



What's My

Time

Style

SECOND EDITION

What's My Time Style: Making the Most of Your Time

By Gary Turner

Introduction to This Case Study

I recently did time management training sessions for a major oil and gas producer in the United States training almost 400 employees. Although headquartered in Texas, they had a rapidly expanding office in Pittsburgh due to drilling opportunities in the "Marcellus Shale." The company also had a "Service Center" in Oklahoma and several field offices in smaller towns. They asked me to do several sessions in the Texas home office, then go to do sessions in the Pittsburgh office, thirdly to do sessions in their Oklahoma Service Center, and finally to do field office sessions.

When I did each session, I used the *What's My Time Style?* instrument by HRDQ to assess participant style preferences. *What's My Time Style?* is a quick and easy-to-use tool for identifying personal time management style. Based on the personality theories of Marston and Jung, the self-assessment measures an individual's preference for one or more of four basic behavioral styles: *Direct*, *Spirited*, *Considerate* and *Systematic*. With this knowledge, individuals learn how to make their style work to their advantage and better understand how to work with others who manage their time differently.

I use this instrument because it helps participants identify their personal time management style, learn how to capitalize on their time management strengths, understand how to avoid their potential time management trouble spots, and improve interactions with others who have different time management styles.

When I finished this training project, I was somewhat surprised with the results in the various offices. The chart below shows the average style preferences of each of the offices.

	Direct	Spirited	Considerate	Systematic
Texas Office:	5.8	3.5	4.9	6.8
Pittsburgh Office:	5.8	3.3	4.2	7.7
Oklahoma Office:	4.5	4.2	6.3	6.0
Field Offices:	7.5	3.2	4.5	5.8
HRDQ Norm:	6.2	3.6	5.2	6.9

While the Texas office was very close in each of the four styles to HRDQ's national normative data the Pittsburgh office was very high in Systematic, the Oklahoma Office was very high in Considerate, and the Field Offices were very high in Direct.

Pittsburgh Office – A High Systematic Time Management Style

The Pittsburgh Office had gone through a lot of rapid growth and hiring. There were many geologists and petroleum engineers in their sessions as a lot of future drilling was on the horizon. These "techie" types scored lower on Considerate and higher on Systematic than other offices. One of their main concerns about time management was "always being rushed." One of the pressure points in many of their jobs was in planning future drilling operations and the Texas Office always needed answers pronto. But the planning had many variables and so the Systematic style could work better in detailed diagrams, maps, tables, and charts that were needed for their decisions.

In the sessions I had with them, many expressed their concern that they did not have enough time to do the detail that was expected. One engineer said, "I don't like to listen to my phone messages because someone is always asking me for the completed charts *now*." The participants explained that there were so many choices of where to drill that they had trouble making an accurate decision about the best opportunity. Participants were also frustrated with the lack of organization and infrastructure in the office – the rapid growth made things rather chaotic and the Systematic Style of managing time gets very frustrated with that.

Obviously one of the time management preferences of the Systematic Style is having the time to do the job right, to analyze carefully, to follow procedures carefully, and to be thorough with the detail.

Oklahoma Office – A High Considerate Time Management Style

The Oklahoma office had help desk functions, interfaces with landowners, petroleum landmen, and customer service functions. Unlike the Pittsburgh office, those in the Oklahoma office understood that the nature of their jobs required them to be interrupted frequently by their internal or external customer. Most of the interruptions were by phone calls coming in. They prided themselves on office camaraderie and fun as shown by their higher-than-average Spirited Style. The "service nature" of the job also led to the highest Considerate Style (with a pretty strong back-up of Spirited Style).

I was intrigued that our sessions in this office had many snacks and desserts most of which were made and brought by participants. One person had even brought a birthday cake for a session participant. The people in the session obviously expected this and expected us to take a couple extended breaks for the treats. Also, before I got started in the first session, one landman, as you might expect, stood up to welcome me warmly to the session and the city. He then proceeded to sidetrack (at least it appeared so to me) even more by telling a lengthy joke about a Texan so everyone in the room could laugh. During the sessions everyone listened to me with full attention. They made me feel like talking on and on. Between my talking and the breaks it was hard to fit everything into the sessions.

In the sessions I had with them many expressed concerns about the home office making changes without consulting with the Oklahoma Office. Many talked about additional responsibilities being given them in their job with the end result that they felt overwhelmed with how much they had to do. They frequently talked about their office camaraderie and "family" atmosphere. They felt appreciated by co-workers and were glad they could be of service in the growing company. But because they did not feel listened to and because they were forced to change their procedures so frequently, they felt a lack of control over their time.

Obviously, time management preferences of the Consideration Style are having the time to help others, to do the job so they do not offend anyone, and to include everyone's opinions in decisions. There is a "customer service" mentality in this style.

Field Offices – A High Direct Time Management Style

Field Office sessions had well operators, well tenders, production supervisors, GIS techs, well supervisors, measurement techs, a construction supervisor, and line walkers. The "men" (because they all were men) were doers – get in their truck, drive to the next well, and get the maintenance done quickly. So it was not much of a surprise when their time management style came out very high on Direct.

Although the previous sessions were scheduled to run from eight to noon and one to five, these sessions were from seven to eleven and eleven-thirty to three-thirty. (Direct Style workers need to get started early.) When I arrived early to my first session at 6:30 am, the white trucks were already lined up at the field office modular office building – the participants were ready to go. I walked in and there were still a couple donuts left but little coffee left. Once the donuts were gone, the snacks in this session were potato chips in their bags – quick and easy to make. Any everyone had change for the coke machine.

When I started the sessions asking for concerns they had about time management the immediate answer from everyone was “interruptions.” As one well tender said, “I plan out my trips to get a lot of work done for the day, but I’m at my second well when someone calls and wants me to go check on a well 45 miles away because the landowner wants to see if it’s operating. That’s ridiculous.” (I think “ridiculous” was actually a four-letter word we’ll forget for now.) For these men “interruptions” meant a change in the goals and plan they had for the day. That was frustrating.

The Direct Style likes to remain on course and sees to it that he or she does stay on track. When the morning participants found out that Subway sandwiches were being brought in for lunch, one man said, “You mean I don’t have to eat in my truck today.” That created a big laugh as that was their daily modus operandi was short lunch breaks and staying focused on work all day long.

One of the time management preferences of the Direct Style is to accomplish tasks quickly and to have immediate access to needed items as they are goal driven. One man complained because he had needed a tool but had left the tool at a previous site. I could see how much that had upset him.

What I Learned

Because of my years of time management training, I knew that certain jobs had time management preferences built into the job because of the nature of the work. But this experience showed me that you can’t teach time management principles without knowing the job and personal preferences of the learner.

Sometime managers cannot stand interruptions while, for others, interruptions are part of the job and in fact enjoyable. Sometime managers can’t stand demanding deadlines, while others enjoy putting demanding deadlines on themselves because it makes the job exciting.

So, the *What’s My Time Style* inventory is a great way to allow personal discovery and understanding about our own preferences in managing our time. It also helps give guidance in knowing how to help other people manage their time. As I’ve heard it said, “Don’t stress. Do your best. Forget the rest.”

Traditional time management works well for Systematic Styles who like a “plan-prioritize-schedule execute” tactic in their daily work. But for other styles, there is a preference that requires **responsiveness** to situations, people, or emerging priorities. People can have different styles but still use time effectively.

About the Author

An award-winning trainer and consultant, Gary Turner has over 30 years of professional experience with major corporations such as M&M Mars, Warner Bros., and AT&T. His diverse area of expertise includes consulting on leadership, team development, organizational improvement, and collaboration.

About HRDQ

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Since 1977, HRDQ has been researching, creating, and publishing training tools for developing great people skills. We offer a rich catalog of research-based assessments, simulations, games, and programs in practical formats suitable for trainers, facilitators, and coaches of any experience level. Our products are carefully designed to improve the performance of individuals, teams, and organizations. You look to us for effective, time-saving learning solutions that address today's most in-demand people skills, like communication, leadership supervision, emotional intelligence, collaboration, critical thinking, decision making, conflict resolution, and more. From frontline employees to senior-level executives and everyone in between, our products help initiate and promote lasting change.

Better Learning. Better Performance. Better Life.

Experiential is the key word that explains the power of HRDQ products to deliver on our promise of **better learning**. HRDQ activities don't place learners in a passive environment where they simply listen to someone describe how something should be done. Instead, we engage learners in situations where they discover the value of a skill for themselves and then *practice* it. Practice is critical, because, without it, nobody can become more skillful—at anything. To master bicycle riding, you must get on a bike; listening to someone describe how to do it isn't enough. The same applies to the broad range of interpersonal skills covered by HRDQ programs. No matter how much information you absorb about these skills, your first attempts to perform them are likely to be awkward. No practice? No skill.

Experiential Learning results in **better performance**, because it increases the odds that training will transfer from the learning environment to the workplace, where it really counts, where participants can apply what they have learned in a way that improves their job performance. Why? Think about it. If you have learned something about a skill, but you've never practiced performing it, would you want to debut your first attempts before an audience of real supervisors, subordinates, coworkers, or customers? Practice during training, in a (hopefully) consequence-free environment, leads to application on the job because it gives learners the self-confidence to use and refine a skill in the real world. They've been there. They've done it. They know they can do it again.

And better performance leads to professional and personal success, which leads to a **better life**. We aren't referring only to higher salaries, promotions, and status, though all of those certainly matter. We mean simply this: any activity, task, or job is far more rewarding when you can perform it skillfully. Life is better when you do things well.

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Questions?

Contact us at support@HRDQstore.com or 800-633-4533.

HRDQ's Style Suite

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What's My Coaching Style

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What's My Learning Style

What's My Selling Style

What's My Team Member Style

What's My Time Style

Learn How Personality Drives Behavior

Direct, Spirited, Considerate, and Systematic. These memorable terms encapsulate the complexities of personality, as unveiled in this useful suite of assessments. The HRDQ Style Suite provides individuals with eight fast and easy ways to better understand themselves and others. The self assessments in this suite enable participants to identify their style, understand how it drives behavior, and learn ways to apply that style to build stronger, more productive relationships – all in as little as an hour.

Available in print and online, the HRDQ Style Suite provides facilitators with step-by-step guidelines, flexible training outlines, and professional PowerPoint® presentations. Participants are sure to enjoy the invaluable learning opportunities provided by these assessments.

Learning Outcomes:

- Pinpoint personal style
- Understand the strengths and trouble spots of each style
- Identify the styles of others
- Learn how to use your style to improve relationships

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