



How many assessments have you taken over the years?

From when you were in school taking standardized assessments to getting older and taking online or even magazine assessments for fun?

Or professionally, taking assessments to tell you about your personality or how you work best. These kinds of assessments are everywhere and they are intended to give us some insight into who we are and how we operate.

There is value to be had in these assessments, but there is also a limited value to be had in these assessments.

When it comes to leadership and trying to determine what your leadership style is, there is no shortage of places to look.

One of the most common and popular assessments for leadership is called the DISC.

After taking the DISC they assign you what letter you are most like in your leadership style.

There are also assessments like the Enneagram which focuses more on personality and how that fits into your working style.

Even the 5 Love Languages have translated into the workplace with the 5 Languages of Appreciation.

There are loads of leadership strength assessments like VIA and Gallup.

We have the trusted Myers-Briggs that breaks down our personalities.

And USC has their own leadership style assessment.

I've highlighted some of the most popular instruments for a couple of reasons.

1) As I stated in the beginning, there is value to be had in anything that gives you a little bit more insight into who you are, and in this case who you are as a leader.

The challenge and the problem with assessments is that they are limited, because every assessment you take whether it's about your personality or your strengths or your leadership style, you're going to get a different answer.

Sometimes it's a letter, sometimes it's a number, sometimes it's a color, sometimes it's a label. Across assessments you're getting different labels.

What happens often is you take the assessment, maybe by yourself, maybe within a group of other people and everybody says 'well, I'm a D. I'm an I. Oh, isn't that interesting?'



Then the meeting ends and it kind of goes away. Later on people might say, 'wait weren't you the D? What does a D mean again? What was the I?'

We're trying to hang our hat on whatever that assessment told us about ourselves.

The other challenge with using assessments is sometimes we use them as an excuse to adopt a fixed mindset.

For example, if our color or number or letter or label tells us that we are a certain way then we can say, 'well I'm a Gemini that's how it goes' or 'I'm a seven. That's just my personality.'

You can see where there can be some danger in attributing too much stock into assessments.

Anything that can provide you insight is valuable, but the best insight you are going to get about yourself as a leader is your own self-reflection and assessment and your responsiveness to external feedback.

That's how you're going to figure out what kind of leader you are, and what kind of leadership style you prefer. That is the winning combination for almost all growth.

There has to be an element of self-awareness and assessment but even the most self-aware of us can only be so self-aware. There are always blind spots and there are always shadow sides we don't see. That's where our humility as a leader will benefit us.

By reaching out to others to get the feedback from them about what our leadership style is, but more importantly than a label is how it is impacting them.

Is it effective?

Are we being a strong leader regardless of the label that goes along with that?

Instead of using assessments, there are some folks who have tried to come up with names for different leadership styles.

If you Google different leadership styles, you'll see the titles pop up and one of them will say 'The 10 leadership styles' and the next one will say 'The 5 leadership styles' and 'The 7' and 'The 9' and so forth. There's not a consensus on the exact number of leadership styles and what they all are and what they're called.

But Goleman is a really good starting point and a pretty good standard for what some of those leadership styles look like.

He's labeled them as coercive, authoritative, affiliative, democratic, pacesetter, and coaching.



In this chart, he has broken them down to show what each style looks like and the emotional intelligence attached to each style, when it works best, and the impact on team culture and climate.

What I love about looking at leadership styles from this lens is a couple of things.

1) It's not labeling you as a person that you have to own this fixed label, color, number, or letter. It's saying that these are the different styles and here's where they can work best. You'll notice that none of them say never.

There are some where when in the mention of impact, they say it can be negative like in coercive and pacesetter so you need to take caution when adopting those leadership styles. But there are still moments when those types of leadership styles will be the most beneficial.

When you are coming into your own as a leader and developing your presence and the type of leader you want to be, one thing that's very important for you to take away is you don't have to call your leadership style a certain thing and you don't have to be the same kind of leader in every situation.

In fact, while your values and integrity and vision should stay grounded, how you're leading and what style you're learning should change over time to adapt to different situations and different people.

Think of leadership styles less of a fixed mindset and more of an adaptive one.

As a leader, you need to be able to respond to different situations in different ways. The Goleman 6 are a great place to start and to think about where you naturally go as a leader.

You can take an assessment or you can self reflect and get that valuable external feedback from your team.

Figure out where you naturally go and figure out where you might need to adjust to some different styles depending on the circumstance.

So, the most important question for you is, are you willing and able to adjust when necessary?

Being a leader is challenging and so much of that challenge is that things change and they change often and frequently and many times we can't predict when those changes are coming.

So as you continue to develop yourself, develop your ability to be flexible and adjust your style based on the circumstances.