

# Human Synergistic Circumplex - An Overview

The Human Synergistics International Circumplex provides a way to “see,” measure, and change the thinking and behavioural styles proven to drive the performance of not only individuals, but also groups and organizations. It breaks down the factors underlying effectiveness into 12 specific styles that are grouped into three general clusters and arranged in a circular manner based on their similarity: Constructive, Passive/Defensive, and Aggressive/Defensive.

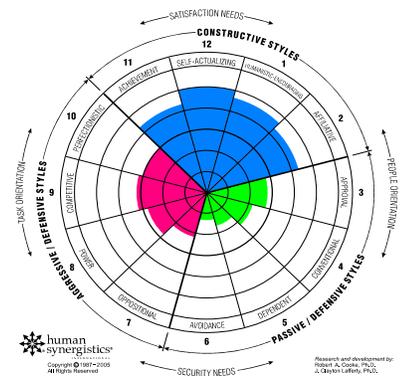
The Constructive styles are highly effective and promote individual, group, and organizational performance. In contrast, the Aggressive/Defensive styles have an inconsistent and potentially negative impact on performance, and the Passive/Defensive styles consistently detract from overall effectiveness. The styles describe what’s happening and what’s expected in organizations and, given their impact on performance, provide a direction for change and development.

Originally developed in 1971 by Dr. J. Clayton Lafferty for the *Life Styles Inventory*™, Dr. Robert A. Cooke has carried out numerous projects on the Circumplex to assess its validity, modify and improve it, and develop surveys around it for groups, leaders, and organizations. The power of the Circumplex is found in this integrated, multi-level set of measures as well as the provision of a common language that people can use to describe and redirect the cultures of their organizations.

## Clusters of the Circumplex

### Constructive Styles

Reflect a healthy balance of people and task related concerns and promote the fulfillment of higher-order needs. Styles associated with this orientation are directed towards the attainment of organizational goals through the development of people. Constructive styles account for synergy and explain why certain individuals, groups, and organizations are perfectly effective in terms of performance, growth, and work quality.



### Passive / Defensive Styles

Represent an unduly strong orientation towards people as opposed to tasks, fuelled by and reinforcing individual insecurity. The styles characterize people who subordinate themselves to the organization but, in the process, end up creating stress for themselves and allowing the organization to stagnate. Passive / Defensive of styles can produce a predictable and secure situation, but at the cost of learning, adaptability, and ultimately survival.

### Aggressive / Defensive Styles

Emphasize tasks over people and are driven by underlying insecurities. In the extreme, these styles lead people to focus on their own needs at the expense of those of the group. Though sometimes temporarily effective, Aggressive / Defensive styles may lead to stress, decisions based on status rather than expertise, and conflict rather than collaboration.



# Circumplex - Individual Level Personal Leadership Styles

## **Achievement - 11 o'clock**

Achievement style is based on the need to obtain high-quality results on challenging projects, the belief that outcomes are linked to one's effort rather than to chance, and the tendency to personally set challenging yet realistic goals. People high in the style think ahead and plan, explore alternatives before acting, and learn from their mistakes.

## **Self-Actualizing - 12 o'clock**

The self actualizing style is based on needs for personal growth, self-fulfillment, and the realization of one's potential. People with this style demonstrate a strong desire to learn and experience things, creative yet realistic thinking, and a balanced concern for people and tasks.

## **Humanistic-Encouraging - 1 o'clock**

The humanistic encouraging style reflects an interest in the growth and development of people, a high positive regard for them, and sensitivity to the needs. People high in this style devote energy to coaching and counselling others, are thoughtful and considerate, and provide people with support.

## **Affiliative - 2 o'clock**

The Affiliative style reflects an interest in developing and sustaining pleasant relationships. People high in the style share their thoughts and feelings, are friendly and cooperative, and make others feel perks of things.

## **Approval - 3 o'clock**

The approval style reflects a need to be accepted and a tendency to tie one's self-worth to being liked by others. People high in this style try very hard to please others, make good impressions, and be agreeable and obedient.

## **Conventional for o'clock.**

The conventional style reflects a preoccupation with conforming and blending in with the environment to avoid calling attention to oneself. People high in the style tend to rely on establish routines and procedures, preferred to maintain the status quo, and want a secure and predictable work environment.

## **Dependent - 5 o'clock**

The dependent style reflects the need for self protection coupled with the belief that one has little direction or personal control over important events. People high in this style allow others to make decisions for them, depend on others for help, and willingly obey orders -- possibly as a result of recent changes in their lives.

## **Avoidance - 6 o'clock**

The avoidance style reflects apprehension, a strong need for self protection, and a propensity to withdraw from threatening situations. People high in the style "play it safe" and minimize risks, stay away from group activities and conversations, and react to situations in an indecisive and non-committal way.

## **Oppositional - 7 o'clock.**

The oppositional style reflects the need for security that manifests itself in the questioning, critical, and even cynical manner. The people high in the style ask tough probing questions that can lead to better ideas, they might also emphasize even minor flaws, use criticism to gain attention, and blame others for their own mistakes.

## **Power - 8 o'clock.**

The power style reflects the need for prestige and influence in the tendency to equate self-worth with controlling others. People with strong tendencies towards the style dictate (rather than guide) others actions, try to run everything themselves, and treat others in aggressive and forceful ways.

## **Competitive - 9 o'clock**

The competitive style is based on the need to protect one status by comparing oneself to others, out performing them, and never appearing to lose. People high in the style seek recognition and praise from others, you view non-competitive situations as contests or challenges to "prove" themselves, and try to maintain a sense of superiority.

## **Perfectionistic - 10 o'clock**

The perfectionistic style is based on the need to obtain flawless results, avoid failure, and the tendency to create self-worth with the obtainment of unnecessarily high standards. People high in the style or preoccupied with details, place excessive demands on themselves and others, and tend to show impatience, frustration, and indifference towards others' needs and feelings.

## **Circumplex Individual Level - Impact Leaders Have on Others**

### **Achievement - 11 o'clock**

The manager or leader motivate and encourage others to set challenging but realistic goals, establish plans to reach those goals, and to pursue them with enthusiasm.

### **Self-Actualizing - 12 o'clock**

The manager or leader motivates and encourages others to gain enjoyment from their work, develop themselves professionally, and approach problems with interest, creativity, and integrity.

### **Humanistic Encouraging - 1 o'clock**

The manager or leader motivates and encourages others to be supportive of people, hope those around them to grow and develop, and provide others with positive and constructive feedback.

### **Affiliative - 2 o'clock**

The manager or leader motivates and encourages others to treat people as members of the team, be sensitive to the needs of others, and interact in friendly and cooperative ways.

### **Approval - 3 o'clock**

The manager or leader motivates and requires others to gain the approval of those around them, "go along" with people, and maintained (superficially) pleasant interpersonal relationships.

### **Conventional - 4 o'clock**

The manager or leader motivates and requires others to conform, fit into the "mold," and follow rules, policies, and standard operating procedures.

### **Dependent - 5 o'clock**

The manager or leader motivates and requires others to do only what they are told, clear all decisions with the superiors, and please those in positions of authority.

### **Avoidant - 6 o'clock**

The manager or leader motivates and acquires others to avoid any possibility of being blamed for mistake, shift responsibilities to others, and maintain a low profile.

### **Oppositional - 7 o'clock**

The manager or leader motivates and drives others to point out mistakes, gain status by being critical, and dismiss even good ideas due to minor flaws.

### **Power - 8 o'clock**

The manager or leader motivates and drives others to act forceful and aggressive, control the people around them, and build up to power base.

### **Competitive - 9 o'clock**

The manager or leader motivates and drives others to operate in a "win/lose" framework, outperform their peers, and do anything necessary to look good.

### **Perfectionistic - 10 o'clock**

The manager or leader motivates and drives others to set unrealistically high goals, stay on top of every detail, and work long hours to obtain narrowly-defined objectives.

# Circumplex Group Level - Group Styles

## **Achievement Orientated Groups**

These groups are concerned with getting things done and performing well. The group interaction a rational way, often with a plan and a reasonably structured way of proceeding.

## **Self-Actualizing Groups**

These groups tend to be optimistic, interested, and, at times, seemingly disorganized. Their members will offer any idea without hesitation, show enthusiasm about new and unusual perspectives, and getting grossed in the problem in the process.

## **Humanistic-Encouraging Groups**

These groups are constructive, sensitive, and supportive of members. People in these groups are interested in each others' growth and development, provide one another with assistance and support, and constructively build on the suggestions and ideas presented.

## **Affiliative Groups**

These groups are very friendly, cooperative, and relaxed. Such groups place great emphasis on people and interpersonal relationships.

## **Approval Orientated Groups**

In approval orientated groups, conflicts are minimal and interpersonal relationships are pleasant--at least superficially. Members of these groups are primarily concerned with being excepted and not offending one another.

## **Conventional Groups**

These groups tend to be constrained and predictable due to the formal way members interact, pressure to conform, and/or the tendency of members to think alike. Members' ideas and suggestions are somewhat conservative and traditional; they tend to view anything innovative or "different" as too risky.

## **Dependent Interaction Style Groups**

There are too many followers and not enough leaders in groups with dependent interaction styles. Members feel that they need direction and assistance but, at the same time, or reluctant to take on leadership responsibilities. Goals and objectives are accepted without question or are not established at all.

## **Avoidance Interaction Style Groups**

It's difficult to get a lot done in groups with an avoidance interaction style. Members are reluctant to suggest ideas or to commit to solutions--either because they feel apprehensive, don't want to "look bad," or have learned that it's not in their best interest to get involved.

## **Oppositional Interaction Style Groups**

Confrontation, conflict, and dissension prevailing groups with an oppositional interaction style. Members challenge everything said by each other, look for flaws and mistakes, and (in self-defence) present only "safe" ideas that are difficult to criticize.

## **Power Orientated Groups**

Members of power orientated groups are assertive and overconfident--sometimes even aggressive and arrogant. People spend their time vying for position, trying to get their way, and refusing to compromise.

## **Competitive Interaction Style Groups**

Problem-solving in groups with a highly competitive interaction style is more like a game or contest in a collaborative activity. Members are not really interested in solving the problem instead spend time selling their ideas and trying to impress the other.

## **Perfectionistic Groups**

The perfectionistic group makes every effort to come up with the best solution and to avoid any and all mistakes. Members get hung up on details, please to much emphasis on minor issues, and are never completely satisfied with any idea.

# **Circumplex - Organizational Level - Organizational Cultural Styles (Behavioural Norms)**

## **Achievement - 11 o'clock**

An Achievement culture characterizes organizations that do things well and value members who set and accomplish their own goals. Members of these organizations set challenging but realistic goals, establish plans to reach these goals, and pursue them with enthusiasm. Achievement organizations are effective; problems are solved appropriately, clients and customers are served well, and the orientation of members (as well as the organization itself) is healthy.

## **Self-Actualizing - 12 o'clock**

A Self-Actualizing culture characterizes organizations that value creativity, quality over quantity, and both task accomplishment and individual growth. Members of these organizations are encouraged to gain enjoyment from their work, develop themselves, and take on new and interesting activities. While self-actualizing organizations can be somewhat difficult to understand and control, they tend to be innovative, offer high-quality products and/or services, and attract and develop outstanding employees.

## **Humanistic Encouraging - 1 o'clock**

A Humanistic-Encouraging culture characterizes organizations that are managed in a participative and person-centered way. Members are expected to be supportive, constructive and open to influence in their dealings with one another. A humanistic culture leads to effective organizational performance by providing for the growth and active involvement of members who, in turn, report high satisfaction with and commitment to the organization.

## **Affiliative - 2 o'clock**

An Affiliative culture characterizes organizations that place a high priority on constructive interpersonal relationships. Members are expected to be friendly, open, and sensitive to the satisfaction of their work group. An Affiliative culture can enhance organizational performance by promoting open communication, good cooperation, and the effective coordination of activities. Members are loyal to their work groups and feel they “fit in” comfortably.

## **Approval - 3 o'clock**

An Approval culture describes organizations in which conflicts are avoided and interpersonal relationships are pleasant – at least superficially. Members feel that they must agree with, gain the approval of, and be liked by others. Though possibly benign, this type of work environment can limit organizational effectiveness by minimizing constructive “differing” and the expression of ideas and opinions.

## **Conventional - 4 o'clock**

A Conventional culture is descriptive of organizations that are conservative, traditional, and bureaucratically controlled. Members are expected to conform, follow the rules, and make a good impression. Too conventional a culture can interfere with effectiveness by suppressing innovation and preventing the organization from adapting to changes in its environment.

# **Circumplex - Organizational Level - Organizational Cultural Styles (Behavioural Norms)**

## **Dependent - 5 o'clock**

A Dependent culture is descriptive of organizations that are hierarchically controlled and non-participative. Centralized decision making in such organizations leads members to do only what they're told and to clear all decisions with superiors. Poor performance results from the lack of individual initiative, spontaneity, flexibility, and timely decision making.

## **Avoidant - 6 o'clock**

An Avoidance culture characterizes organizations that fail to reward success but nevertheless punish mistakes. This negative reward system leads members to shift responsibilities to others and to avoid any possibility of being blamed for a mistake. The survival of this type of organization is in question since members are unwilling to make decisions, take action, or accept risks.

## **Oppositional - 7 o'clock**

An Oppositional culture describes organizations in which confrontation prevails and negativism is rewarded. Members gain status and influence by being critical and thus are reinforced to oppose the ideas of others and to make safe (but ineffectual) decisions. While some questioning is functional, a highly oppositional culture can lead to unnecessary conflict, poor group problem solving and "watered-down" solutions to problems.

## **Power - 8 o'clock**

A Power culture is descriptive of non-participative organizations structured on the basis of the authority inherent in members' positions. Members believe they will be rewarded for taking charge and controlling subordinates (and being responsive to the demands of superiors). Power-oriented organizations are less effective than their members might think; subordinates resist this type of control, hold back information, and reduce their contributions to the minimal acceptable level.

## **Competitive - 9 o'clock**

A Competitive culture is one in which winning is valued and members are rewarded for out-performing one another. People in such organizations operate in a "win-lose" framework and believe they must work against (rather than with) their peers to be noticed. An overly competitive culture can inhibit effectiveness by reducing cooperation and promoting unrealistic standards of performance (either too high or too low).

## **Perfectionistic - 10 o'clock**

A Perfectionistic culture characterizes organizations in which perfectionism, persistence, and hard work are valued. Members feel they must avoid all mistakes, keep track of everything, and work long hours to attain narrowly-defined objectives. While some amount of this orientation might be useful, too much emphasis on perfectionism can lead members to lose sight of the goal, get lost in details, and develop symptoms of strain.

## **Circumplex - Organizational Level - Customer Service Styles**

### **Achievement - 11 o'clock**

Service providers do the job right the first time and suggest "extras" that anticipate the customers' future needs, as well as recognizing in response to changes in the clients' (and their own organizations) goals and objectives.

### **Self-Actualizing - 12 o'clock**

Service providers take a real interest in their work in regard to does meaningful, bring your creative flair to the dealings with clients, and maintain high standards.

### **Humanistic Encouraging - 1 o'clock**

Customers find that employees will be open to their suggestions, share information with them, go the "extra mile," and make sure their needs are met.

### **Affiliative - 2 o'clock**

Service providers are informal and sociable, easy to talk to, courteous, and consistently cooperative and reassuring without being overbearing.

### **Approval - 3 o'clock**

The approval style prevails in service providers are preoccupied with being accepted by the co-workers and/or superiors and emphasize their needs over those of the customer.

### **Conventional - 4 o'clock**

The conventional style is characterized by adherence to rules, traditions, and--in the extreme--inflexible procedures.

### **Dependent - 5 o'clock**

The dependence to prevails when service providers don't have the authority and/or resources they need to carry out the tasks for which they're responsible.

### **Avoidant - 6 o'clock**

The avoidance style translate into little or no service, with employees disassociating themselves from the organization, their jobs, and the customer.

### **Oppositional - 7 o'clock**

The opposition style prevails when service providers few clients negatively and complain that the jobs would be great "if it weren't for the customers".

### **Power - 8 o'clock**

The power orientated style focuses on "controlling" The client. The power stroke in emerge with service providers don't trust or respect customers or feel there's little competition for the customers business.

### **Competitive - 9 o'clock**

The competitive style is evident when providers view clients is potential conquests, approach negotiations in win / lose terms, and focus on the intermediate transaction rather than the long-term relationship.

### **Perfectionistic - 10 o'clock**

The perfectionist style prevails when service providers obsess over details and insist on doing things "exactly right" or as precisely as they believe they should be done.