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# AS THE 20TH CENTURY DRAWS TO A CLOSE, THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH

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## MOST BUSINESSES OPERATE IS A SINGLE

## WORLD MARKETPLACE, WOVEN TOGETHER BY THE

## ELECTRONIC WEB OF THE INTERNET AND GLOBAL

telecommunications. Fortune 50 multinationals and kitchen table entrepreneurs all have worldwide reach, and their next customer—or employee—may come from anywhere, at any time.

This trend toward globalization and the “boundaryless” organization has transformed the way companies do business. Many corporate teams now involve international participants, so meetings and other forms of communication are often limited by logistics. Coworkers, clients, and vendors may be continents and time zones away. Gleaning the optimum understanding and results from e-mail, telephone encounters, and limited face-to-face interactions is critical to the success of these virtual global teams.

Two approaches have evolved to

improve international information transfer and to increase responsiveness.

▮ *One approach is to discover the differences in the ways individuals from various cultures act in business situations, and to develop business strategies based on these differences.*

▮ *Another approach is to discover the similarities in the ways individuals throughout the world communicate and behave in business situations, and to respond to the marketplace based on these similarities.*

Both approaches are valid and integral to creating holistic relationships and overcoming global communication barriers.

## A GLOBAL PROFILING TOOL

The validity of the *similarity* approach has been verified in a major research study of business communication styles. Social Style is a tool that provides a profile of an individual's interpersonal business style, based on how other people perceive him or her in the workplace. Research data accumulated by Wilson Learning demonstrates that measurements of the two principal dimensions of Social Style—assertiveness and responsiveness—hold up across cultures worldwide. The four Social Styles—labeled Analytical, Driver, Amiable, and Expressive—can be clearly and consistently identified within and across multiple cultures.

### *Meaningful and Useful Technology*

For more than 25 years Wilson Learning has offered its Social Style model as a way of examining business behaviors. Since its inception, seven million respondents have completed at least one form of the profiling instrument that is part of Social Style training. More than 1.5 million participants have had their Social Style identified by three to five respondents, representing six continents, 24 countries, and 15 different language and culture groups.

The beauty of the Social Style technology is that it is a simple, universal language that can be used to bridge the gap between any two cultures.

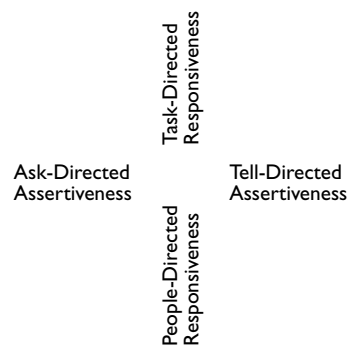
Without exception, a person's Social Style has been found to be a meaningful and practical tool for understanding and improving cross-cultural business relationships. The Social Style technology enhances working relationships and speeds the way toward cohesive, goal-oriented interactions. Individuals move beyond interpersonal differences more quickly and set their sights on end results more rapidly.

“If a business is interested in expanding its markets in any areas of the globe, it should be concerned about the communication strategies it would need to succeed in that particular culture,” says William B. Lashbrook, Ph.D., Wilson Learning Fellow Emeritus and a developer of Social Style. “The beauty of the Social Style technology is that it is a simple, universal language that can be used to bridge the gap between any two cultures. It has tremendous potential for solving the problems associated with bringing new products and services to market worldwide.”

## WHAT IS SOCIAL STYLE TECHNOLOGY?

Social Style is based on observations of individual behaviors within the context of interpersonal business relationships. Individuals' knowledge of Social Style, both their own and that of other team members, helps them communicate more effectively with others and interpret business actions that they observe. Wilson Learning's measures of the two principal dimensions of Social Style—assertiveness and responsiveness—have been found to be independent, allowing the construction of a matrix that can be used to categorize perceptions that people have of themselves and others.

The “social” aspects of style have to do with perceptions originating within the context of interpersonal communication. The repetitive pattern of communication that a person uses to communicate to and with others constitutes his or her “style.”



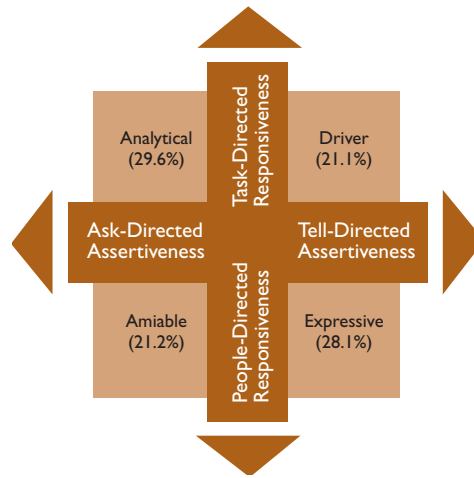
Within and across multiple cultures, each style represents a discernible pattern of assertiveness and responsiveness when observed by others. Regardless of cultural differences, these similar patterns of behavior are observable wherever people communicate with one another. While the distribution of the four styles may be affected by culture, there is clear empirical evidence that within any one culture or any one language system there are four Social Styles that can be measured by perceptions of assertiveness and responsiveness.

## GLOBAL RESEARCH PROJECT

**W**ilson Learning collected data for the Global Research Project from the results of 140,800 composites and 662,000 profiles that it had on file. A composite represents an individual Social Style as perceived by three to five others who have completed a profile form for a program participant. Not all participants are successful in obtaining the minimum of three respondents required to form a composite, but their self-profiles were still an important resource for the survey. The sample represented approximately 10 percent of all Social Style information collected by Wilson Learning since 1975, and contained data from 20 nations and six continents.

To meet research criteria and objectives, the final sample consisted of 35,216 composites and 165,515 profiles. To meet internal reliability standards, Wilson Learning used guidelines developed by the American Psychological Association, which vary the criteria of adequacy as a function of the intent of the measurement.

The values contained in the following figure are percentages of composite profiles for the total research sample. Theoretically, for a randomly drawn sample the values in the quadrants should be equal, or a distribution of 25 percent for each Social Style. Since the research sample was drawn from Wilson Learning’s client population, it reflects the kinds of participants serviced by Wilson Learning—largely high-tech companies or sales organizations within companies. Thus it shows a disproportionate distribution of the Analytical (often characteristic of high-tech employees) and Expressive (predominant style of sales professionals) Social Styles.



### *Countries with Prevalent Styles*

Results from the Global Research Project also showed some variances in the percentages of Social Styles by country, indicating slightly predominant Social Styles in certain cultures. The highest percentage of Analyticals (lower levels of assertiveness and responsiveness) was in the Spain database (35%), while the lowest percentage was in Japan (26%). The Mexico database had the highest percentage (35%) of Expressives (high levels of assertiveness and responsiveness), while Japan also had the lowest percentage of that style (24%).

The nation with the highest percentage of the Driver style (high levels of assertiveness and low levels of responsiveness) was Japan at 24%, and the lowest was Mexico at 14%. In the quadrant opposite to the Driver style is the Amiable style (low assertiveness and high responsiveness), which was most prevalent in Japan (25%) and least prevalent in Spain (16%).

### **A GLOBAL CONVERSATION**

**R**egardless of the country in which Social Style data is collected, there are significant numbers of people who are perceived to be one of the four identifiable Social Styles. There is no evidence that any country, continent, or culture can be stereotyped by Social Style, although some areas of the world have slightly more of one style than another.

The Social Style a person represents is defined in terms of observable behaviors that are common across cultures, languages, and contexts. Social Style technology remains an easily learned and quickly operational tool to communicate with people—an aid to communication that is becoming more and more a global conversation.



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WILSON LEARNING CORPORATION  
7500 Flying Cloud Drive  
Eden Prairie, MN USA 55344-3795

800.251.9076  
[www.wilsonlearning.com](http://www.wilsonlearning.com)