

Real Colors Virtual Communication

PURPOSE

In this activity participants will explore the similarities and differences of how each of the four Real Colors® address virtual communication.

CAUTION

Emphasize no Color Bashing. That means do not allow or promote making fun of any temperament, including negative comments or characterizations. Do not tolerate stereotyping. This is not the time to talk about weaknesses or to criticize the temperament.

MATERIALS

Real Colors Virtual Communication Reference Guide

PowerPoint or other visual aids to enhance the presentation, optional

APPROXIMATE TIME

45-60 minutes

SUGGESTED GROUP SIZE

12-24 participants

PROCESS

Introduction/Purpose (10 minutes):

Note: This activity is intended to be delivered virtually using a platform with video and breakout room capability. It can be adapted to an in-person training as needed.

If you request participants to send you their Primary and Secondary Colors prior to the day of the training, you can set up the breakout rooms in advance and prepare a plan if you are missing any color(s) to aid in a smooth delivery the day of the training.

Say: *“Virtual communication is an essential part of our day-to-day interactions – both personal and professional. Today we will explore how temperament affects our virtual communication and apply what we learn to better communicate with each other! By knowing your own style and preferences and then understanding the other temperaments, we can all become more effective and productive virtual communicators. Before we go any further, let’s establish a basic definition of virtual communication. How would you define virtual communication?”*

Do: Allow the participants to give their definition of virtual communication. Display the participant responses so everyone can see them by having everyone type their responses into the chat or by compiling the responses on a virtual whiteboard that is shared.

Possible responses will include:

- People communicating without being face-to-face.
- People speaking with each other but not always having the ability to see or hear each other.
- Interactions that happen anywhere, provided there is a way to connect.
- A cheaper way of conducting meetings and trainings for team members who are in different locations.
- A way of sending messages.
- Something I don’t like.
- A way to increase productivity and efficiency.





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PROCESS (continued)

Say: *“Now that we understand what virtual communication is, what are examples of different types of technology we use to communicate virtually?”*

Possible responses:

- Web-conferencing tools
- Video chats
- Instant Messaging tools
- Emails
- Collaboration tools
- Project management tools
- File sharing tools
- Phone calls/conference calls

Do: Allow the participants to brainstorm different types of technology used to communicate virtually. Display the participant responses so everyone can see them by having everyone type their responses into the chat or by compiling the responses on a virtual whiteboard that is shared.

Activity Instructions (20 minutes):

Note: For this activity, participants will work in Primary Color groups. If you have this information, move directly into the Activity. If you don't have the participants Primary Colors, take a moment to gather this information.

Say: *“We are going to break into Primary Color groups to explore how our temperament affects our virtual communication, or what unique preferences do **GOLDS, GREENS, ORANGES, and BLUES** have about virtual communication. When you join your breakout room, each group will answer the following questions:*

- *What is your style or what are your preferences when conducting business in a virtual environment?*
- *What struggles or frustrations do you have when conducting business in a virtual environment?”*

“You will have 15 minutes to discuss the two questions and put your responses on your virtual whiteboard. I will check in on the different groups as you work if you have any questions.”

Note: Be sure the participants know how to use the virtual whiteboard and annotation features of the platform being used before sending them to the breakout rooms.



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PROCESS *(continued)*

Do: Move the participants into breakout rooms according to their Primary Colors. Allow the groups 15 minutes to discuss the two questions and record their answers on the virtual whiteboard. During the first ten minutes, visit each breakout room to check on each group's progress and to address any questions that arise. Listen to the discussions and note the information that does/does not go on the virtual whiteboard. You may want to take notes for processing later.

Do: When five minutes remain, remind each group of the time. Ask them to begin wrapping up their discussion and plan for what they will share with the full group when they return to the main meeting room. Before returning to the main room, ensure you have a screen capture of each group's virtual whiteboard, or they are able to share it with the full group.

Discussion (10 minutes):

Do: Bring all participants back into the main room and process each visual. There will likely be opportunities to discuss the influence of Secondary Colors on virtual communication.

Remember, the goal is for everyone to recognize that people have different preferences around virtual communication. Their preferences are neither good nor bad, right nor wrong. But recognizing these differences aids in better understanding of coworkers, improved communication, increased clarity, and the overall health of team culture.

If anyone expresses negative emotions, or presents a negative experience, move the conversation to a solution-focused interaction. Ask questions that steer the participant to applying how understanding Real Colors preferences could have changed the situation and how they will change interactions in the future.

Some possible questions to ask:

- *“What similarities and differences do you see between the Primary Color whiteboards?”*
- *“Did you have any “AH-HA” moments or “that never would have occurred to me until...” thoughts?”*
- *“What skills does ANY communicator in a virtual environment need, regardless of their Real Color Spectrum?”*

Possible Responses:

- o Active Listening Skills are a critical part of virtual communication because many of the non-verbal cues present during in-person interactions are lost. Asking clarifying statements and summarizing show your attempt to understand the speaker. Providing feedback on what a team member says shows you are thinking critically about the conversation. Responding appropriately – nodding, positive facial expressions, eye contact with the camera vs. looking at a different screen, not interrupting – is also important to practice.



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PROCESS *(continued)*

- o Building rapport and developing a level of trust is an important part of virtual communication. You can promote social interaction, provide opportunities for everyone to contribute, and model a supportive, positive and enthusiastic tone. This is natural for **BLUES**, but important for all colors to keep in mind.
- o Ask questions to ensure “the message sent is the message received.” Keep interactions short, specific, and frequent. This keeps **GREENS** thinking and will likely generate more questions, it will keep **ORANGES** on the ball and spark creative, outside the box thinking, the questions show **GOLDS** you are considering the details important to larger discussion, and clarifying shows **BLUES** you are seeking to understand the speaker.
- o Focus on results; Yes, colors other than **GOLD** are results oriented and want to know they are not wasting their time!
- o Keep everyone in the loop and regularly communicate progress and next steps.
- *What should you consider when you aren’t able to see or hear the recipient (technology like texts, chats, and email)?*

Possible Responses:

- o In general, be sure to respond promptly, be very clear about your intentions as people can read more emotion into words than is actually there, check for understanding, and seek out clarification when you don’t understand the sender’s meaning.
- o Specifically:
 - GOLDS** – ensure you are organized and to the point
 - GREENS** – use facts to explain the “why” and avoid fluff
 - ORANGES** – enjoy the quick, concise and immediate response of text-based interactions; they may not be as responsive with email
 - BLUES** – will often use emojis as they add feeling and take the edge off of the words; not generally their preferred method of communication
- *Of the media we just mentioned do you have a preference and why?*
- *What are the challenges using this type of media?*

Possible Responses:

- o Misinterpretation, confusion, misunderstanding, frustration, MSU (making stuff up), becoming upset; Many of these are the same as in person communication, but you may not be able to pick up on the same non-verbal cues.
- *What is one thing you will do differently for each Color, in your next virtual communication, to ensure you are reaching all four Real Colors?*



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PROCESS *(continued)*

Wrapping It Up (2 minutes):

Say: *“Congratulations! You have gained new knowledge and understanding of differing perspectives around virtual communication. When you communicate virtually, remember to acknowledge your own preferences as well as take time to understand others’ temperament preferences. Remember, we are all in this together, so give each other a little grace and take steps to make it easier for everyone.”*

Do: Send the *Real Colors Virtual Communication Reference Guide* to each person – either by email or collaboration tool.

Say: *“As you review the **Real Colors Virtual Communication Reference Guide** I just sent you, I have one final question. How can you apply what you learned today when you communicate virtually? What should you take into consideration when communicating with each of the four Real Colors?”*

Do: There are many ways to facilitate participants answer to this question. Participants could type their answer into the chat. As the facilitator, you could call on each person to share what they learned until each person has shared. Participants could text a question about virtual communication to a colleague of a different color to clarify their understanding and report back the answer to the group. Each person could post what they learned on your internal collaboration tool. Be creative! As participants share how they will apply their learning, have the group add notes in the open section of the *Real Colors Virtual Communication Reference Guide*.

When everyone has finished sharing,

Say: *“Thank you for your participation in this short activity. Our goal is to keep Real Colors® alive and well in our organization and to use Real Colors for more effective communication, improved morale, and increased productivity.”*



Real Colors Virtual Communication

GOLD

When using messaging/chat/collaboration tools:

- Clear, concise communication is preferred
- Will use direct words/phrases
- Desires a quick response

In meetings:

- Would like Pre-work ahead of time to be prepared and productive during the online session
- Will log in early and expect a prompt start time
- Appreciates an agenda
- Expects an orderly discussion as in raising hands to lesson people talking over each other
- Will be frustrated with “technical issues” on the host’s part as that means they didn’t test their system and aren’t prepared

Notes:

BLUE

When using messaging/chat/collaboration tools:

- Likes emojis to add context to meaning
- Will check in to see how others are doing vs. communicating for a “purpose”
- Uses more emotions-based words to compensate for the missing non-verbal cues

In meetings:

- Likes ice breakers that allow for connection
- Pays attention to facial expressions and body positioning to gage level of interest and involvement
- Finds silence disquieting and uncomfortable
- Will likely use the chat feature frequently
- More comfortable with a smaller group size as everyone has an opportunity to participate
- Will be patient and not interrupt but if not invited to participate may not have their voice heard

Notes:



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GREEN

When using messaging/chat/collaboration tools:

- Will not reply to a comment unless further clarification is needed.
- May need time to think through options before answering a message even when a quick response is desired
- Can find it difficult to express the full scope of their understanding succinctly

In meetings:

- May not want to share their video since they are not as animated as other colors
- They understand technology and enjoy virtual meetings
- Helpful to send out topics to be discussed, questions or problems to consider, and relevant data and information so they can be prepared and have time to think.
- Annoyed by poor technology or weak technological skills by the host.
- Appreciates opportunities to ask questions
- Enjoys using various features like chat and polling to gather information and data
- Prefers a smaller group if they want to participate or a large group if they just want to listen

Notes:

ORANGE

When using messaging/chat/collaboration tools:

- Tend to respond to messages quickly (or not at all because they have moved on to the next thing)
- Bring humor to group messages
- Responses may be viewed as incomplete by other colors

In meetings:

- Will bring some element of fun and humor if allowed to
- Will disengage if the content or presenter is dry and boring
- Will likely have other screens running and engage in task shifting
- Gamification will keep an Orange more interested. Meaning have games, puzzles, prizes, and fun activities.
- Will likely use chat feature with other participants
- Enjoys brainstorming and the opportunity for out of the box thinking
- Any built-in physical activity breaks the monotony and is appreciated

Notes:

