

# Assertiveness Report



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# **Assertiveness**

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This report contains a considerable amount of information about your results and about negotiations styles in general. The contents list below gives a quick indication of the overall headings that have been used for each section

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## Assertiveness

# INTRODUCTION

Assertiveness is a philosophy and a technique of communication. It involves getting a deeper understanding of what goes on when we interact with others, particularly when there is an element of conflict present (which covers, of course, a lot of human experience).

Assertive people:

- feel empowered - they do not feel that they are unjustly controlled by others
- are proactive - that is, they make things happen, and are not reactive - always waiting
- to see how they will respond to the words and actions of others
- know their rights and responsibilities in dealing with others
- are able to resist the aggressive, manipulative and submissive ploys of other people.

A good definition of assertiveness is:

### **Getting what you want from others without infringing upon their rights**

The model on the facing page has a two axis grid. One axis describes the level of 'energy' that an individual may adopt in a situation in which they are communicating with one or more people. This runs from 'Strong' to 'Gentle'. This usually means verbal energy in terms of speaking (when the voice may be louder and more forceful), but it also has associated non vocal characteristics such as leaning forward, high use of other body language and/or facial expressions, etc.

The other axis on the grid relates to the level of 'empathy' that may be preferred by an individual (or one that evolves). This runs from 'warm' to 'cool'.

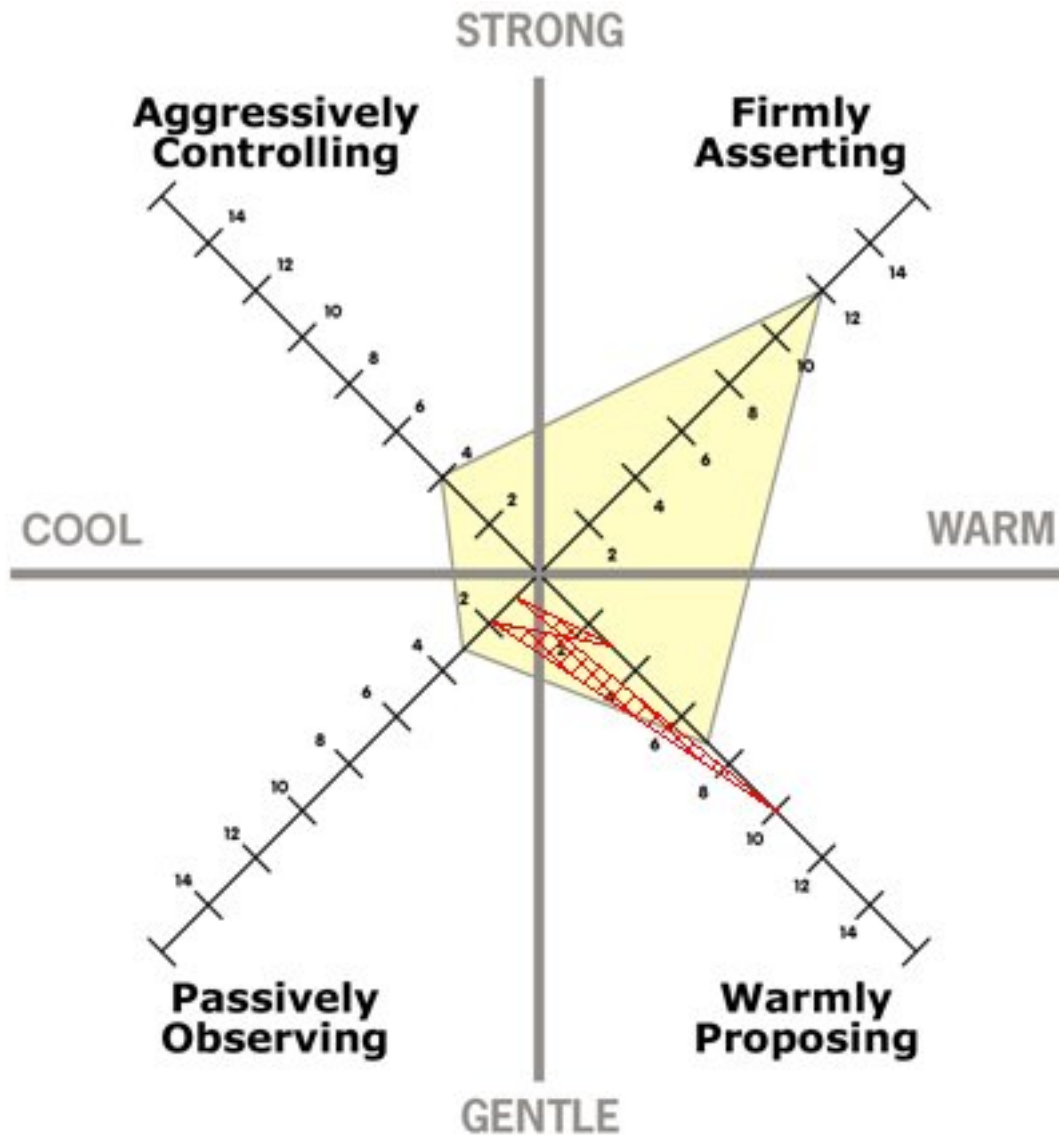
By intersecting these two axes the grid created shows four assertiveness styles. Every one of these four styles may be adopted in different situations, although it is likely that most individuals will stick to their greatest preference in most circumstances that they encounter.

Of course, all of these styles have their associated strengths and weaknesses and some are more useful and applicable in different circumstances, than others. The diamond shape or shaded area shows how much of each quadrant in the grid is typically used for a positively assertive individual. Don't forget these are only averages, not fixed recipes for all people in all circumstances. Although the level of energy should be a little higher than average, it is the empathy side of the grid that assertiveness is often shown.

Firm and positive assertiveness requires considerable practice for many people. However, it is fair to say that successful efforts to be assertive often arise from a strong feeling of self worth, or high self esteem, combined with a strong and positive belief about the intrinsic worth or value of others around you.

## Assertiveness

### ASSERTIVENESS GRID PROFILE FOR MARY SAMPLE



Note: The diamond shape or shaded area above shows how much of each quadrant in the grid is typically used most consistently to achieve successful results, by being suitably assertive in most situations. Of course, every communication circumstance is different and may require slightly different styles to handle it. This graph 'shape' is therefore only an 'average' and merely suggests that we should steer away from entirely aggressive and passive styles if we want to become more assertive.

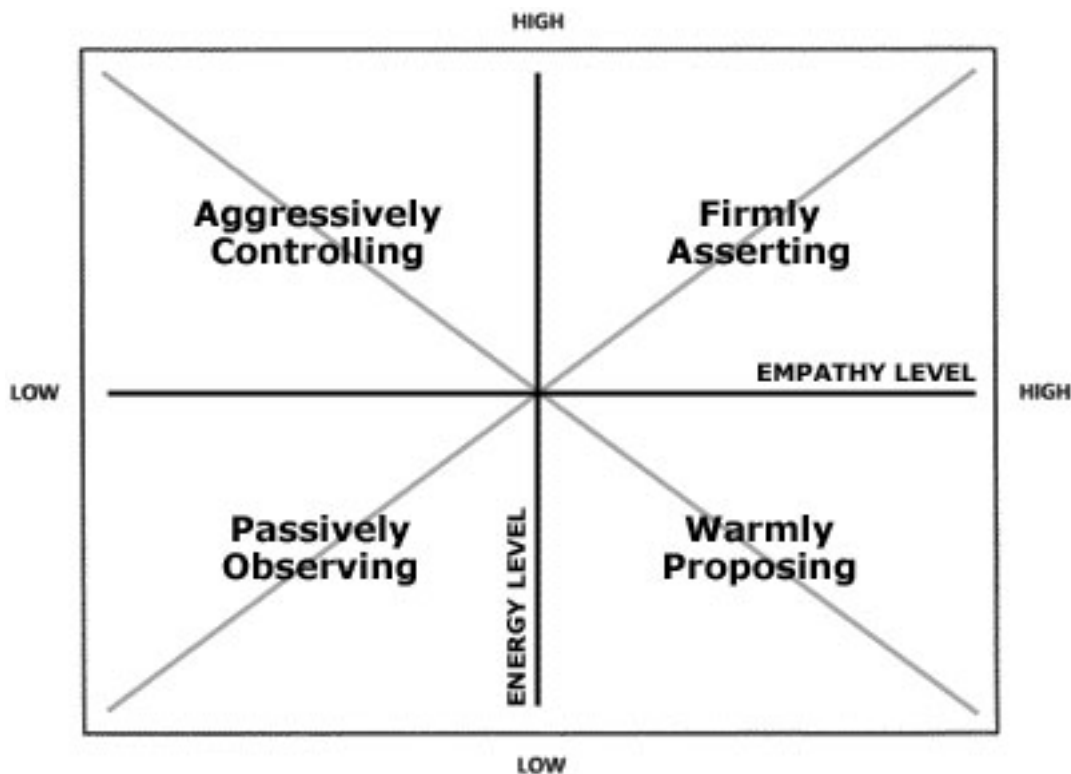
## Assertiveness

# INTERPRETING YOUR RESULTS

The effective assertiveness grid has four quadrants, which carry four 'labels'. These are:

1. **Aggressively controlling**
2. **Passively observing**
3. **Warmly proposing**
4. **Firmly asserting**

These quadrants are the outcome descriptions from the level of energy and the level of empathy used in assertiveness. This is represented on two intersecting axes in a simple grid fashion as follows:



Individuals may actually draw on all four of these different communication styles in the same communication, or in different situations from time to time. In addition, an individual can learn or choose to use more of a particular style than another. However, if the instrument has been completed honestly, for the most part, an individual is likely to have a primary and/or a secondary style that are considerably stronger than the others. This means that they are likely to adopt these styles more often and with greater ease than other styles.

Each assertiveness style has its inherent strengths and weaknesses, depending upon the person, the other party or parties in the discussion, and the type of communication to take place. Lets look at each of these styles in more detail (although it should be remembered that these descriptions relate to high scores in these quadrants-usually 6 or more. Lower scores will have only some of the characteristics described.

## Assertiveness

# THE FOUR ASSERTIVENESS STYLES

## AGGRESSIVELY CONTROLLING

**Your score for this category = -3**

In this high energy, low empathy quadrant, the individual is literally likely to want to be in control in most of their encounters or conversations with others. To do this, they may consciously or unconsciously 'trample' on the rights of others. This style can therefore be very direct and commanding of attention, and fail to listen to others, or regularly interrupt them when speaking. This style will also make high use of strong body language and a loud and confident voice (to effect the control they are seeking).

Likely Body Language: Invades space, louder voice, arms crossed or moving in aggressive

**Of these four styles, data gathered to date suggests that it is the Firmly Asserting style that is used the most and is adopted more than any other by people that are seen to be the most positive in their efforts to be assertive. (and who are happy with the end result of their efforts). This is followed by the Warmly Proposing style, the Aggressively Controlling style and the Passively Observing style last. It should be noted however that this is only an 'averaged' finding. It needs to therefore be remembered that each situation may see the use of a different mix of styles each time.**

## Assertiveness

# THE FOUR ASSERTIVENESS STYLES

## PASSIVELY OBSERVING

**Your score for this category = 2**

In this low energy, low empathy quadrant, the individual is likely to keep themselves to themselves, or to remain quiet and unassuming in most discussions or in meetings with others. This style is happy to watch the 'antics' of others in a detached way, without feeling the need to join in or to enter the discussion. When directly engaged, this style is likely to often give way or concede to more aggressive types but to mentally analyze how they might redress the balance in a different way in the future.

Likely Body Language: Leaning back, hands clasped or arms crossed. Eyes averted or watching

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## Assertiveness

# THE FOUR ASSERTIVENESS STYLES

## WARMLY PROPOSING

**Your score for this category = 10**

In this low energy, high empathy quadrant, the individual is likely to offer gentle comments and suggestions in discussions and conversations. This style is generally more interested in finding out about other people and in building better relationships. They will therefore be unlikely to jeopardize a positive conversational climate to push even their important points too hard. They may therefore accept that they may not get everything they seek in a discussion but there is always the next time.

Likely Body Language: Open posture, attentive, good eye contact, friendly, smiling face, some

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## Assertiveness

# THE FOUR ASSERTIVENESS STYLES

## FIRMLY ASSERTING

**Your score for this category = -1**

In this high energy, high empathy quadrant, the individual is likely to have a high feeling of self worth and well understand their personal needs and rights. However, they also recognize and value the important needs that others have. As such, this style will usually listen to others attentively before firmly communicating their message, or to outline what they need in the context of what they have heard. This style is also likely to have strong personal standards and act to ensure that these are compromised as little as possible.

Likely Body Language: Relaxed, slightly leaning forward posture and lots of use of the hands,

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## Negotiating Style Profile

# 'COMMUNICATION STYLES' USED IN ASSERTIVENESS

### AGGRESSIVELY CONTROLLING DOMINANT STYLES

**Pros**

- Commanding and confident when required to be.

**Cons**

- Are often insensitive to the rights and needs of others.
- May adopt a sarcastic or hostile attitude.
- Interrupts and talks over others without listening.

### WARMLY PROPOSING DOMINANT STYLES

**Pros**

- Keeps the discussions and conversations calm and friendly.
- Gently offers lots of ideas and suggestions.

**Cons**

- May not come to the point about what they want or need.
- May become upset in the face of high aggression or anger.

## Negotiating Style Profile

# 'COMMUNICATION STYLES' USED IN ASSERTIVENESS

### FIRMLY ASSERTING DOMINANT STYLES

**Pros**

- Takes action towards getting what is wanted without denying others' rights.
- Pro-active and solution oriented to always find a positive way forward.
- Demonstrates that they value people's feelings and others' needs.
- Listens well.

**Cons**

- May not coach others who are less assertive.

### PASSIVELY OBSERVING STYLES

**Pros**

- Effectively analyzes discussions or debate.
- Can listen well.

**Cons**

- Ignores/sacrifices own rights.
- Stays silent rather than speaking up.
- Can feel inept at times.

## Assertiveness

# YOUR INDIVIDUAL SCORE

Once you have plotted your individual score, as long as this has been done honestly and accurately, you should be in a position to:

- 1. Review the balance of styles that you draw upon when you engage in communication (at the moment).**
- 2. Compare your mix of assertiveness styles with the effective assertiveness average 'diamond' shape profile.**
- 3. Determine whether you should look to adjust your style or to practice making more use of styles other than your current primary style, to achieve better future results.**

As we said at the outset, there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers in assertiveness. This is partly because every situation is highly individualistic. As such, every person needs to try to use the style that is both comfortable for them, and is likely to work in the particular situation. After all, assertiveness with someone that you may have known for a long time as a friend, is likely to be quite different to the sort of assertiveness you might need when you want to stand up to someone in a shop that has been rude to you, for example (perhaps more Aggressively Controlling or Firmly Asserting) than assertiveness with your friend (perhaps more Warmly Proposing).

In the final analysis, the essential value in any measurement instrument is in the extent to which it provides a useful indicator of your personal way of operating. This should ideally be helpful in a way that individuals can reflect upon and judge whether any adjustments or changes are necessary or desirable.

By completing this profile, the intensity of your scores should provide a useful basis for such a review to take place. To deepen or extend this further, you may want to ask two or three of your colleagues to complete the profile as they see your assertiveness style. By averaging their scores and plotting them on the grid, this can create an interesting comparison between your own perceived personal style and the style that others perceive you to practice when they see you trying to be more assertive.

Whatever your scores, and whether they are yours alone or enhanced by the views of others, you may want to develop your skills in quadrants other than the one in which you are already strongest (your primary style). Consequently, on the page overleaf, you will find a number of broad suggestions that you might like to think about in each category.

## Assertiveness

# DEVELOPING YOUR ASSERTIVENESS SKILLS

AGGRESSIVELY CONTROLLING	FIRMLY ASSERTING
<p><b>Positive ways to use this style:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Make your points more directly in a louder more confident voice.</li><li>2. State your rights strongly to others.</li></ol>	<p><b>Positive ways to use this style:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Develop your attentive listening skills.</li><li>2. Find ways to empathize with the other person or persons or "put yourself in their shoes".</li><li>3. Confidently, clearly and firmly state your own needs and expectations to others.</li><li>4. Aim to be flexible to adapt your position to protect your own rights and avoid infringing the rights of others.</li><li>5. Look for opportunities to find approaches that represent a good outcome for both parties.</li></ol>
PASSIVELY OBSERVING	WARMLY PROPOSING
<p><b>Positive ways to use this style:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Aim to quietly look for the underlying reasons or motivations for the points made by the others as they talk.</li><li>2. Learn to watch and interpret body language more often.</li><li>3. Use constructive silence to help you to reflect more often in conversations.</li></ol>	<p><b>Positive ways to use this style:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Try to play the role of calm and friendly offerer of ideas and suggestions.</li><li>2. Bring people into conversations through small talk more often.</li><li>3. Find out more about other people's needs and aspirations and focus on those that match your own.</li><li>4. Look to explain your points carefully and in a gentle and assured way.</li></ol>

## Assertiveness

# BUILDING YOUR CONFIDENCE

You may have identified at least one person with whom you need to be more assertive, and with the work done in the previous few sections, you may be now much better prepared for an encounter with that person. But what if you get too stressed by the whole thing, and either avoid the encounter, or perform badly in the encounter? So, how you can build your confidence?

Some approaches to stress management may help. Remember, a little bit of stress may help, not hinder you: many actors find that a bit of performance stress in fact helps them to perform much better on stage than they might have done in a film or television studio.

- Know your stuff: the better prepared you are in terms of grasp of the details of a situation, the less you will have to fear from unexpected developments
- Relax: or relax as much as you can. Be aware of over-stressed behavior (rapid, shallow breathing, tense muscles) and modify this through slowing down your breathing, and progressively relaxing your muscles (tense your toes, and breathe in; relax your toes, and breathe out; repeat this sequence for calf muscles, buttocks, stomach, fingers, arms, neck, eyes)
- Eliminate unhelpful intake of those things which might 'wind you up' (e.g., drinks with caffeine in them) or make you feel unwell (rich foods, etc)
- Avoid negative mind-games: reject fantasies of failure, and any self-destructive messages to yourself ("I always muck this up; I'll never succeed at this...")
- Think positively: imagine what it will feel like to succeed or to have achieved the kind of results you are looking for.

Another way you can become a more confident person, and thus be more assertive, is by taking small, manageable risks in your daily life. This does not mean placing yourself in dangerous situations: it simply means that you begin to push the borders of your comfort zone, and become comfortable with more stressful situations. The more you do this, then chances are the better you will perform in any encounters you might have with problem people.

## Assertiveness

# PREPARING A SCRIPT TO BE MORE ASSERTIVE

### ASSERTIVE SKILLS: THE FEEDBACK SEQUENCE

A useful technique for asserting yourself is the seven-step feedback sequence. This is a technique that is easy to rehearse and memorize, and can help manage the stress of an encounter with a person who is denying someone else their assertive rights.

**The facilitator should photocopy and hand out the Feedback Sequence handout on the page overleaf.**

### Assertive Skills: The Feedback Sequence

1. When you ... (do something)
2. This happens ...
3. And I feel ...
4. Would you ... (do something else)
5. Because/that way/this would mean ...
6. I/you/they would feel ...
7. So what do you think?

Here is a sample of the feedback sequence at work:

- When you criticize me in front of the other staff,
- You mentioned a lot of confidential material that should not have been revealed,
- And I feel personally humiliated, and also angry that I have to now explain situations to them that should have been kept private.
- Would you please discuss these matters with me in private in future,
- Because that way we could discuss our differences in a calmer setting, and confidential matters could be kept that way.
- I would feel that you were respecting me professionally, and that we could keep a lid on what we are trying to do.
- So what do you think?

The feedback sequence shows that people can manage pressure, think on their feet, and get what they want if they use the right words in the right way. To do this successfully, people need some verbal skills - let's look at these skills in some detail.

## Assertiveness

# SETTING THE SCENE

Imagine if, after all your preparations and rehearsal, you finally encounter your problem person - in their office, in the parking lot, on the factory floor, in the kitchen - wherever. Just as you move into executing your well-rehearsed script, things go wrong - the phone rings, someone else rushes in, the dog runs in barking, a large, slow, noisy truck rumbles past. Such interruptions make your task all the harder, and may in fact wreck the entire encounter situation.

Plan to ensure that the encounter takes place in a space where you are less likely to be interrupted. If it appears that the other person's office, or the living room, or wherever, may well suffer interruptions, arrange for the encounter to take place elsewhere - in the garden, in a meeting room, in an office not currently being used. In fact, the more you are involved in choosing the location of the encounter, the more you may be seen by the other person as being more powerful and influential than you have hitherto been seen to be.

The location is the "where" and the "space" of the encounter. But you also need to control, or at least influence, the "when" and the "time" of the encounter. You need to ensure that an appropriate block of time is set aside to process the problem. The other person, when confronted with your new-found assertiveness, may well choose to try and escape by saying that there is no more time available - other matters are pressing, and they must go to attend to them. Make an appointment with the other person, and try and ensure that the appointment is long enough to process the things you need to say.

It may be appropriate to have third parties present. Such a person or persons may in fact act as witnesses in high conflict situations, particularly if there is the possibility of a "it's your word against mine" outcome later.

To "justify" the presence of another person, you may say that they are there for moral support, or they may be there in an official capacity (e.g., a Human Resources staff person). It may be that the third person is regarded highly by both you and your problem person, and can therefore be invited along to observe, listen, mediate, give an opinion, or perform other functions.

Other parties can also provide you with feedback on your performance, which might be very useful. They can tell you how well/ badly you handled your script, how you adapted and thought on your feet, what your body language was like, what alternative strategies you might have pursued, etc.

## Assertiveness

# COMMUNICATING ASSERTIVELY ON A CONSISTENT BASIS

As we saw when considering styles of communication, aggressive people tend to use "I" language a lot. When we say "you (did this, did not do this)", it sounds like we are accusing. Sometimes accusation has its place, but such language can alienate the other person, and evoke high and counterproductive hostility - they feel the need to defend themselves, and before you know it, you're squabbling about details and trivia, rather than solving your problems. "I" language also has the virtue of showing a positive role model, that of a person taking responsibility for herself or himself. This may influence others, including your problem person, to do likewise. If that occurs, you will then have a much more solid basis for honest and effective communication.

But isn't using "I" all the time vain and egotistical? Not necessarily. It's all in the way that you say it. Aggressive and manipulative people use "I" in this way, but assertive people use "I" language in a matter-of-fact fashion to show that they are proactive problem-solvers, not patronizing ego-trippers.

Samples of "I" language are:

- I'd prefer that ...
- I've been thinking about ...
- I want you to know that.... ...
- I'd like to discuss ...
- I believe we need to talk about ...
- I would like to suggest ...
- I understand that ...
- I have decided that ...
- I feel that ...

As per your script, use the Feedback Sequence to get across your analysis of the problem situation, and the way in which this situation affects you:

1. When you ... (do something)
2. This happens ...
3. And I feel ...
4. Would you ... (do something else)
5. Because/that way/this would mean ...
6. I/you/they would feel ...
7. So what do you think?

Don't be afraid to adapt this sequence to new thoughts and perceptions that arise in the encounter itself. Once you are comfortable with the sequence, you can use it to process your feelings and give others much-needed feedback on the impact of their words and actions. You may, for example, be the first person who has ever pointed this out to them.

As per your script, use your verbal skills (saying no, dismiss and redirect, questioning, fogging, forcing a choice, broken record, asking for specifics, workable compromise, and threats) to get your points across. Be ready to meet new information that arises in the encounter by using these verbal skills to express new thoughts and perceptions. Be ready to use these verbal skills to resist and counter the aggressive or manipulative ploys thrown up by your "problem" person as the encounter proceeds.

## Assertiveness

# PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

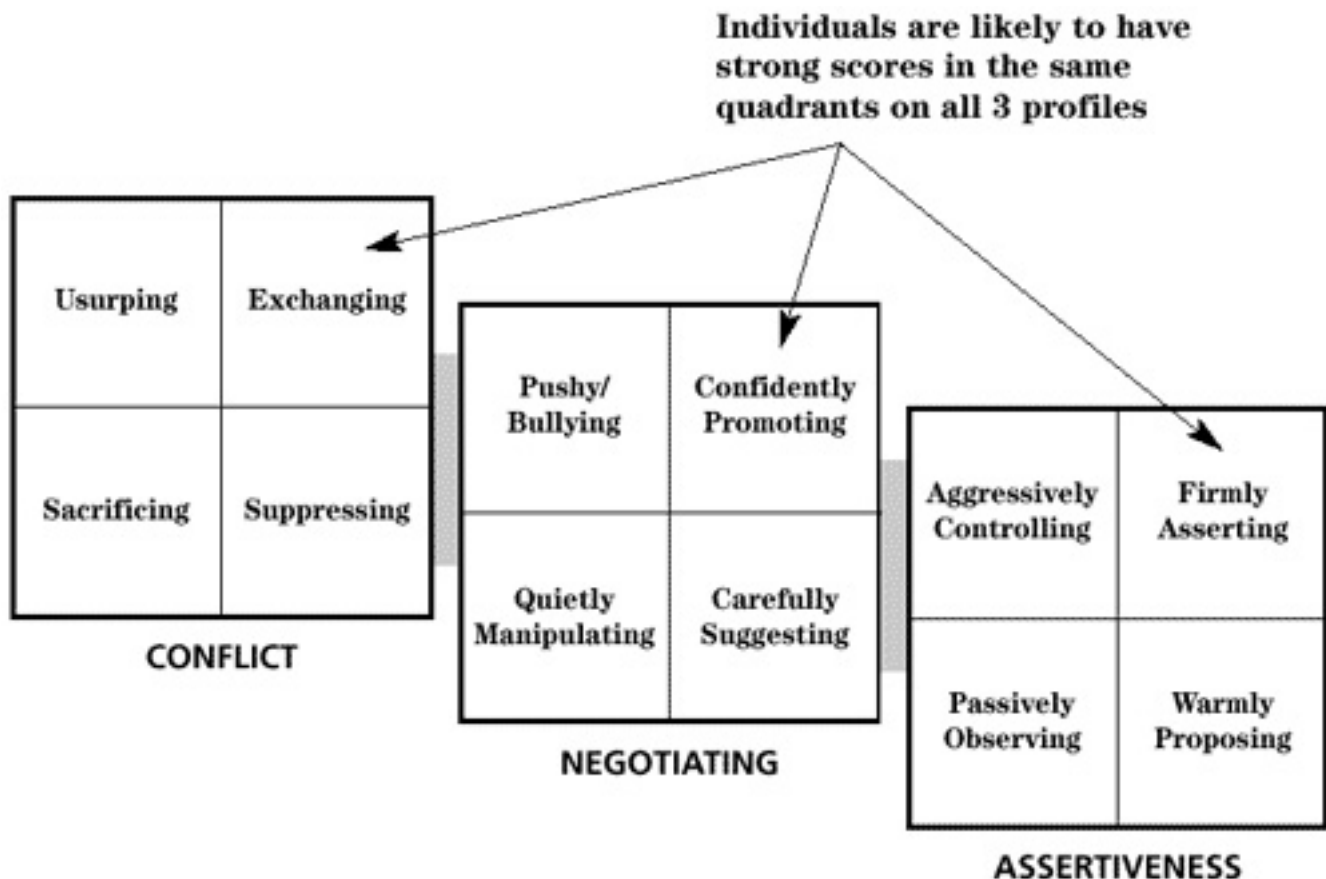
Being assertive is not an easy task and takes considerable effort if it is to be done properly. The Assertiveness Profile provides a simple framework in which this can be achieved.

This framework helps us to understand our own style preferences in various situations, and the style that others are likely to adopt in different circumstances and at different times. The more we learn about these different styles the more flexible we can be in adjusting our behavior to achieve the best possible results.

This model is shown graphically on the page overleaf.

### LINKS TO OTHER INSTRUMENTS

As we suggested earlier, the Assertiveness Profile integrates fully with two other instruments produced by Team Publications. These are the Negotiating Style instrument and the Conflict Style Instrument. Both of these instruments also use a four quadrant grid build around the two axes of levels of energy and levels of empathy. As a result, each of the four individual quadrant types can be compared directly as illustrated in the diagram below.



1. My personal goals to assert myself more effectively in the future :

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_

2. As a result I will make more time to achieve the goals by giving less priority to:

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Each week I will record my progress by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. My support person(s) will be \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. My support person(s) will help me by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. I will use the following methods to maintain my momentum and learn along the way:

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_

7. I will reward myself for achieving my milestones by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. My end reward will be \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Signed** \_\_\_\_\_ **Dated** \_\_\_\_\_