

**SuperSkills Development
Report**
Sample Profile

Date 1/11/2007

Company Company x

Project



Introduction



Most of us spend a lot of time having conversations of one form or another, but some people are clearly much more effective than others at ensuring the conversations they have strengthen relationships and are productive, rather than waste time and destroy trust.

The good news is that conversations are based on a number of distinct skills - the 5 Super Skills - which means we can all become better. But that is not the whole story. Our ability to use these Super-Skills also depends on our personality.

This report looks at the main facets of your personality using the Facet5 personality instrument and provides a unique insight into how this determines how you are likely to 'show up' in conversation against the 5 Super-Skills and where you can focus to drive improvements.

The 5 SuperSkills

Research shows there are 5 'Super-Skills' that underpin all conversations we have. They are as follows:

	Presence	Maintaining undivided attention, really "being there" for the other person - by remaining focused on the conversation and able to ignore distractions.
	Hyper awareness	Self-awareness of your biases, beliefs and emotional triggers, meaning you know what is going on for you during a conversation and how to control your emotions.
	De-coding	Drawing out what the other person is really saying by getting to the meaning behind the words so that the other person really feels understood by you.
	Voicing	Expressing your views with courage and conviction in a way that is constructive and helpful for the conversation - even when you have to give tough messages.
	Flow control	Managing conversations - the beginning, middle and end - so that it flows well and results in clear outcomes that everyone agrees with.

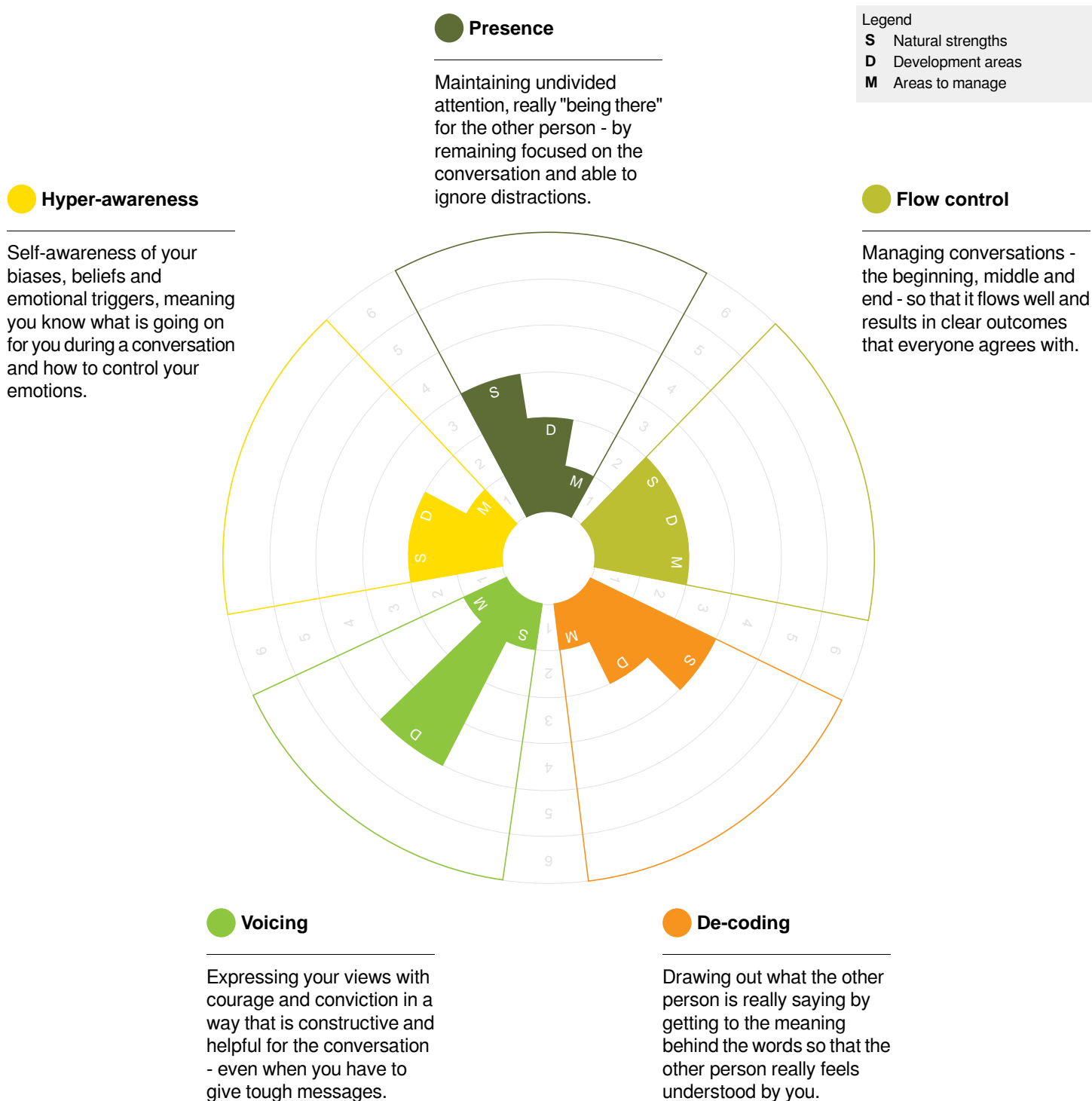
What does the report show?

People differ in how they present these Super-Skills based on natural tendencies that are driven by our individual personalities. These personality elements can be identified by Facet5 and from this your "natural" Super-Skills profile has been identified. It is important to note that your ability to use the Super-Skills is not set in stone. It can be developed through self awareness, feedback, training and practice. This report is the first step in the journey to having more productive conversations.

1. A picture of your overall SuperSkills profile	2. Your natural strengths	3. Development areas and how to address these	4. Potential unhelpful habits and how to manage them
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The following page shows an overview of your profile against each of the 5 Super-Skills.

The following diagram outlines your overall natural strength against each of the 5 SuperSkills, based on your personality. It provides you with a simple and easy-to-read snapshot of how your personality affects the way you engage in conversations. For each SuperSkill it highlights where you have areas of strength and/or areas which need to be developed or managed.



The following pages focus on each of the Super-Skill in turn, highlighting where your personality suggests you are likely to have strengths, which are possible developments areas and finally some possible unhelpful habits and how to manage.



Presence

Maintaining undivided attention, really "being there" for the other person - by remaining focused on the conversation and able to ignore distractions.

Someone who uses this skill well will come across as highly attentive and focused on the other person. They create what is known as a 'human moment' where distractions from technology and interruptions by other people do not interfere with the conversation. They will make the other person feel valued because they give their undivided attention.

Your strengths are...

- you are willing to discuss different viewpoints with an open mind
- you are willing to dedicate time to other people and their concerns
- have an openness to understanding what is being said without suspecting a personal agenda

Develop your ability to...

- maintain focus on issues with clarity and purpose
- actively participate and contribute with more enthusiasm and interest

Manage your ...

- tendency to lose attention quickly when you have assumed you've understood and everything is OK



Hyper-awareness

Self-awareness of your biases, beliefs and emotional triggers, meaning you know what is going on for you during a conversation and how to control your emotions.

Someone who uses this skill well will come across as calm and self aware. They control their emotions appropriately, even when challenged, and will understand when their own biases, opinions and agendas are getting in the way of the conversation.

Your strengths are...

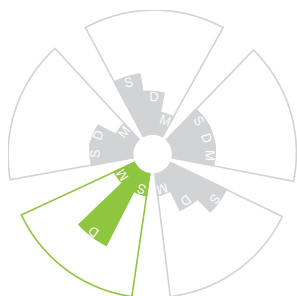
- you have a willingness to listen and accommodate others viewpoints
- you know when there is a need to flex your approach to a conversation

Develop your ability to...

- visibly show you are interested in what is being said
- know when there is a need to contribute and engage more broadly

Manage your ...

- inclination to prioritise other people's needs ahead of your own



Voicing

Expressing your views with courage and conviction in a way that is constructive and helpful for the conversation - even when you have to give tough messages.

Someone who uses this skill well will express their views clearly, calmly and confidently and will not be afraid to challenge others. They are comfortable giving people difficult feedback but will always do so with sensitivity and respect for the feelings of others.

Your strengths are...

- you have an open and straightforward approach to sharing significant information with others

Develop your ability to...

- state your ideas and opinions with clarity and conviction
- speak up and address difficult issues assertively without giving in too quickly if others disagree
- voice your immediate response to ideas and welcome comment
- share your thoughts and ideas more readily with others

Manage your ...

- tendency to avoid talking about subjects that may upset others



De-coding

Drawing out what the other person is really saying by getting to the meaning behind the words so that the other person really feels understood by you.

Someone who uses this skill well will listen attentively, allow the other person plenty of time to speak and not rush in with their own views. They will ask lots of questions to deepen their understanding and avoid judging what others say too quickly. Above all they will come across as genuinely interested in what the other person has to say.

Your strengths are...

- you have a genuine interest to understand other people's wants and needs
- you are able to get to the true meaning behind the detail in what people are saying
- interpret what you hear without immediate judgement

Develop your ability to...

- draw people out by showing enthusiasm and interest
- actively engage in the conversation and enquire more to understand

Manage your ...

- tendency to assume what people need and therefore miss what's really going on



Flow control

Managing conversations - the beginning, middle and end - so that it flows well and results in clear outcomes that everyone agrees with.

Someone who uses this skill well will be clear on the purpose of a conversation at the outset and ensure they maintain focus on the desired outcome. They will give plenty of time for others to speak and will allow the conversation to digress where necessary but have the ability to bring it back on track. They end conversations with agreed next steps.

Your strengths are...

- you are able to manage and steer conversations in a way that suits all participants
- you allow conversations to digress in pursuit of interesting ideas without losing focus on the original purpose

Develop your ability to...

- describe the purpose of conversations more clearly to maintain focus
- instigate conversations and participate more frequently

Manage your ...

- tendency to allow discussions to end without clear outcomes
- tendency to allow the conversation to roam unchallenged

Presence

All conversations start with a human moment, a moment where we actively make ourselves available for the person. The impact of this on the other person is profound because it says 'you're important'.

This feeling of status, of being important, has been shown by scientists to correlate positively with all sorts of health indicators. In other words, it really matters.

But it isn't easy – we're bombarded with distractions from technology, from busy diaries and from our own inner voice. The good news is that we all train our brains to become better at this.

Being present in the moment not only has benefits for yourself, but for those around you. Try it. In your next conversations, make a conscious effort to be 100 per cent present. Notice your distractions as they happen, and bring your mind back to the conversation. See what happens.

Top tips

Before the conversation

- Find a time and space where you can talk without interruptions. Don't have important conversations in the middle of a noisy office, or when you are in a rush.
- Turn off your phone and put it away, and close your laptop.
- Tune-in to yourself before you start to see if anything is filling your thoughts ... if so, consciously 'park' it and decide to come back to it later. Or, if you can't, agree to have the conversation another time.

During the conversation

- Pay attention to your attention – check that you are still present.
- If your mind wanders, use one of the tips (like your catchphrase).
- Paraphrase what the other person is saying to make sure you are correctly hearing what they are telling you.

Remember: Your attention is one of the most important gifts you can give to other people! So practice showing it.

Hyper-awareness

When two people talk there are always three conversations taking place:

- 1 The one in your head
- 2 The one on the other person's head
- 3 The one between you.

Hyper-awareness is about being tuned into what is happening inside you – your biases, prejudices and emotions – and making sure these do not interfere with the conversation.

Brain scans of people who are always rushing around 'getting things done' show that they are in a constant state of high alert. The brain interprets this as a 'threat' and responds by releasing stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. These impact on our ability to think and act clearly and also on how effectively we connect with others. Learning to notice what is going on inside us and managing our stress levels means we are able to take control and to have better conversations!

Think of yourself as an iceberg – what shows above the water is only a small part of what is going on inside you and this super-skill is about being able to tune into what is going on underneath the waterline.

Top tips

- Take the time to understand what 'events' trigger you to respond emotionally during a conversation – for example, someone being rude, or disrespectful, or sexist, or someone who turns up late, or who constantly checks their phone, etc.
- Develop your ability to spot when you have been triggered and consciously pause before you act or reply – remember it takes only six seconds for your rational brain re-engage.
- Tune into your physical state – are you feeling hungry, tired, thirsty, hot, cold or stressed? Our physiological state significantly impacts our ability to concentrate and to regulate our emotions. We tend to overlook this, especially when we are busy.
- Be curious – if you talk to someone and you find yourself being annoyed or irritated, ask yourself 'why?' – keep learning about yourself.
- Make sure you stay aware of your own needs during a conversation.

Remember: One of the most important ways to get the right outcome from your conversations is to be aware and in control of your own needs and emotions. So practice tuning into yourself.

De-coding

De-coding is the art of hearing what someone else is really telling you. It is about going beyond the words and tuning into the emotions and feelings to understand what is really going on for the other person.

Psychologists have shown that one of the most basic needs for humans is to be listened to and heard, because it shows that we are important to the other person. If we feel that we are not worthy of being listened to or that our opinions do not matter it profoundly impacts our sense of self-esteem.

So one of the key skills to having better conversations is to improve your ability to accurately de-code what others say. This is not as easy as it sounds

Top tips

- Check your mindset when you are listening to someone speak and ask yourself – ‘am I listening to understand this person or am I listening so I can just get my view across?’.
- Practice listening on three levels:
 - Listen for Facts – what did they actually say?
 - Listen for Feelings – what emotions am I picking up?
 - Listen for Intent – what are they really trying to tell me?
- Remember that great conversations start with great questions – so ask more questions and give fewer answers.
- Paraphrase what the other person says so you can check you have heard them correctly.
- Avoid responding to or judging what other people say until you have understood what they are saying – the ‘rush to judge’ is one of the quickest ways for conversations to turn into monologues!

Remember: If you improve only one Super-Skill make it this one, whether that be at work, with your partners, your friends or your neighbours. Remember we have two ears and one mouth – use them in that proportion.

Voicing

Voicing is the Super-Skill of saying what needs to be said, in a way that is constructive and that keeps the conversation on track. It requires both courage and skill. You need courage because it can be risky to speak out or to give someone some tough feedback. And you need skill so that you express yourself honestly but with respect for the other person’s feelings.

Being able to tactfully speak your mind is important to great conversations – it’s essentially an assertive mindset. In fact, in important conversations, being able to voice what matters to you most is critical.

Many of us worry about speaking out because we don’t want to upset people or look stupid, or cause an argument. But almost no problem is solved by ignoring it, so we all need the ability to do this

Top tips

- If you are worried about having a difficult conversation, remind yourself that you are not alone. So go easy on yourself.
- Think logically about the risk of having the conversation versus avoiding it – research shows we tend to focus more on the risk of having the conversation than on the benefits of addressing an issue.
- Tune into your feelings and learn to name them – conversations are difficult precisely because they are all about feelings. So before a difficult conversation, write down your feelings
- Use the OFT’N model:
 - Observe – the facts
 - Feelings – name your emotions
 - Thoughts – explain your thinking
 - N – state what you Need.
- Rehearse and practice difficult messages – and ask someone you trust to give you feedback.
- Finally, remember that voicing is about speaking your truth – you have the give other person the opportunity speak their truth!

Remember: This is perhaps the hardest Super-Skills because many of us associate speaking out with risk or causing arguments. But very few problems, at home or at work, are solved by not speaking about them – and we all feel better once we say what we really feel and think.

Flow Control

Flow Control is about understanding that all conversations have a beginning, a middle and an end and that we need to pay attention to each part. However, by their very nature we do not know how a conversation will play out so this skill is also about managing a conversation if it takes an unexpected turn and bringing it back on track.

The reality is that many of us are busy and rush from one meeting or conversation to the next, which means we often arrive unprepared and not clear about what we are trying to achieve. As a result we often leave with a different understanding about what happened and what has been agreed, and feeling that we have not used our time well.

Top tips

Before the conversation, ask yourself the following”

- What is the objective of the conversation?
- What will a successful outcome look like?
- What do I want to ‘voice’?
- How do I feel about this?
- What do I think the other person may be thinking or feeling?
- How might they react? How will I respond to this?
- Where is the best place / time to meet?
- How much time will we need?

During the conversation

- Agree purpose of the conversation with the other person.
- Demonstrate you are ‘present’ (Super-Skill one) – and stay present.
- Honestly ‘voice’ your feelings (Hyper-Awareness and Voicing).
- Make sure you fully understand the other person (De-coding).
- Summarise what has been discussed and make sure you agree next steps.
- If the conversation veers off-track or the other person talks too much or too little, notice this and gently steer it back to the agreed objectives.

Remember: Great conversations don’t just happen by accident. They require planning and the ability to be responsive during the conversation to ensure it stays on track. Your time is precious so use it wisely.

Your reflections

What, if anything has surprised you about your report?

What Super-Skills do you find naturally easy and how could you use these more widely?

What Super-Skills are you most motivated to improve?

How will they make a difference to the quality of the conversations you have?
