



“Where knowledge & skills combine”



History of DISC

The DISC language is based on observable behaviour. Throughout history, people have observed basic behavioural characteristics, and in recent years, these observable characteristics have been validated by numerous scientists and researchers. Assessments have been developed to assist people in maximising their personal potential and the potential of human resources throughout an organisation.

The lineage of the DISC language, although not then called DISC, can be traced back thousands of years, to such philosophers as Empedocles, Hippocrates, and Galen.

EMPEDOCLES 444 B.C. Empedocles described a model of the universe composed of four elements. He stated that these four elements could be combined in an infinite number of ways, just as an artist can create numerous pigments with only four different colours. This is an important concept for understanding of how we use DISC to create numerous combinations of behavioural types.

HIPPOCRATES 400 B.C. Hippocrates was an observer of people. He noticed the effect of the climate and the terrain on the individual. Defining four types of climates, he categorised behaviour and appearance for each climate, even suggesting which people would conquer others in battle, based on the environmental conditions in which they were raised.

GALEN 130 A.D. Galen, of Rome, spoke of four body fluids and their effect on behaviour and temperament. They were blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm.

WILLIAM MOULTON MARSTON 1893-1947. The most evolutionary step in the creation of DISC was provided by Dr William Moulton Marston. Born in Cliftondale, Massachusetts, in 1893, Dr Marston was educated at Harvard University. He received three degrees from that institution, an A.B. in 1915, and LL.B in 1918 and a Ph.D. in 1921.

After conducting research on human emotions, his book *Emotions of Normal People*, published in 1928, described the theory used by the DISC model today.

He explained that people illustrate their emotions using four behaviour types. He argued that these behavioural types came from people's sense of self and their interaction with the environment. He based the four types on two underlying dimensions that influenced people's emotional behaviour. The first dimension is whether a person views their environment as favourable or unfavourable. The second dimension is whether a person perceives himself as having control or lack of control over their environment.

Marston did not invent the DISC behavioural measurement system. Since publishing his research findings and observations, behavioural research has modified his ideas considerably. To the modern scientist, much of Marston's work may seem stilted and antiquated. Yet, the importance of his

contribution in dividing human behaviour into four distinct categories and using measurements of the strength of these responses as a means to predict human behaviour remains undiminished.

Here are some facts that you may find interesting:

Marston is acknowledged by most as the inventor of the lie detector and invented (1915) the systolic blood pressure test for deception.

Using the pen name of Charles Moulton, he spent most of his time during the last five years of his life as the originator, writer and producer of "Wonder Woman". First published in book form, this endeavour has turned out to be a most successful and enduring franchise.

Stricken with polio in 1944, Dr Marston was partially paralyzed until his death at age 53 in 1947.

WALTER CLARKE 1902 -1994. Walter Clarke was the first person to build a psychological assessment based on the Marston theory. In 1956, Clarke, an industrial psychologist, constructed an assessment which confirmed Marston's theory of the DISC model. Clarke created the Activity Vector Analysis, a checklist of adjectives on which he asked people to indicate descriptions that were accurate about themselves. This assessment was intended for use in businesses needing assistance in choosing qualified employees.

Summary

Despite the contributions made to the field of behavioural research, particularly since Marston, the modern categories of DISC (Dominance, Influence, Steadiness and Compliance) owe much to his research. Thus it is helpful in understanding the working of the DISC system to keep Marston's categories and their original meaning in mind.

The premise of the modern day DISC model is that all people demonstrate some element of behaviour in each dimension.

Modern behavioural research suggests that the most effective people are those who understand themselves and others. The more one understands his or her personal strengths and limitations, coupled with the ability to identify and understand the strengths and limitations of others, the better one will be able to develop strategies to meet the demands of the environment. The result will be success on the job, at home or within the community.

Why Study Behaviours?

UNDERSTANDING SELF AND OTHERS. The science of self may be the most important lessons we can learn because without this knowledge, we have little control or understanding of our actions. Social interaction has always been key to success and in some cases even survival, but with increased technology comes the need to better communicate. All of this is predicated on an understanding of self.

GAINING COMMITMENT AND COOPERATION. People tend to trust and work well with those people who seem like themselves. The most effective way to gain the commitment and cooperation of others is to "get into their world" and "blend" with their behavioural style: observe a person's body language,

“how” they act and interact with others. Notice clues in their work or living area. By applying the DISC language, you will immediately be able to adapt to their style.

BUILDING EFFECTIVE TEAMS. People tend to be too hard on each other, continually judging behaviour; therefore, team development tends to be slowed or halted due to people problems. An awareness of behavioural differences has an immediate impact on communication, conflict resolution and motivation for the team. Investment always precedes return. Investment in training the team on the DISC language gets an immediate return in team development. According to specialists in team development, most teams never make it to high performance without training in a behavioural model and commitment to using it from the top management down.

RESOLVING AND PREVENTING CONFLICT. Understanding style similarities and differences will be the first step in resolving and preventing conflict. By meeting the person’s behavioural needs, you will be able to diffuse many problems before they even happen. People prefer to be managed a certain way. Some like structure and some don’t. Some like to work with people and some prefer to work alone. “Shot in the dark” management does not work in the 21st century.

The DISC language, combined with DISC Flow[®] Reports, will teach you more about a person in 10 minutes than you can learn in a year without DISC.

GAINING ENDORSEMENT. Other words for endorsement are “credibility” or “influence”. Every interaction you have with a person either increases or decreases your endorsement. Have you ever met a person who won’t stop talking and relates his whole life story to you? When you see that person coming, do you dread the interaction? If so, it is because their behaviour has caused them to lose endorsement with you. Conversely, a person who you can’t wait to see daily has gained your endorsement and, therefore, is deserving of your time.

The DISC language allows you to “stack the deck” in your favour. By knowing a person’s behavioural style, you can adapt to their style and gain endorsement.

