

Tailor message to 4 modes of thinking

By Mary Ellen Slayter

As part of a leadership course I'm taking this year, I recently took an Emergenetics assessment, which provides insights into people's preferred modes of thinking. I learned that when you're communicating with your colleagues, managers or clients, it's important to keep these four modes—conceptual, analytical, social and structural—in mind and tailor your message to reach each one of them.

Here's what you need to know about the modes:

- **Conceptual:** People who use this mode of thinking love ideas. They like dealing with concepts and philosophical questions. They also enjoy dreaming up things that don't yet exist. You can talk about lofty concepts with them, but beware: They get bored quickly and may lose interest if you don't keep them engaged. You probably know who these people are in your organization. They may be officer-level employees or on an innovation team.
- **Analytical:** These people like data, evidence and details. They want to know how you came to your conclusions and where the information came from. They like to hear about trends and will put the lofty ideas of Conceptual thinkers into perspective. You may be dealing with Analytical thinkers when you draft a memo for the accounting department.
- **Social:** While Conceptual and Analytical thinkers look at ideas and data, Social thinkers are more people-oriented. They want to hear real-life examples and learn about how ideas will affect people. They like to hear about others in their organization and what they may be doing to help build the company. If you're writing a company newsletter, Social thinkers will be interested in your stories about employees.
- **Structural:** These thinkers take ideas and put them into action. They are practical and thrive on tips and how-tos. They want to know what they can be doing to improve a situation or process—and what the outcome will be.

Of course, these are tendencies, not straight classifications. Using a variety of communication traits will help ensure everyone gets the message you're trying to send.

Mary Ellen Slayter is the editor of *Administrative Professional Today* and Managing Director of Reputation Capital Media Services.