

How My Graph Became a Dot

by Inscape Publishing



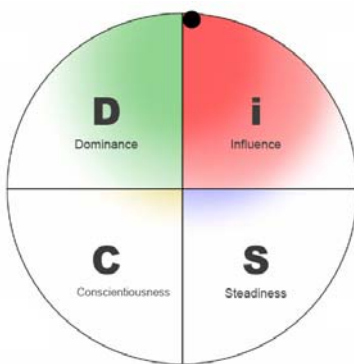
From *DiSC[®] Classic* to *Everything DiSC[®]*: How My Graph Became a Dot

The DiSC[®] model has been used for decades to help people understand themselves and others. Practitioners continue to find ways to make the model simpler, more intuitive, and more relevant, while still enhancing the richness of insight that has made DiSC so popular. In this paper, we'll discuss some of the different ways in which the DiSC model can be both measured and represented. More specifically, we'll explore how DiSC is measured and represented in the *Everything DiSC[®]* report, and discuss the implications and benefits of this approach relative to some of the more traditional approaches to teaching DiSC.

The traditional way to represent the DiSC model is a line-graph format, as shown to the right. This format is used in Inscape Publishing products such as the *DiSC Classic* profile and provides separate scores on four scales: D, i, S, and C. The interpretation of this graph within the profile is based on a Classical Pattern, which describes a person's overall DiSC pattern as it's influenced by all four styles.



This line graph representation of DiSC, however, is only one of many ways to discuss DiSC and present a participant with his or her DiSC style. The earliest representation of the DiSC model, as described by William Marston in his book, *The Emotions of Normal People*, was a circle.

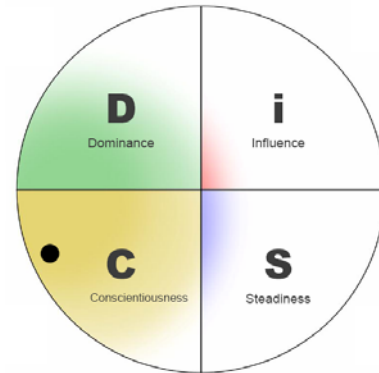


Harkening back to the roots of DiSC, the DiSC circle, to the left, provides an intuitive way to show a participant her or his location within the DiSC model. This representation of DiSC is used within the *Everything DiSC* profiles. For instance, the circle, or circumplex, to the left shows a participant who tends toward the i or Influence style but also has a strong tendency toward the D or Dominance style. If one were to take the line graph above and represent it in a circular format, this would very likely be the resulting profile. In both cases, we have a person who is very high in the i and D styles and very low in the S (Steadiness) and C (Conscientiousness) styles.

How does the DiSC® circle work?

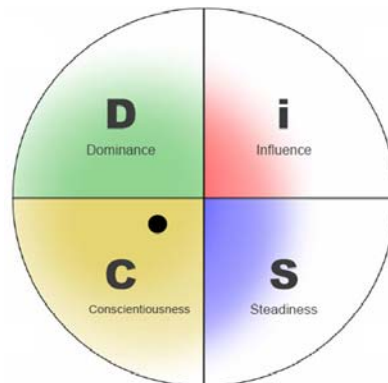
Although the circular representation of DiSC® is designed to be simple and intuitive, it also conveys a great deal of information about a person's DiSC style at a glance. To start, the angular location of a person's dot indicates the person's primary DiSC style.

Many people also lean toward a second DiSC style. For example, in the circle to the right, we have a participant who tends toward the C style, but also has some tendency toward the D style. Most likely, if he had taken the *DiSC Classic* assessment, he would have ended up with a Creative Pattern (composed of the C and D styles) or an Objective Thinker Pattern (composed mostly of the C style.)



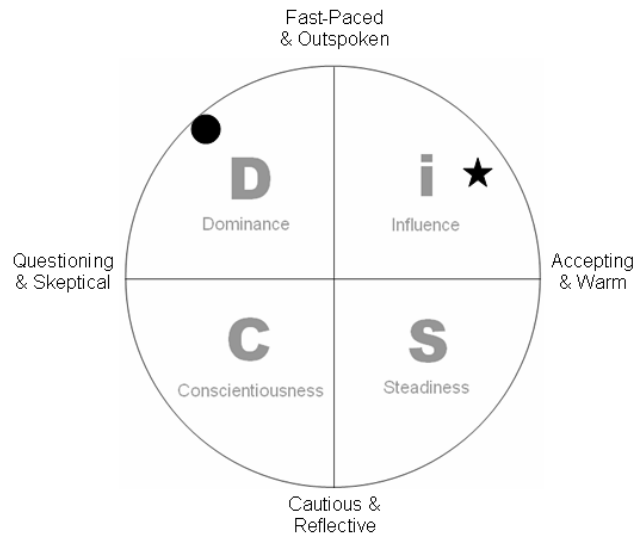
The distance from the dot to the center of the circle also communicates important information about the person's DiSC style. A person whose dot is close to the outer edge of the circle is probably very committed to his or her DiSC style. The shading within the circle reinforces this principle and shows the participant that he has a large amount of the C style and a significant, but slightly less, amount of the D style. The shading also shows that he probably exhibits very little of the S style and even less of the i style. The shading, however, still reinforces that he has each of these four styles within him. As a result, this participant understands that he probably has some difficulty shifting into an i or S style for long periods of time.

To the right we have another participant who tends toward CD, but her dot is much closer to the center of the circle. Her CD style will not be as pronounced, and the shading tells her that she will find it easier to shift into the i or S styles without significant stress.



What are the advantages of using the *Everything DiSC*[®] Assessment?

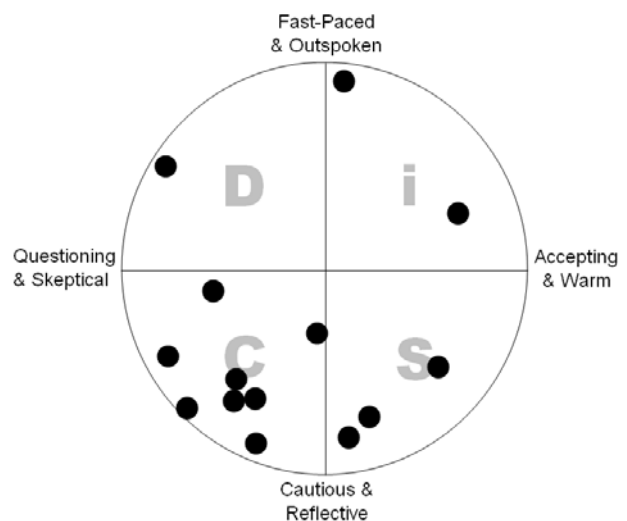
Relationships: One of the most powerful aspects of the DiSC[®] circle is that it allows us to show the relationship between two people in a straightforward, visual manner. For example, on the circular DiSC map below we can plot a participant (represented by the dot) and her co-worker (represented by the star). The participant can immediately see the similarities and differences between the two of them. Even though they both share a tendency to be fast-paced and outspoken, they differ dramatically on how questioning or accepting they are. In this case, the participant can quickly see where tension or frustration might arise. Because she is much more questioning and skeptical by nature, she can visually understand why her co-worker might interpret her candor as blunt or cold. The participant can also see how she and her co-worker complement each other and where they both share blind spots.



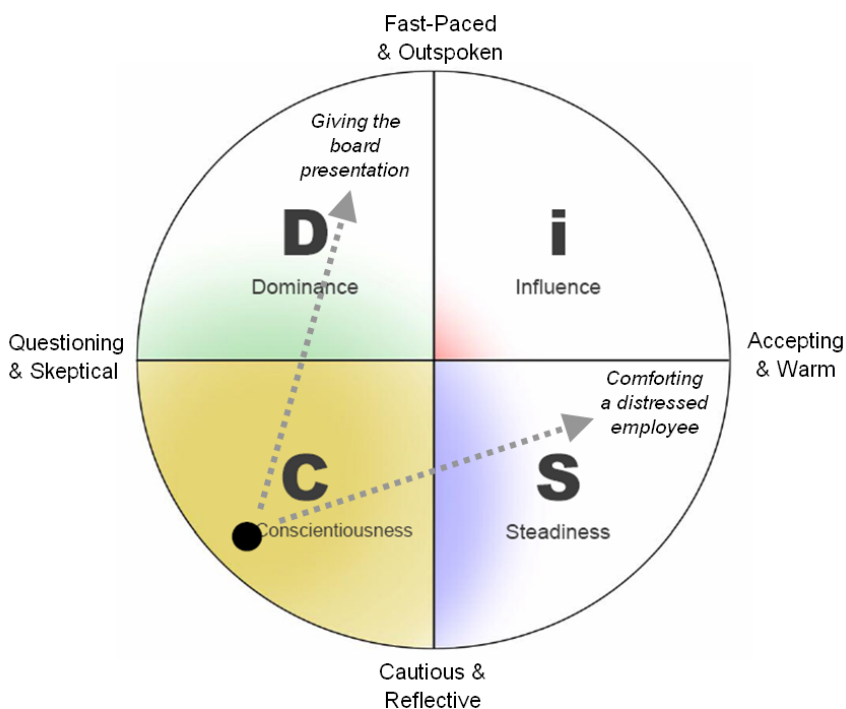
Although the line graph representation of DiSC allows us to compare the profiles of two people, a great deal more interpretation and coaching is often necessary before the implications of that comparison become clear. With the circular representation, the implications and applications of the information are visually apparent. And while there is still a great deal of richness for a facilitator to add, participants can immediately begin to apply the information for themselves.

Group Dynamics: The circular representation of DiSC also allows participants to quickly gauge the composition of their group and see the implications of that composition.

For instance, in the team represented to the right, a disproportionately large number of group members tend toward C. Consequently, this group is probably fairly task-oriented and may put a very high priority on getting things right. We can also see some potential group limitations. Because virtually everyone in the group is cautious and reflective, the team may find that they often lack a sense of urgency or energy in their culture. They may lose out on opportunities because they don't move at a quick enough pace. Further, by simply glancing at the map, we can start to understand some of the frustrations that individual members may experience. For instance, the two people in the i quadrant may, in many respects, feel alienated or misunderstood by the rest of the group.



Adaptation & Stress: For years, consultants, coaches, and facilitators have used DiSC[®] to help people recognize the occasional need to adapt their DiSC style to the people or situations around them. As mentioned earlier, the *Everything DiSC*[®] profiles use shading to help participants understand the areas on the DiSC map where they might have difficulty stretching. For example, the map below shows a manager who tends heavily toward the C style. Using the map, she can quickly see how certain situations require her to stretch beyond her natural tendencies. She can visually understand that when she needs to comfort a direct report who is upset or frustrated, she'll probably need to project more acceptance and warmth than is naturally her style. Using the shading, she can also see that this is most likely out of her comfort zone, and she will find it stressful if she has to do this kind of activity on a regular basis.



If, on the other hand, when this same manager is giving a board presentation to a group of very direct, results-oriented executives, she can see that a different type of adaptation is necessary. It's clear that she needs to pick up her pace and be much more outspoken with her ideas. If she's a mature manager, she can probably make the stretch, but the map helps her understand why it's so draining. Although a facilitator can certainly discuss the concepts of adaptation and stress using the line graph representation of DiSC, the visual, integrated nature of the circular representation makes this process simple and intuitive for the participant.

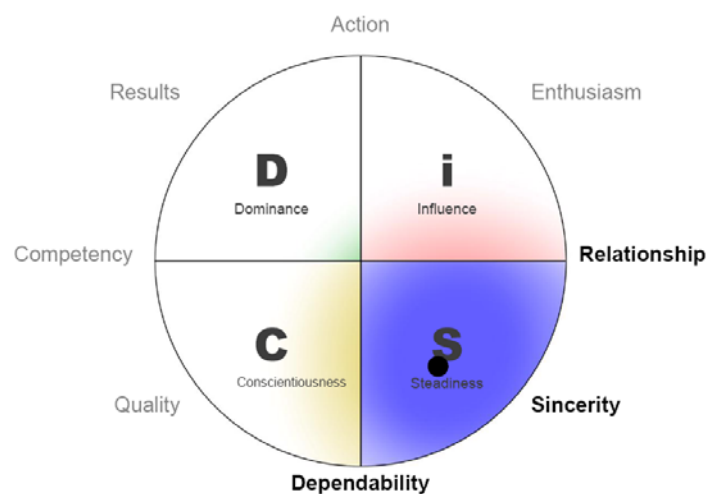
Integration of the Four Styles: Instead of presenting the four DiSC styles as four separate traits, the circular model shows the true continuous nature of DiSC. For instance, there is a meaningful difference between someone who has a pure D style and someone who has a DI style. In both cases, the D characteristics express themselves differently because the four styles do not live in isolation. This is a clear case where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Marston recognized this fact when he compared the DiSC circle to the color wheel, where colors flow into each other in a smooth, continuous fashion. The combination of red and blue form the color purple, which has its own unique properties separate from either red or blue. Within the *DiSC Classic* assessment, the Classical Patterns are used to capture the integrated, interactive nature of the four styles. For instance, the Inspirational Pattern describes someone who is high in both the D and i styles and how these two styles uniquely combine to form the pattern. The circular representation of DiSC presents this integration, however, in a simple, visual manner. Participants can clearly see how the different styles blend into one another and where they fit within that blend.

Memorability: One of the reasons that the DiSC[®] model has been so successful over the years is because it gives people a simple, memorable way to understand themselves and those around them. The DiSC profile could easily be designed to contain 20, 50, or even 100 different scales. And while such a profile might contain a lot of information, it would lose most of its practical usefulness. The complexity would keep people from internalizing the information. They would have trouble organizing it and remembering it. Consequently, they wouldn't apply it.

Even though the line-graph representation of DiSC has proven to be incredibly powerful, the circular representation presents the DiSC model in a way that is even more intuitive and memorable without sacrificing the richness of information. Instead of learning about four separate scales, participants learn about one integrated model. Psychologists have long known that people can remember information much more easily when they “chunk” it together into smaller, unified pieces. With the circular model we are asking people to carry around in their heads *one* unified piece of information (i.e., the circular model) rather than *four* separate pieces of information (i.e., the four DiSC scales). Although it may sound like splitting hairs, study after study shows the profound effects that chunking information has on memory. Consequently, if the DiSC model is more memorable, it's going to be more practical and useful. People will be more likely to successfully apply the model in their everyday lives.

Application Layers: DiSC has proven to be very powerful in giving people a language to discuss their differences. The model helps people not only understand those differences, but value them. In a more sophisticated marketplace, however, companies often want to take DiSC even farther. Organizations routinely use DiSC to train salespeople, managers, customer service agents, leaders, etc. With the circular DiSC map, we are able to create an application layer for the DiSC model that helps participants see the immediate relevance of DiSC to their field, such as sales or management.

For instance, the DiSC circle to the right is taken from the *Everything DiSC[®] Sales Profile*. The words around the circle describe the priorities of customers or salespeople with the different DiSC styles. So, if we have a salesperson who tends toward the S style, he probably places a priority on appearing sincere, building trusting relationships, and providing dependable service. If he is working with a customer who tends toward D, he can quickly see that the customer has priorities that are quite different from his own and he'll have to adapt his natural style.



Application layers such as this mean that participants don't have to spend time learning abstract theories about personality or behavior that aren't relevant to their situation. Further, these participants don't have to struggle to understand how DiSC relates to their goals and developmental needs. It becomes immediately apparent how they can use this model to be more successful at their job.

Measuring your location on the DiSC® circle

In the *DiSC® Classic* assessment, participants are shown 28 forced-choice boxes that contain four words each. Consequently, participants review a total of 112 words. In each box, they are asked to choose one that is most like them and one that is least like them. One of the original reasons for using this measurement methodology is because it greatly reduced the social desirability of responses. That is, a participant can only choose one response as *most* even if they are all desirable and has to choose one as *least* even if it's not very desirable.

In the *Everything DiSC®* assessment, participants are shown 79 adjectives and asked to indicate, on a five point scale, how frequently each adjective describes them. This format is illustrated below.

	Never or almost never	Occasionally	Applies to me about as often as not	Usually	Always or almost always
cautious	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
stern	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
playful	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
patient	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
firm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Because the *Everything DiSC* assessment is electronically scored, the computerized scoring algorithm can automatically adjust for the social desirability of responses. Consequently, participants are left with more freedom to answer the questions in a way that truly describes them. That is, they are not forced to select a response that does not feel optimal to them. For this reason, participants generally find it easier to respond to the *Everything DiSC* assessment than to the *DiSC Classic* assessment. In addition, because they are reviewing only 79 words, rather than 112 words, the assessment usually takes less time.

After a participant has finished the assessment, the profile is scored. Each of the 79 adjectives is assigned to one of eight DiSC scales: D, Di, i, iS, S, SC, C, or CD. Although not reported in the actual profile, participants receive scores on each of these eight scales. Each of these eight scales is weighted according to its location on the DiSC circle, and a participant's location in the DiSC circle is calculated. Because the *Everything DiSC* assessment measures people on eight points around the DiSC circle rather than on four points, like the *DiSC Classic* assessment, it provides more precision about a participant's true DiSC style. For instance, instead of simply measuring a person on the S and C scales, the *Everything DiSC* assessment measures a person on S, SC, and C scales. This precision gives us a better idea of where a person is located within the DiSC circle.

What happened to the Classical Patterns?

Although the *Everything DiSC*[®] profiles do not technically refer to a Classical Pattern, the profiles allow a facilitator to glean the same information from a quick glance at the DiSC[®] circle. For instance, the Inspirational Classical Pattern is assigned to a person who scores high on the D and i scales of the *DiSC Classic* assessment. Research shows that if these same people are plotted as a dot within the DiSC circle, the vast majority end up with a dot at the top of the circle, where the D and i quadrants meet. The majority of people who have a Creative Classical Pattern end up with a dot that tends toward the left side of the DiSC circle, where the C and D quadrants meet.

One of the most common questions about the transition from using Classical Patterns to using the DiSC circle involves the Achiever and Appraiser patterns. These Classical Patterns describe people who are high in two DiSC styles that are theoretically opposite each other. The Achiever pattern is a combination of the D and S styles, and the Appraiser pattern is a combination of the i and C styles. Because each of these patterns represent two opposite sides of the map, it is clearly difficult to represent them on the DiSC circle. Naturally, facilitators want to know what kind of feedback these participants will get if they use the *Everything DiSC* profile, and they also want some assurance that this feedback will be just as rich and accurate.

First, keep in mind that the Achiever and Appraiser patterns are two of the most infrequent patterns. As predicted by the DiSC model, few people will be high on two styles that negatively correlate with each other in such a strong manner. One must also keep in mind that among those who receive these patterns, some will receive them as a result of measurement error. There are people, however, who have taken the *DiSC Classic* assessment multiple times throughout the years and repeatedly receive one of these opposite-style Classical Patterns. When these people are plotted in the DiSC circle, they usually have a dot that is quite close to the center of the circle. In fact, of all of the Classical Patterns, people with an Achiever or Appraiser pattern have, by far, the shortest average *vector length*, or distance from the center of the circle.

By investigating the data, we uncovered one of the main reasons why people score high on two DiSC styles that are theoretically opposite. Experienced DiSC practitioners may recognize that each of the four DiSC styles contain smaller facets within them. For instance, on the C scale, there are items that measure facets such as introversion, precision, or a systematic nature. Although these constructs correlate with each other, they also have some independence. That is, although most people who score high on the C scale embody all of these facets, some have only one or two.

The research suggests that people who are high in both the i and C scales (Appraiser Pattern), for example, score high on select facets from the i and C scales that are not, in fact, strongly opposite each other. For instance, a person who is high on both the i and C scales is not both extroverted (as measured by the i scale) and introverted (as measured by the C scale). On average, most of these people, although not all, respond to the profile as extroverts, not introverts. So why are they also high on the C scale? For many people it is because they care about precision and accuracy. The research suggested that people with the Appraiser pattern were actually less likely than the average person to endorse words like private, soft-spoken, cautious, introverted, or reserved (all of which are C words). The C words that they did endorse, however, were words like logical, precise, thorough, tactful, well-disciplined. In this case, we end up with a person who is extroverted (like a high i) and cares

about precision (like a high C). And so, in the i/c pattern we don't necessarily have opposites, but probably have a mix of i facets and C facets that are fairly independent of each other.

We have a similar finding with people who score as Achiever patterns in *DiSC® Classic*. From the data, we can see that these people (on average) did not score high on D facets that include forcefulness (as measured by words like forceful, dominant, outspoken, demanding) but did have the D facets that include persistence (as measured by such words as insistent, strong-willed, stubborn, persistent, independent). Consequently, the average person with the Achiever pattern might have the confidence and independence of a high D without the forcefulness or adventurousness. And at the same time, this person might have the agreeableness of an S without the timidity. When participants taking *DiSC Classic* receive an Achiever or Appraiser pattern, the facilitator may want to take extra time to explore which aspects of D, i, S, or C are most relevant to them.

Similarly, when participants have taken the *Everything DiSC®* profile and receive a score very close to the center, the facilitator has the opportunity to explore how natural each of the four styles is for them. How well does the D style describe them? How about the i, S, or C styles? In most cases, the participant will simply be someone who contains each of the four styles in roughly equal amounts and will find it equally easy to shift into each of the four styles. There may be instances, however, where two or three of the styles are a better fit than others.

Conclusion

Although the line-graph representation of DiSC used in *DiSC Classic* is still a very powerful tool, the circular representation of DiSC opens up new possibilities for DiSC practitioners. This representation allows participants to quickly understand relationships in the DiSC model and recognize patterns within group dynamics. The *Everything DiSC* assessment also helps people quickly internalize the ways that they might need to stretch in their daily lives and the stress that this causes. And perhaps most important, the circular representation makes the DiSC model more intuitive and memorable while building on its inherent richness.