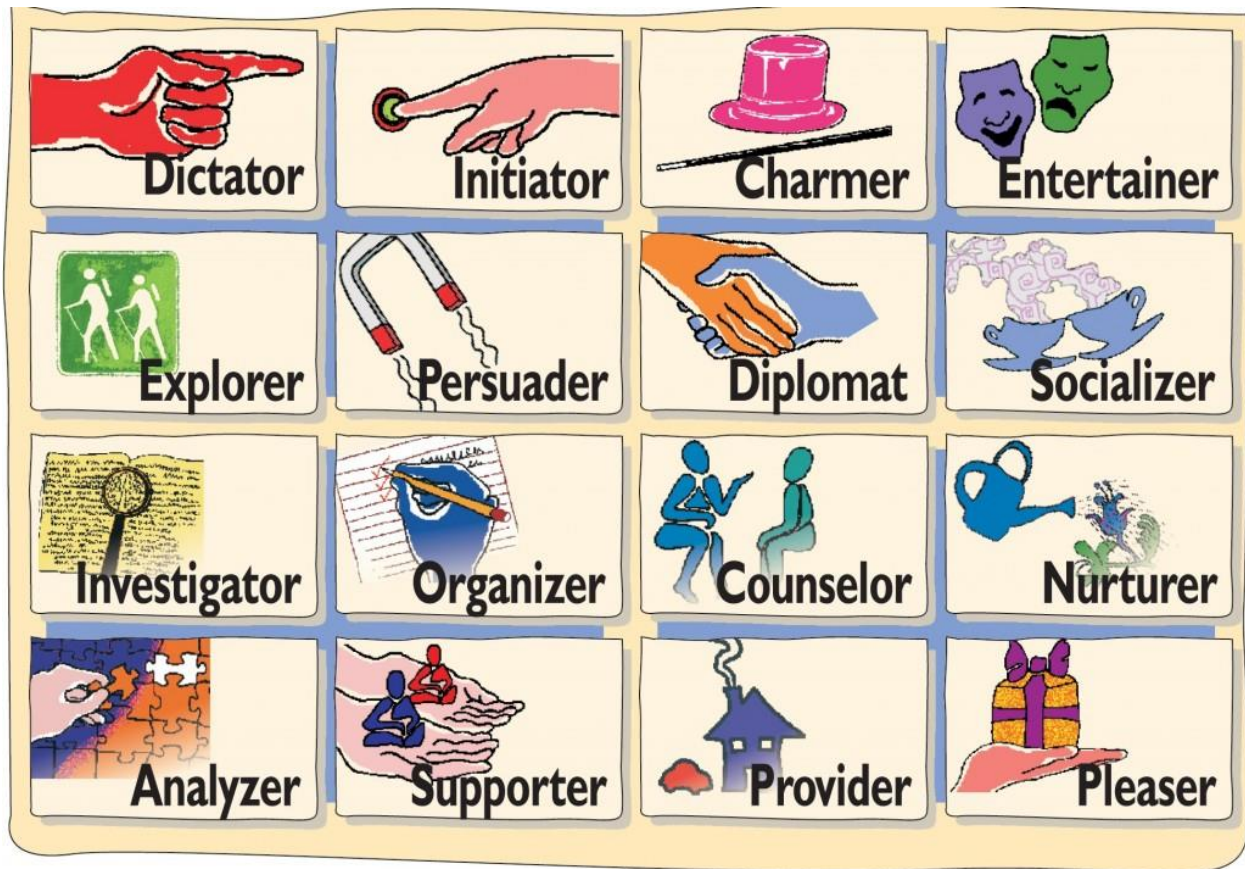


## The Matrix of Communication Styles

Understanding your style would be relatively easy if you limited yourself to one of the [four basic communication styles](#). However, depending on the situation, you may alternate between one, two, or even three styles. It's like walking. You naturally walk at a certain pace. But then you shift gears to match the pace of someone next to you.



It's the same with communicating. People prefer to use one style. Our "**primary style**" is the one we're most comfortable with. But we also have a backup style. Typically, this second style is dictated by our situation — the demands of our particular job if at work, the demands of domestic life if at home.

We refer to the backup style as our "**secondary style**." Most people vacillate frequently between their primary and secondary styles. As a result, our overall or specific style becomes a combination of these two styles. It's like mixing lemon into tea: The concoction has a flavor all its own.

In this lesson, you will learn about your unique flavor.

For example, if the [Survey](#) revealed your primary style to be **Director** and your secondary style **Harmonizer**, then this creates an identifiable pattern of communicating called the *Persuader*.

## How the Matrix of Communication Styles Works

If you split the Matrix into equal quarters, or quadrants, then **each quadrant illustrates a primary style**—Director, Expresser, Thinker, or Harmonizer.



Each quadrant contains four more squares. Your secondary style determines your particular square within each quadrant.

Here's how it works, using the Organizer as an example:

### Step 1

Your **primary style** governs your placement in one of the quadrants.

- Directors are in the upper left of the Matrix.
- Expressers are in the upper right.
- Thinkers are in the lower left.
- Harmonizers are in the lower right.

Since the Organizer's primary style is **Thinker**, she is in the lower-left.



## Step 2

Once you've located your quadrant, cover up the other three. Pretend they don't exist. In this case, you'd cover up the top half of the Matrix and the lower-right quadrant. The only quadrant visible would be the Thinker.

## Step 3

The Thinker quadrant is divided into four smaller squares. Each has a label, like Investigator or Supporter. Use the same rule of thumb as the first step. In this case, the secondary style is Expresser, which makes this person an Organizer.

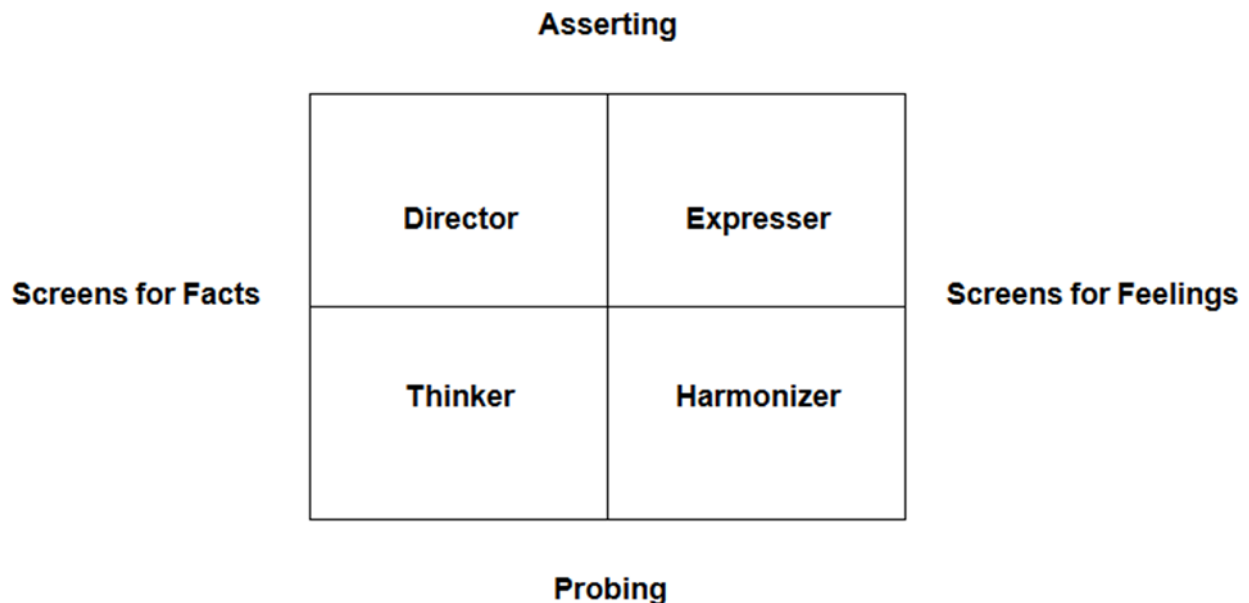
- Thinker / Director = *Investigator*
- Thinker / Expresser = *Organizer*
- Thinker / Thinker = *Analyzer*
- Thinker / Harmonizer = *Supporter*



Download the PDF – [“The Sixteen Specific Communication Styles”](#)

## Filters and Frames

The Matrix is a very helpful tool because it lets you see the relationship between all sixteen styles at a glance. You can see how the styles at the top of the Matrix are the most assertive, while those at the bottom are the least so. How those on the left side are most analytical, while those on the right are the most intuitive.



The combined workings of filters and frames – both of which occur within our subconscious – help us define the four basic styles of communicating:

- **Directors:** Filter for facts and respond assertively.
- **Expressers:** Filter for feelings and respond assertively.
- **Thinkers:** Filter for facts and respond by probing.
- **Harmonizers:** Filter for feelings and respond by probing.

This is not to say that the only thing that distinguishes Directors from Expressers is that one filters for facts and the other for feelings. The behaviors of each style are more complex and varied than that. But certain behaviors are “markers” for each style, and these markers can help us identify a person’s style.

## Corner Styles

Some people—approximately one in a hundred—are so-called “corner styles.” The four corner styles are Director, Entertainer, Analyzer, and Pleaser. Corner styles occur when a person’s score for one basic communication style is ten points higher than the score for any of the others.

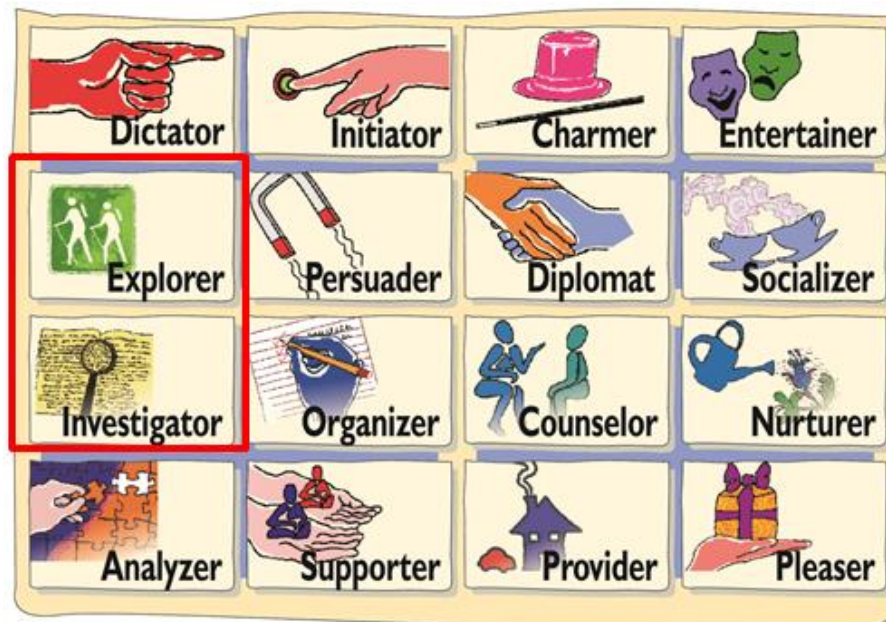


Corner styles have particular challenges to face in developing their communication skills. Because they don’t regularly use a secondary, backup style, their communications tend to be less adaptable and flexible. These challenges are discussed under the [description for each corner style](#).

## Blended Styles

Some people truly have two styles and occupy two places on the Matrix. We call these “blended styles.” A blended style occurs when a person’s high score is identical for two of the basic

styles. For example, a person who scores 35 for both Thinker and Director would be a blend of Investigator and Explorer.



If you have a blended style, don't worry. It's a perfectly natural outgrowth of the way the survey is constructed. Taking the survey again might slightly alter your score, and thus give you a neater fit within a particular square on the Matrix. But your score the first time you take the survey is typically the truest reflection of your style. And a person who has a blended style can get just as much out of Straight Talk as someone who occupies a single square on the Matrix.

After you read the [descriptions of each specific style](#), it may be readily evident which specific style is yours. If so, adopt it as your own. But if you are still wavering between two styles, accept your fate. The purpose of the Matrix is to help you improve your communications, not to shoehorn you into a particular category or give you a label.

## Conclusion

As you begin to familiarize yourself with each style, certain themes begin to emerge about what constitutes a [competent communicator](#).

- The importance of asking good questions.
- The need to assert one's own beliefs and feelings clearly and honestly.
- The importance of getting all the facts before you draw conclusions.
- The need to distinguish between asking pertinent questions and conducting a self-serving interrogation.
- The value of active listening — paraphrasing what another person says to confirm your understanding of the situation.

Once you start to appreciate the full spectrum of styles, you can begin fitting your colleagues and friends into the Matrix. You can start to peg styles based on the balance between assertive vs. probing, analytical vs. free-flowing. You can also begin to see how communication styles affect [leadership styles](#).