

Plainly put, I have just acquired another alarm clock that takes up a lot of memory and space on my phone. Has it worked on me? I still hate waking up early in the mornings, but lately, I have awakened much earlier than I am accustomed to (7 a.m.), so I think The Rock is having a positive effect on me. I kind of like having The Rock on my side and pushing me to be the best of the best. It's like we're almost BFFs. I shall shoot him an Instagram direct message to thank him for bringing this app into my life. I am also sure he will appreciate me mentioning him in the SEAALL Newsletter, because that is the *true* honor.

Feel free to acquire The Rock Clock for yourself (available for both Android and Apple), if only to get 4.5 minutes of entertainment value out of it. Who knows, it might work for you and The Rock can help you crush those project goals in record time!

SEAALL Student Scholarship Article

What's My Style?

Learning About Communication Styles and Effective Leadership at the 2016 AALL Leadership Academy¹

Law librarians from over 40 libraries across the country -- including many in the southeast -- gathered in Oak Brook, Illinois, in April for the fifth AALL Leadership Academy. The two-day training brought together librarians from law schools, courts, law firms, and government agencies for an "intensive learning experience designed to develop essential leadership skills."²

At the academy, participants learned about effective leadership through engaging discussion, activities, and assessments. A range of topics were discussed, including the definition of leadership, leadership styles, values, motivation, influence and ethics, and good communication. Since that last topic -- good communication -- is the cornerstone of effective leadership, this article will share some of the ideas and strategies discussed at the academy on how to communicate well in the workplace.

As presidential speechwriter James Humes once said, the "art of communication is the language of leadership."³ Not surprisingly, therefore, the academy's facilitators, Pam Parr and Gail Johnson of Face to Face Communications, devoted much of the first day to teaching participants ways to communicate effectively. The conversation focused on understanding and navigating the four distinct personal communication styles, discussed by Robert Bolton and Dorothy Grover Bolton in *People Styles at*



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Work and Beyond.⁴ Clear communication, productive relationships, and ultimately effective leadership is facilitated by understanding one's own personal communication style as well as the styles of others.

Essentially, according to the Boltons (and Ms. Parr and Ms. Johnson), individuals possess one of four primary communication styles: analytical, driver, amiable, and expressive. The two primary determinants for which style is dominant in a given individual are the individual's level of (1) responsiveness and (2) assertiveness.



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Participants at the academy identified their primary style based on self assessments, as well as on assessments completed by colleagues, friends, and family prior to the academy, that gauge an individual's levels of responsiveness and assertiveness and, accordingly, their style.⁵ (I'm an "analytical.") Each style has various features that determine not only how one communicates and relates to others, but also how she makes decisions and utilizes her time. Analyticals, for example, generally tend to be less assertive and less responsive and are very logical, cautious, and deliberate in their decision-making, relying heavily on information and data.



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In addition, there are certain traits that individuals with a particular style tend to possess -- many of which are positive, but some of which can be perceived as negative. Additionally, how one responds to stress also tends to vary by style. Analyticals, not surprisingly, are considered to be very logical and orderly, but can be perceived as indecisive, and when faced with conflict or a stressful situation, they tend to withdraw and try to avoid it.

An individual cannot change their dominant style, but, as noted earlier, understanding personal communication styles is essential for effective communication and leadership. Analyticals, for example, need to be cognizant of their tendency to require more time and information when making decisions than others do, and adjust, when needed, to be more decisive. Similarly, they need to recognize when they are working with individuals (such as “drivers”) who rely more on their instincts and make decisions more quickly. In this situation, analyticals should consider making some adjustments in order to avoid misunderstandings and ascertain how to best work together toward a common goal.

In conclusion, the discussion of good communication and personal communication styles was not only one of the most valuable, informative, and enlightening components of the academy, but also one of the most fun. Law librarians interested in enhancing their leadership and communication skills would enjoy and benefit from asking themselves, “What’s my style?”

¹ My sincere thanks to SEAALL and the scholarship committee for awarding me a Lucile Elliott Scholarship in order to attend the 2016 AALL Leadership Academy.

² Am. Assoc. Law Libraries, Leadership Academy, <http://www.aallnet.org/mm/Education/leadership-academy/leadershipacademyflyer.pdf> (last visited May 20, 2016).

³ James C. Humes, *The Sir Winston Method: The Five Secrets of Speaking the Language of Leadership* 14 (1991) (“The difference between mere management and leadership is communication. And that art of communication is the *language of leadership*.”)

⁴ Robert Bolton & Dorothy Grover Bolton, *People Styles at Work and Beyond: Making Bad Relationships Good and Good Relationships Better* (2d ed. 2009). This work further develops the styles originally identified by David Merrill. *See id.* at 12. *See generally* David W. Merrill & Roger H. Reid, *People Styles and Effective Performance: Make Your Style Work for You* (1981).

⁵ The self-assessment is available in Bolton & Bolton, *supra* note 4, at 24-42, or there is a similar assessment available online at <http://occonline.occ.cccd.edu/online/klee/CommunicationsStyleInventory.pdf>