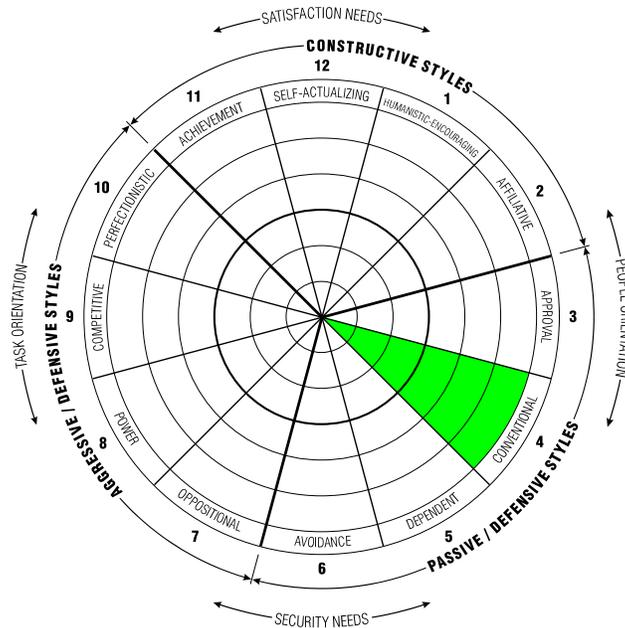


The Conventional Mindset

Attitudes, Values and Beliefs for Working Effectively with People



Conventional

Four o'clock position

Style Description: predictable goals, conforming, supports status quo

Measures our tendency to act in a conforming way. While some conformity is necessary in life, too much can be restrictive. The conventional style represents a preoccupation with adhering to rules and established procedures, maintaining a low profile, and “blending in” with our particular environment to avoid calling attention to ourselves. When we rely on established routines to determine how we do things, we risk losing our sense of uniqueness and individuality.

Conventional Mindsets - You Are Hiding Behind a Mask of Conventionality

Conventionality is a way of getting by, getting along, living by the rules and doing what is expected. The Conventional scale measures the tendency to seek security in the acceptance of others and to do this in a traditional and conforming way. This style assumes that a certain amount of conventionality is needed within a social group, but that too much emphasis on conventionality can have a stifling effect.

While we all try to do what is expected of us, this style represents a preoccupation with living “by the book” in order to escape attention. It is as if the conventional person is saying, “If I do everything like everyone else, I won’t be noticed.” In this way, the Conventional style acts like a kind of psychological camouflage.

Goethe, the great poet and philosopher, once observed, “I find more and more that it is well to be on the side of the minority, since it is always the more intelligent.” When everyone thinks alike, everyone is likely to be wrong. Great writers, philosophers and social critics have long commented on the deadening effects of conformity.

In this century, behavioural science has largely confirmed the limiting effects of this mode of thought. Individuals with such characteristics have been called “yea-sayers” and in a wide variety of social psychology work are consistently seen as adopting the ideas, values, beliefs, and perceptions of others too easily.

Being conventional can cause emotional and physical stress symptoms; in fact, research suggests a higher-than-normal rate of development of an arthritic condition in people who describe themselves as severely conventional. A sharply increased amount of muscle tension sustained over a long period of time may account for this. Such individuals are quite literally “up tight,” their joints and bones having been forced together unnecessarily over a long time frame. Increased ability to relax and be less passive defensive may help alleviate this condition.

The way you described yourself on the Conventional scale indicates that you show a strong preference for staying unseen and unnoticed by others in certain situations. Having a high score strongly suggests that you may be experiencing some negative consequences as a result of this thinking style / mindset.

A very high Conventional score can indicate that you act in a conforming, almost unthinking way especially when you are exposed to situations that trigger you (17% zone). This level of preoccupation with adhering to rules and established procedures is likely to restrict your intellectual ability, imagination, creativity, innovation and relationships with others. You may experience a sense of being meaningless, hopeless and helpless. You want to be seen as “normal, ” rather than to stand out as different in any substantial way. This is a great injustice to your self-esteem, your abilities, and your effectiveness. You seem to prefer fading into the woodwork over being seen and noticed. Your preoccupation with rules and procedures inhibits you from clearly seeing the real purpose behind them.

In certain situations, you are much too likely to be seen by others as dull, uninteresting and even without much thought or imagination, when none of this is necessarily true of you. When you enter this passive / defensive “flight” zone, your protective facade is not in your best interests, nor is it in the best interests of your personal or work relationships. Know this defensive response may be due to faulty Neuroception (scanning for danger).

You may be experiencing symptoms of stress as a result of your conventional thinking. “Soft” symptoms will be evident first, such as tension headaches, withdrawal from conversations and saying and doing only those things that are absolutely safe, expected and common. This handout will help you to explore the series of choices you have made that result in your tendency to be overly conforming. It describes the characteristics of conventionality, discusses the origins of such an idea and suggests ways you can reduce or eliminate this ineffective approach.

What Does High Conventional Look Like?

A strong mindset on the Conventional scale indicates that these characteristics may describe you:

- A tendency to view rules as a source of comfort and security.
- A preference for staying unseen and unnoticed, even when your leadership is required.
- A tendency to cover up mistakes for the fear that you will look bad.
- Reduced initiative and the lack of taking the lead.
- A preoccupation with appearing average, “normal” and like everyone else.
- Unquestioned obedience to authority figures and rules.
- A reduction in originality, creativity and the exploration of ideas.
- Feelings of security within a bureaucracy.

Conventional-based Thinking: High Range 65% and Above (Least Effective)

You probably see rules as more important than ideas. Your overly conservative behaviour can keep you from trying new things. You may have difficulty taking even the small risks. In a sense, being conventional involves trading your creativity and spontaneity for feelings of security. Your tendency to hide behind regulations and procedures can involve discounting your own beliefs and opinions.

If you scored closer to the High range, you probably have respect for doing things the way they have always been done. Because you are concerned with how you appear to others, you usually avoid situations containing risk, new opportunity, or need for innovation. Your preference for sticking with what worked in the past may help you feel secure, but it can also prevent you from working up to your potential.

Conventional-based Thinking: Medium Range 35% - 65% (Less Effective)

If you scored closer to the Lower range, you may not always follow established procedures to the letter. Instead, you tend to use your own judgment to determine whether or not to “bend” the rules in some circumstances. Although you might prefer to use conservative approaches to some problems, you are capable of coming up with fresh solutions and taking occasional risks.

Conventional-based Thinking: Low Range Under 35% (Most Effective)

You prefer to think for yourself, rather than allowing rules and procedures to dictate how you do things. While you may be receptive to the input of others, you are comfortable making your own decisions. You can recognize and appreciate your own uniqueness, as well as what is special in others. Free from the stifling effects of conventional behaviour, you are probably able to explore creative solutions to problems.

Conventional-based Thinking

Because conventional managers find comfort in the enforcement of rules and standardizing procedures, they establish a predictable work environment that discourages innovative thinking. Doing things “by the book” and strictly adhering to the reporting relationships in the formal organizational chart characterize the conventional manager’s approach. Because they are typically concerned with doing exactly what is expected, these managers often lack the ability to motivate subordinates to set goals and improve their performance.

Understanding Your Score

Conventionality can have a negative impact on your career, overall effectiveness, interpersonal relationships, happiness, and health. Conformity can enable you to hide yourself from others - but trying nothing and taking no chances is likely to bring you to a complete standstill in your life, with an accompanying sense of unhappiness. Such feelings can be the foundation for depression.

Are you afraid to take risks? Or to say anything that is not perfectly acceptable? If so, your ideas and contributions are likely to be trite and without meaning. This does not mean that you are dull or unintelligent; it means that trying to do exactly what is acceptable is having a deadening effect on your ability.

Please be aware that there is a purpose to conventional behaviour. It serves to protect you and has nothing to do with your ability; in fact, your ability will suffer greatly if you use conventional behaviour in self-defence.

Your Conventional Style on the Job

Your high Conventional score indicates that this style is likely to be the dominant feature in your interaction with others. This style produces a poor management style which is too detailed, too efficient and hidebound with rules.

As a leader making conventionality a habit, you allow real or imagined rules, established procedures and the expectations of others to define what you do and how you act. In doing so, you risk the loss of initiative and leadership. Missing out on the chance to create a thoughtful and perceptive response to your responsibilities, you are very likely to be seen as retarding things rather than exercising the control and initiative expected in your position.

Given your style, it would not be surprising if your group was overstaffed for the real amount of work to be done. Your superiors may not be fully aware of how you are functioning, yet others will see you as ultra-conservative, unimaginative and as the person who sees problems in everything. You are very likely to take a position only when the matter is clearly settled or obvious. In this sense, you are a very significant addition to an executive team. You are very likely to accomplish only limited results. The danger in your preference for maintaining the status quo is the loss of identity that can accompany it.

Changing Your Behaviour Can Result in These Benefits

- A more expressive, less repressed, happier life.
- Healthy, non-dependent relationships.
- The increased respect of those who matter most to you.
- A stronger, more individualized sense of self.
- Renewed belief in yourself and your capabilities.
- Increased flexibility and adaptation.
- A more creative, innovative approach to task accomplishment.
- The confidence to fulfill your potential.
- Spontaneity and enhanced creativity and innovation.
- The ability to make a decision on your own.
- A break from the past and the ability to live in the present.
- Self-set performance standards and goals.



Decreasing the Conventional Style

<https://podcasts.apple.com/au/podcast/139-the-conventional-style/id1371885437?i=1000523715481>

Conventional Behaviours Defined

Core Thinking Patterns for Individual, Team and Organizational Effectiveness

A Conventional Culture...

Is descriptive of organizations and communities that are conservative, traditional, and bureaucratically controlled. Members are expected to conform, follow the rules, and make a good impression. Too conventional a culture can interfere with effectiveness by suppressing innovation and preventing the organization from adapting to changes in its environment. Conventional thinking measures our tendency to act in a conforming way. While some conformity is necessary in life, too much can be restrictive. The conventional style represents a preoccupation with adhering to rules and established procedures, maintaining a low profile, and “blending in” with our particular environment to avoid calling attention to ourselves. When we rely on established routines to determine how we do things, we risk losing our sense of uniqueness and individuality. Key cultural behaviours are as follows;

Organizational (OCI) Behaviours of Conventional-based Thinking

- tell people different things to avoid conflict
- not "rock the boat" fit into the "mold"
- treat rules as more important than ideas
- cast aside solutions that seem different or risky
- make a "good impression?"
- conform
- accept the status quo
- avoid confrontations
- always follow policies and practices

Group (GSI) Behaviours of Conventional-based Thinking

1. was there implicit pressure to “fit in” and not “rock the boat”;
2. were new and different ideas set aside, resisted;
3. did everyone seem to approach the problem/decision by basically the same way;
4. was the meeting run in a structured, formal way that promoted conformity;
5. was there a need for greater diversity in view points and opinions expressed by members;
6. did the group seem constrained; limited to certain perspectives.

Individual (LSI) Behaviours of Conventional-based Thinking

| | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|--|--------------|
| Thinks rules more important than ideas | Achieves by conforming | Enjoys being recognized by superiors | Suggestible |
| Too concerned with looking good | Offers tentative ideas mostly | Concerned with what others think | Conforming |
| Tends to accept the status quo | Avoids conflicts | Very respectful to others | Agreeable |
| Reluctant to be the first to do something different | Often uncertain | Conservative | Indecisive |
| Hesitant suggesting ideas that others may dislike | Reliable and steady | Does things the way they've always been done | Inconsistent |
| Cooperates and compromises too easily | Very conventional | Seems to understand others but doesn't | Restrained |

The Conventional Mindset - What Can You Change?

You can't always change or influence the people around you, but you can control your reactions to them. These reactions originate in your *thoughts*, or the way you perceive and process information and experiences. Your thoughts are powerful resources; what you think defines who you are and what you do in every aspect of your life. By modifying what you think, you can change how you behave.

Using the LSI to Initiate Change in Your Conventional Mindset

Completing and reviewing your LSI / LSI 360 is the vital first step in the process of changing your behaviour. The inventory has undergone over 45 years of extensive research, and has been established as a valid, reliable way to help you take an objective look at yourself.

You can use the LSI to:

- Understand what you were like now, and will cause you to be that way.
- Recognize the consequences of your behaviour and how it affects yourself and others.
- Pinpoint your own unique strengths, as well as any "stumbling blocks" to your effectiveness.
- Identifying more constructive ways of thinking and behaving.
- Decide what aspects of your behaviour you want to change.
- Develop a specific strategy to help bring those changes about.

Moving from Thought to Action

Merely completing the LSI / LSI 360 will do little to advance your desire to improve yourself in the Conventional area. To receive the fullest benefit from the inventory, devote some time to interpreting your LSI / LSI 360 scores (by reading you customize leadership assessment report), thinking about what you learned, and setting goals around what you want to change and talking to other leaders / people you know that are unconventional.

Below are some helpful change guidelines to assist you, followed by a thorough plan of action you can complete to most effectively direct your efforts.

Conventional Mindset Change Guidelines

1. Acknowledge and except all aspects of yourself. Remember, the question is not "am I a good or bad person?" but rather "what is preventing me from being more effective in the Conventional area, and what can I improve?"
2. Recognize that your sense of self-worth *is not* connected to your LSI scores or the impressions others have of you on an LSI 360 assessment. You are worthwhile because you were a human being - tying your self-worth to outside factors can limit your ability to make positive changes in your behaviour.
3. Specifically define what you want to change about being more unconventional and why. Clearly describing an aspect of your behaviour, stating the problems it creates for you, listing why you want to change it, and detailing the actions you plan to take will properly focus the change process.
4. Increase your confidence by concentrating on what you do well. Overcome your preoccupation with failure by focusing on your successes. Make a list of all you do well, and read it when you were feeling under confident.
5. Practice using more effective unconventional behaviours in your mind. These "practice sessions" will gradually begin to affect your real-life performance in 1;1 or group interactions. Picture yourself deliberately changing what you decided to change. Then, imagine yourself as you will be after successfully making the change.

Changing Conventional Mindsets - Action Planning Worksheet

Step 1: My score for the Conventional Thinking Style is _____ (percentile)

Step 2: My score on Conventional means I tend to believe that:

Step 3: Significant Influences

We think and behave as we do because we have been influenced by significant people and situations in our lives. Consider *your* life: try to identify and isolate the influences you've experienced that may be associated with the style.

Significant Person (or situation) _____

Ideas / Behaviours You Might Have Learned _____

Step 4: Consider the consequences of using the style and list them as indicated below.

Personally

Positive Consequences

Self-Defeating Consequences

Professionally

Positive Consequences

Self-Defeating Consequences

Step 5: Consider how your life would be different if you change your behaviour to be less Conventional.

Some Positive Differences

Some Negative Differences

Step 6: Changing your Conventional behaviours

Changing your Conventional behaviour involves changing your mind regarding some ideas you hold around how you value and interact with people. Consider what you will have to give up and what you will gain. What cherished ideas must you challenge? Go back to your LSI leadership report and review both the words and statements that identify this style and your responses to them.

How would you like things to be different? (Same suggestions below)

Becoming More Effective: Steps to Change

Although the Conventional style may appear “safe” on the surface, it can be restrictive as a way of life. Your score on the Conventional scale indicates how important conformity is to you. If you agree that your behaviour reflects a conventional, conforming approach, it may be helpful to explore the following ideas.

1. If you want to change your behaviour, it is important to realize and accept the fact that you are excessively conforming and conventional in your view of yourself and your world. This is a critical first step. Change will come from your acceptance of the fact that you are excessively conforming.
2. Do not accept the position of being a conforming person just because this report section indicates that position. The information in this section may be a surprise to you: Although it is built on what you said about yourself, you may not have been fully aware of what you were indicating by your responses. The purpose of this information is to provide you with new insight into conventionality’s potential influence on your behaviour.
3. The primary problem with excessive conventionality is the feeling that you need it. In a way, this style is very paradoxical: You will be conventional to satisfy your imagined need for protection, yet the Conventional style actually causes a continuing need for protection as well as a great deal of personal isolation and unhappiness.

You will need to evaluate conventionality’s effect on you. Be aware that you may be using conventional behaviour as a defence to protect your self-esteem.

Step 7: What barriers now exist to making this change?

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

Step 8: How can you overcome these barriers? Try to *challenge your assumptions* about your behaviours.

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

Step 9: What will you gain by making this change and becoming less Conventional?

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

Step 10: What do you plan to do to bring this change about?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Step 11: Seeking Support

Depth psychologists know that our capacity for growth relates to our ability to internalize and take personal responsibility for the following three parts of our lives –

- a) Insight** (self awareness and internal motivation to grow and transform is essential here - LSI mindset assessment helps by providing a language and framework);
- b) Endurance** (courage and alignment with your core values helps here);
- c) Action** (moral strength and motivation to grow / learn helps here).

Seek support for your change efforts. Ask one or two trusted family members, friends or work members for their help, especially unconventional and self actualized leaders. Solicit feedback from them on your progress.

With whom will you share your intentions and plans to change? _____

How can they best assist you? _____

Step 12: Accountability - By what date do you intend to take action? _____

Becoming More Effective: Additional Steps to Change

Placing narrow boundaries on your behaviour can severely inhibit your growth and development. Use the following suggestions to reduce conventionality and fulfill your potential.

- Realize that the Conventional style is a kind of mask which allows you to hide rather than develop as a person. The controlling force in your life is outside you, in the rules and the expectations of others. This makes you a mirror reflecting general society, instead of a unique member of that society.
- Ask yourself if your life is the way you want it to be, or if it is merely a long succession of rules, expectations and adherence to the wishes of others. If your life is not the way you want it, do you want to continue doing things the way you do them now?
- Break out of your routine and do something - anything - different. Eat in a new restaurant, take an unexplored route to work, buy something in a colour you normally don't wear.
- Take a risk and challenge a rule or policy that you think is foolish and unnecessary.
- Continually remind yourself that your sense of self worth is not tied to how well you "blend in" and follow the rules.
- Formulate and stand behind your beliefs and convictions. Learn to rely upon and trust your own judgment.
- Don't be afraid to question the usefulness of a rule.
- Look for ways to do things differently at work and at home. Instead of using the same, tired procedure to accomplish something, modify the steps to get the job done more effectively and efficiently.
- Listen to yourself and what you want. Live your life for you, not for the sake of rules or other people.

Action Steps for Change

Now that you have reviewed the Conventional Style, review the following suggested actions, and rate them in terms of your perceived need for change, where 0 is little or no need and 3 is a strong need.

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Look for ways to express my individuality. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. Become less of a conformist. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. Try to be less restrained in my words and actions. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. Find ways to develop my creativity. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. Reduce my preoccupation with rules and regulations. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6. Loosen up; be less conservative. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7. Break out of my routine more often. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 8. Accept changes and new ideas more readily. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 9. Expect more from myself -go beyond the status quo. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Any statement that you have rated as a two or three you should integrate into your action plan.