scores into spaces provided on CSI. | 1. Complete and score inventory. (Suggestion: The instructor should complete the inventory and scoring <i>prior</i> to the classroom session.) |

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(continued)

**APPENDIX B (Continued)**

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|--|---|---|
| 2. Determine dominant style and remaining style scores   | 2. Determine dominant style and remaining styles.   | 2. Determine dominant style and remaining style scores.   |
| 3. Review style profile details<br>(25 minutes)  | 3. Review style profile details.  | 3. Lead class discussion of meaning of four styles and scoring patterns of students (see Figure 1 and style descriptions in text). (Note: Some students may be reluctant to disclose their score profiles to others in the class. As the instructor explains each of the styles, he or she can ask for a show of hands from students as to whether or not the descriptions “fit” their own dominant style.) (Note: Instructors will find descriptions are generally accurate in terms of student perceptions of their dominant style.)          |
| 4. Divide and group class into four groups according to dominant style of Driver, Analytical, Expressive, Amiable<br>(10 minutes)  | 4. Students should form groups with those who have similar dominant styles. (Note: the highest scores for dominant style for each individual will vary.)                      | 4. Instructor should monitor group formation process, ensuring groups of approximately equal size are created. If insufficient members occur for one group, instructor may choose to reassign individuals with “balanced” style scores to help make groups more equal in size. To determine the most appropriate group, the instructor should ask unassigned individuals if they are fast/slow paced or task/relationship oriented. Grouping individuals with similar orientations will tend to maximize style similarity within a given group. |
| 5. Present the four groups with questions for in-group discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you are a team member, what things are most important to you and how do you like to be treated as a member of that team?</li> </ul> | 5. Each group of students should independently discuss each of the five questions and prepare a brief report for the rest of the class. Allocate approximately 30 minutes for | 5. Present groups with questions for in-group discussion, being sure to instruct each group to discuss every question, in order, and to prepare a brief presentation for rest of class. Be sure to observe the groups using their dominant styles to process the question and document individual examples of style usage within those groups. (Note: If a student assistant(s) is/are available, the instructor might consider assigning one to each of  |
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*(continued)*

## APPENDIX B (Continued)

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|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When your team is first created, how do you get the team to begin its work?</li> <li>• How do you manage the team member that does not pull his or her weight?</li> <li>• How do you handle a dominant/take control team member?</li> <li>• Discuss how would you build a team that has a well-rounded/balanced membership. (30 minutes)</li> </ul> | <p>the within-group discussion.</p>  | <p>the groups to more closely monitor the group discussions for examples of communication style usage.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share those insights during the debriefing session.</li> </ul>  |
| <p>6. Team presentations to the entire class, focusing on one question at a time (i.e., all groups should discuss Q 1, before moving on to a discussion of Q 2, etc.) (45 minutes)</p>   | <p>6. Each group should present its analysis/key points to the rest of the class, making sure the group identifies its “dominant” communication style as part of the presentation.</p> | <p>6. The instructor should facilitate the discussion of each of the questions, looking for and pointing out specific examples during the presentations that reflect the preferred communication style of each of the groups.</p> <p>The instructor will hear comments such as, “Well this explains why Debbie always does this in team projects,” or “Now I understand why my roommate always says this when I ask him to take out the trash,” or “Now I understand why he does it this way; it’s because he is a Driver, (Analytical, Amiable, or Expressive).”</p> <p>In the event the discussion does not reflect the dominant style, the instructor should be prepared to offer alternative explanations for that outcome (e.g., group was more “balanced,” group lacked a truly “dominant” style).</p> |
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*(continued)*

## APPENDIX B (Continued)

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| 7. Exercise wrap-up and questions (15 minutes) | 7. Students should discuss the differences they observed and the implications of those differences for both the classroom and the workplace. | 7. The instructor should summarize the complimentary concepts of style-typing and style-flexing, using insights from the exercise to illustrate key points.<br>Be sure to make the following points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The workplace comprises individuals from all four communication styles.</li> <li>• There is no one best style.</li> <li>• Using all four styles effectively provides one the opportunity to flex to others' dominant style(s), accommodating their needs.</li> <li>• Moreover, teams with all four styles present tend to make more informed, well-rounded, and objective decisions.</li> </ul> |
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