



Perfecting Your Practice podcast
EPISODE #30: Understanding How Behavior Impacts Work

- Chris P: Welcome to Perfecting Your Practice, where we believe in a 360-degree approach to your success as a healthcare professional. I'm your host, Chris Panebianco, Chief Marketing Officer at Bankers Healthcare Group.
- Chris P: Hi everyone. Welcome to the podcast. Today, we're talking about a great topic. It's about communication and understanding behavioral differences. My special guest is Allison Whiting. She is with the Intent Group. They align people and strategy, and Allison has really done an amazing job aligning Bankers Healthcare Group with its 400 plus employees. We were fortunate enough to meet Allison about a year ago and it's really changed the way Bankers Healthcare Group works.
- Chris P: Why is this so important today? As everyone knows, you can't open social media, you can't go into an office, you can't be around a water cooler without some kind of communication taking place between executives, colleagues, in most of our listeners' cases, patients and individuals who may work for their practice. So now more than ever, understanding behavior at your level, for your employees, for your colleagues is so important. So, Allison, welcome to the show.
- Allison Whiting: Thanks so much for having me. Glad to be here.
- Chris P: Allison, can you give our readers, excuse me, our readers, our listeners a quick breakdown of what exactly you do, this phenomenon that's taken over Bankers Healthcare Group and many other companies called DiSC?
- Allison Whiting: Absolutely. My background, I kind of got started doing this kind of work, organizational health work, helping businesses with major change and transformation. One of the things you discover with change and stress and conflict, which as you said is all around us all the time, is that we fall into our natural tendencies, our natural reactions, sometimes consciously and often subconsciously. It just happens. My experience in doing this transformation work over the years is when people have a lens to better understand their own reactions and the reactions of others and those differences, it helps everybody look at things more objectively and create a more positive outcome.
- Allison Whiting: So, DiSC is a tool which I've loved using it at Bankers Healthcare Group. And I take to many clients that helps people understand their own behavioral style. So, it's how do I act and react in different situations? For some people it's



outward and for some people it's inward. But being able to really look at things from a different perspective.

Chris P: Explain DiSC. Again, we know the definition, but what is it made up of? There are so many different personality types and behavior types. What are the high level, what's the high level summary of DiSC?

Allison Whiting: So DiSC, we look at different behaviors in different environments. So usually of course in the workplace it's all about work. But there's four main categories, and the forming categories of course for a blend of all of these are, D stands for dominance, I is for influence, S is for steadiness and C is for conscientiousness. And so, you can be a blend of those different styles but it helps you look at whether you're fast paced and really assertive and aggressive in the things that you do or if you tend to be more slow paced and methodical when you approach projects or when you handle conflict. You can start to understand those differences amongst teams and in your colleagues.

Chris P: A lot of people I've spoken with and in my past experience we've dealt with Myers-Briggs or there are different color codes. I heard about that yesterday. I'm a green, I'm a red, I'm a yellow. What's the difference in both?

Allison Whiting: So DiSC is the tool that measures behavior. And what I like about DiSC, it's something that you can change, it's something you can control and it's something you can see. Behavior because we can control it and change it, it also can change throughout the course of your career. So, where your personality stays pretty consistent and the same as a Myers-Briggs tool might measure and there's others out there, DiSC is correlated to your personality but you can control it and you can change it.

Chris P: How much do your surroundings or your environment affect your DiSC?

Allison Whiting: It absolutely can have an impact. So I'll have some organizations, depending on the role that you're in or if you're in a management position or if you're in a really fast paced aggressive environment, you may see some shifts in people's behavior style. It really isn't about exactly where your dot falls or where your style is. But as organizations and as individuals, understanding and appreciating what's natural for you, working with your strengths in any organization and finding ways to recognize when you need to adapt and adjust to build better communication and ultimately get better results.

Chris P: I'm a firm believer that your surroundings dictate what your DiSC is. At work, I'm one way because I have to be. At home, I'm completely different. I don't know if my wife would agree to that or my children but I think you can change as needed in the scenarios. But once you understand and what I've learned was really being able to look in the mirror and understand what makes me tick, but



then how the people around me, I have 23 people on my team and everybody's an individual within that spectrum of the four letters and the combinations. And it's changed the way I interact with them. There are people within our ownership team and leadership team that once you recognize it, it changes the way you interact. So I think it's been a tremendous learning experience to really dive in and understand the intricacies of each.

Allison Whiting: Absolutely. And you know, that's the key when you talk about change and conflict and stress. It's giving people a way to look at things so differently and realize there is no right or wrong. It's simply looking at yourself first and recognizing how people are reacting to you and looking at other people and realizing what you need to do in those situations. And again, behavior is something that we can change and we can control. We can use in an effective way to influence for a positive outcome.

Chris P: Many of our listeners have as I mentioned at the start of the show, they have employees are they have colleagues. But a lot of times in healthcare, you can manage that and you know because you're used to the people you work with, you're used to the people that work for you. But you have a constant flow of incoming patients that if you see 50 different patients a day, there's 50 different personality and behavior types. Walk us through how our listeners might apply or by understanding themselves in their DiSC, what can they do with it?

Allison Whiting: Sure. So, once you know your style or let's just say theoretically figuring out your style, the D and the I, the dominance and influence are very fast paced and assertive. So, these are the people that you encounter that might be quick to speak up or ask questions or challenge. The steadiness and the conscientiousness styles are going to be a little bit more let me think first and then I'll ask questions or they might internalize a little bit more and their pace is going to be a little bit more laid back or slow. So, even looking for some of those clues about their behavior can give you a sense of what they might be looking for from a care perspective.

Allison Whiting: On the flip side, a dominance or conscientiousness individual is going to be facts, figures, making sure that they have all the information and they're confident in what the result's going to be. An influence and steadiness individual is going to be all about the people and the relationships. And so, having some reassurance and taking that time to make that connection is really important for people that are that style.

Chris P: Where are some of the areas you would warn people? So we see the benefit, we talked about the benefit of understanding people around you and yourself. What are some things you would warn people about? Is it jumping to conclusions by a couple different nonverbal cues or maybe someone's just



having a bad day. What are some things people should watch out for when considering this?

Allison Whiting: So, when you think about styles and behavior, it does change as you said in environments and in different situations. So it's really about reading the situation in the moment. And I think first and foremost, recognizing your own reaction to it, if I jump in or if I shut down or whatever, my communication might be to really be able to take the best approach in my response, but to not jump to conclusions. You know, in organizations, we talk a lot about when a company or a team embraces the DiSC model or any model for that matter, it's not about judging or saying we want everyone to be one way, but it's simply about using it, kind of using it as a way to understand where people might be coming from so that we can build the best outcome and the best communication. In organizations of course, having productive conflict that really addresses issues and gets to the end result.

Chris P: A lot of what you've taught us goes back to the triangle and starting with trust. When you go into a company, what are the things you're looking for right off the bat? Because a lot of times, people start, they don't understand the triangle. And first of all, could you explain the triangle for us? And then walk us through how you explain it and get people to buy in at every level so that they can have the right kind of interactions together and how does it apply to DiSC?

Allison Whiting: So, the triangle that you're referring to is really the first discipline around organizational health. So, when we talk about creating alignment in organizations and building the right communication in organizations and ultimately getting those results, it starts with building a cohesive leadership team. And so, of course, that's where we started at Bankers Healthcare Group. And that becomes really important because it drives the whole business. And so, the pyramid is all about, it's based on the work by Patrick Lencioni from the Table Group called The Five Dysfunctions of a Team. And the foundation of that pyramid is trust and it's vulnerability-based trust and really knowing that people have each other's backs, that you put your team first, that you can be fully transparent with each other and let your guard down.

Allison Whiting: And by enabling that to happen, it leads to the second layer on that pyramid, which is productive conflict. From my experience, this is where a lot of organizations and frankly individuals have the most difficult time. It's how do we get comfortable with this idea of really addressing issues when they happen, but in a productive way. And if there's trust on a team and you take the time to build that trust intentionally, then you can get to that productive conflict.

Allison Whiting: Productive conflict enables the third behavior on the pyramid, which is all about team commitment and alignment. So, when we walk out of the room, are we all on the same page? Is everyone clear about who's committing to what? Are we



going to be able to communicate that throughout the organization? Conflict. Putting it on the table enables that piece to happen.

Allison Whiting: And then the fourth is about accountability. So now that we have this commitment and we've all agreed upon what we're going to do, we need to be able to go out there and execute and hold each other to account. Not just on the end result but the behaviors that are helping the team in the organization. And then of course, the fifth point of the triangle is all about collective results and as an organization and as a leadership team, different departments coming together, different roles coming together, do we all have collective alignment because when that happens, then we're working together versus sometimes maybe having different priorities that are driving the organization.

Allison Whiting: So DiSC going along those lines is really the thread that weaves through all of those five disciplines because everyone's going to come to trust in a different way based on their DiSC style. They're going to approach conflict in a different way based on their DiSC style. Accountability will look different, what they need from a commitment standpoint. And so, as part of the process, as you know, as the team is kind of building that trust and using DiSC as one tool to really understand each other, all of a sudden, we can really create momentum in an organization. And it changes the way people look at things versus just reacting to what's going on.

Chris P: I think it made a big difference for us to understand our DiSC. Before we had done it, we did Myers-Briggs, which everybody was focused on but it was not really cohesive with the pyramid and all the levels. So this time was different. I think a lot of us have matured since then. But what I saw different was that we understood each other so that we could apply how you may see your personality traits and how does that affect the pyramid for your lens? I view trust a certain way based on my DiSC. I view accountability, I view conflict. You could ask anyone on my team. My comfort level with conflict is a lot different than 23 other people. Even though other people might be comfortable with it, I handle it a certain way. I behave a certain way when it comes to commitment and accountability and attention to results.

Chris P: Knowing that was huge for us. So, if I'm someone listening, and again, it might be a practice owner, it might be someone who just works with other people or understanding our patients, we keep talking about DiSC, how can I understand more about that, how can I get more information to understand what is my DiSC. How can I get this into my practice? How can I get this into my hospital?

Allison Whiting: Great question. You can certainly research. There are different versions of DiSC. I'd be more than happy to provide information. And my email address is info@alignwithintent.com, even just to provide some basic information, more than happy to do that. It is a really powerful tool and it gets people looking at



things from such a different perspective and opens the door to different conversations. So, not only appreciating that we all approach conflict differently, but recognizing that now we can start to talk about those approaches to conflict to figure out better ways to engage each other in order to get the best decisions or the best results for the business.

Chris P: Walk me through, everybody has a highlight reel of their most favorite companies and we can leave BHG out of this one, but walk me through where you really walked in and we'll keep names out of this, but give me a couple scenarios where you walked in, you saw, oh my gosh, I don't know if this will work. And then what was the outcome? What did you see as a result of learning DiSC, of learning the pyramid?

Allison Whiting: Oh goodness, that's a great question. I've had a couple of scenarios, situations where I've been pulled in with companies that really have a lot of dysfunction where there's been conflicts. Maybe it's business conflicts or big changes. Sometimes it's even personal conflicts that have been going on for a long time to the point where you have a couple people that are either ready to quit or it's just impacting the productivity so much. And so, in those scenarios, walking in, sometimes they're a little overwhelming. Is this really gonna work? But every time, and I have a couple specifics in mind, it's a process that an organization goes through. But as they go down that path, and I'm going to use DiSC as an example of one specific situation.

Allison Whiting: We had a couple of people on this leadership team that just approached conflict so differently based on their styles. One person wanting to go toe to toe and just put it out there. And we found out they were the oldest of 10 children and if you didn't yell and you didn't yell loud, it wasn't going to work, you wouldn't be heard. And then the other person only saw conflict from a negative perspective. And so they wanted to avoid it at all costs. And so, this had gone on for a really long time. And once they understood those differences and linked it back to their DiSC styles, it was this tremendous breakthrough. And then the whole team could figure out, how do we engage in a productive way all the time, and the turnaround was tremendous and everyone, not only were they getting better results, but they were having so much more fun when they would come to work every day. So some of those examples stick out in my mind.

Allison Whiting: Other examples, you know, my work has taken me through a lot of big transformations with companies. So we would go into organizations that either were in fast growth mode or perhaps they were needing to make quick changes for survival. My piece of the puzzle with DiSC and organizational health was one. But we'd also be changing processes and looking at the strategy of the organization. And in those cases, helping people through the change, and I'm going to use DiSC since that's our topic today, being such a key piece of that because, you know, where some people would want to have the plan down to



the letter with the i's dotted, the t's crossed and every detail and take a long time, other people would want to drive it forward without a plan and it would create chaos because we know change by the nature of what it is so uncomfortable for people.

Allison Whiting: Once they were able to really look at people's differences and leverage those differences in a positive way, it was amazing to see how quickly we could start to make the change happen and get the results.

Chris P: Have you ever had a situation where you just couldn't save a group?

Allison Whiting: I don't know if I've ever had a situation where you can't save a group, but there's definitely been situations where the majority of the team will change and there might be one or two people that just won't make the changes that need to be made to go along with the team. And in those cases, usually what happens is either that team player ends up opting out because the organization's moving forward and it's just not the right fit. Or in some cases, tough decisions have to be made because once that alignment starts, then everyone's moving in the same direction.

Chris P: Do you find across industries that it's all relative? I know coming from my background, my family, I grew up on a potato farm and things were done a certain way and expectations. I always love, I joke, I get compared to my father a lot because it's just hard-nosed, no BS, this is what it is, it's black and white. Just do your job and work your butt off, and good things will happen. So, coming from that background, which I love and getting that comparison, times have changed. And that's not always the right way to go. But have you seen, again, that's farming, then there's finance, there's healthcare, there's automotive. I know your background was heavy in automotive. Do you see a difference or is it all relative across industries?

Allison Whiting: I see all of the industries changing. Certainly, in the manufacturing space, there's been a tremendous shift in terms of just leadership styles and what was okay when I started 20 years ago, today it looks so different in the workplace. You know, we talk a little bit about generations at work and that's a factor that influences how people work together and what organizations need to do.

Chris P: I would be remiss if I didn't ask you how do millennials plan to DiSC?

Allison Whiting: That's a great question. That's another topic for another podcast perhaps.

Chris P: That will be episode two.

Allison Whiting: What I do find is there's certainly generalizations that exist with the different generations at work, and a lot of those different generational differences, it's



helped create this wave of change in every industry. What I find is that DiSC is a layer across all generations that people can really relate to. And again, it's that different perspective or a way to understand why people do what they do or how they tick and get people talking differently. In fact, even your example of how you grew up plays into what we bring to work. And so, when we talk about styles and organizational health and team members are getting to know each other differently, it's realizing that there's so many layers that make up each person. And when we can understand where it's coming from for us and we can understand and appreciate where other people are coming from, it's a different conversation.

Chris P: It Sounds very similar to Dale Carnegie, How to Win Friends and Influence People, everyone has a different lens that they view the world through. But if you can combine that, it seems like a very, I know it doesn't seem like it, I've experienced it. It's very powerful where my personality trait is that fast D with a little bit of C. In the couple of months since we've been working together, it's caused at least that pause to stop and say where before I would say, look, it's my way or the highway and I understand it this way and I view it this way, at least now if not in the moment, five minutes later, I'm noticing, ah, and I actually carried, you can't see this, but I do have my book that Allison gave us that shows my style and how I deal with conflict with people that are of the other styles. It's a game changer for people.

Chris P: Now, maybe a year from now I won't need the book and I won't have the voice in my head, it'll just happen. But you know, talk me through what are, if you're going to do things like this, what makes it successful? Is it something, is it like practicing a sport or lifting weights? It's just practice, practice, practice. How do you become proficient at it?

Allison Whiting: That's a great question. So from an individual standpoint, to me, this whole idea of awareness and realizing your intent and understanding where other people are coming from is so powerful. It creates, I love what you said, it creates that pause. So when I'm approaching, it applies outside of work too. If you're approaching any conversation or you're going into a meeting to just be more mindful of what you're bringing into that conversation and sticking with your strengths because you're fast paced decision maker is what drives success, and yet knowing that not everyone's going to receive that the same way.

Allison Whiting: So I think that mindfulness is part of it and on an individual level, keeping it in front of you and then practicing it and just slowly shifting, not changing who you are, but shifting the way that we react to situations so that we can then influence things in a more positive way. Organizationally or even on teams, and I love what Bankers Healthcare Group has done because it becomes a piece of what you're, of your culture, of the language that you use and everyone knows that this is another way to understand and appreciate those differences. So my



guess is even your team now understands where that D dominant style's coming from and ultimately, it's never a perfect meet in the middle because it's human beings and we're running businesses, but this idea of understanding and looking at it from a different perspective.

Chris P: We do have two of my team members sitting here with us and they're smartly shaking their heads yes, but we'll ask them after. Give us some insight on how little things you can do to leverage understanding your behavior. We've talked about, it's that pause, it's understanding viewing. But what are some other little techniques that you have that we can give our listeners?

Allison Whiting: So in any it, it kind of starts with your own pause. In fact, I guess going back to that, thinking about when there's stress conflict and change, that's when we fall into our natural tendency. So perhaps even for the next little bit of time, to be mindful of what your go to reaction and behavior is in those situations. Do I lean in and get aggressive? Do I pull back and get more thoughtful or inward and just recognizing that in yourself? And then the other piece of it is to really pay attention in and pick your head up and look at the people around you. So if I'm managing a team of people and maybe I'm not getting the results that I want or the engagement that I'm looking for, to just take that time to understand where they're coming from and where those similarities may come into play or I find for most people, I'll often ask in these training sessions in group meetings that I do, who drives you crazy at work. Most of the time people will say it's the people who are opposite us. Once in a while, we're too similar.

Chris P: We actually, in our team meeting, I found something out about one of my team members that we are the exact same profile and I wondered, we were sitting next to each other at the time when Allison handed out the information. And we just looked at each other and it was one of those Step Brothers moments, did we just become best friends? Since then though, it has made a huge change because the things that I would do as a manager would irritate her or the things that she was doing as an employee, but we're the same person. When you take a step back, then I look at my boss and those are the same feelings at times I would have towards him. And it just opened this aha moment. You could just see it on both of our faces and immediately, I think the understanding, kind of camaraderie. I think if you'd allow everyone at BHG to walk around with their letter on their shirt, everybody would do it and then you'd see the huddles form.

Chris P: It's really a great thing and it's changed our business. I've seen it immediately. We're practicing every day. No one's perfect, but having a guide like Allison is good for our business, it's good for our customers. We're all going the same way, but if we're all understanding each other, the end result is your end customer. If you're a healthcare professional, it's your patient. If you have dysfunction that I've seen, and people have heard me talk on the podcast about



my, I have three small children and we've been through a lot of doctor's appointments and different types of settings from major surgeries to checkups to specialists. You can see dysfunction as a patient from the second you walk in. And it's so important now. And to tie it all back, patients have options. They don't want to go where they feel uncomfortable.

Chris P: So if you're listening to this, you know, I really encourage you to reach out to Allison. Allison's given me a look across there like she doesn't know what she's getting into it, but there's so much value and Allison is amazing at what she does. If you're somewhere that you just want some information and you can't go through this with a consultant, please just reach out to her and she can give you information, point you in the direction. It is so valuable. You know, she's created an evangelist in the BHG team. This is a time where I wanted to bring value. We talk a lot about marketing and taxes and running your practice and patient lending. This is something for you personally and it's for you as a business. I'm a full believer, 430 people at BHG are full believers.

Chris P: So, Allison, what's one thing that our listeners can take away? If I have to narrow it down to one, what would be one thing you'd want to leave them with?

Allison Whiting: I guess the one thing I would leave them with is this idea of looking at the world a little differently and really paying attention to your triggers, your reactions, your team, and how they're responding to maybe your style and approach. Think about your patients. Looking at them from a different perspective and understanding where they're coming from because at the end of the day, we all want to do good work and communication and how we come together to make that happen is absolutely critical.

Chris P: That's excellent. I love it. I want to thank Allison Whiting for coming on. It's such great information. I can't stress to you enough. Reach out, go get some information. It can help you in and out of the practice. It's just so valuable. So Allison, thank you so much. If you'd like more information, please email info@alignwithintent.com. Allison would love to hear from you. That's it for today. We're going to wrap it up. If you'd like to continue the conversation or share your thoughts and opinions, please shoot me an email at podcast@bhg-inc.com. I'd love to hear from you. Have a great day.