

Quick Identification of Social Style, Aptitudes, and Motivation

*Keith J. Rosario**

Bangalore, India.

*e-mail: keith.rosario@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The Social Style of an individual is a pattern of interpersonal behavior predominantly exhibited by him, which when identified can lead to an understanding of how he can best be handled and motivated. Identification of a person's Social Style is not easy by conventional methods. Social Style can be quickly and easily identified using graphological principles with the help of two primary handwriting traits and two sub-traits.

INTRODUCTION

Social Styles

Perhaps nothing in the history of the world has been more confusing to man than man himself- unique, non-standard and quite unpredictable, the facets of his personality hidden under multiple layers of concealment. Any tool that facilitates a closer understanding of others needs to be explored. An understanding of others' nature, responses and motivation improves working relationships and is a key in effectively dealing with, appreciating and motivating the people around us. Social Style is one such tool.

The concept of Social Style was first formulated by Merrill and Reid.¹ Social Style is defined as a pervasive and enduring pattern of interpersonal behavior. A person's Social Style is his characteristic way of behaving across a variety of situations and influences nearly everything a person does with other people.² People tend to fall into four Social Styles. Each person has a dominant style that influences the way he works and interacts

with others. None of these styles are “better” or “worse” than any other. No person conforms completely to one type. However, everyone has one style that predominates and is used most frequently. This is the style with which the person feels most comfortable. Though some behaviors do change, a person’s dominant Social Style tends to remain the same.

The Social Styles are defined in four quadrants as functions of the traits of Assertiveness and Emotional Responsiveness. These styles are:

- A. Expressive:** high assertiveness, high responsiveness
- B. Driver:** high assertiveness, low responsiveness
- C. Analyst:** low assertiveness, low responsiveness
- D. Amiable:** high responsiveness, low assertiveness

Figure 1 sums up the way in which each of the styles operates and the key words that describe their motivation. Within each style, individuals exhibit behavioral traits that may place them higher or lower on the assertiveness and responsiveness scales.

Identification of Social Styles

By conventionally recommended methods, identification of a person’s Social Style is not easy. According to Bolton², a person has about a 50 % likelihood of assessing his own

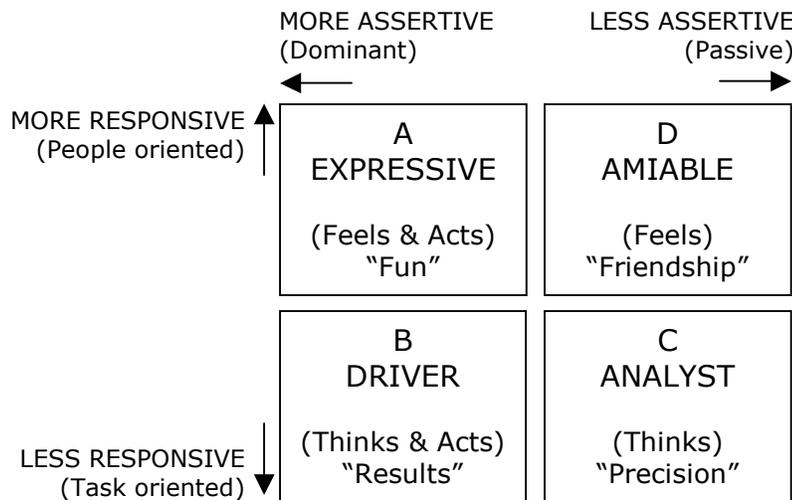


Figure 1. The four Social Styles.

style correctly and the best way of discovering one's Social Style is to receive feedback from other people through a structured feedback format. The suggested alternative is to attend workshops for training in the specific instruments to identify Social Styles. This analysis is limited only to the four primary quadrants of the Social Style grid.

The availability of an alternative method to identify Social Style would make this tool more widely and effectively applicable. This paper explores how graphology may be used for this purpose. Two primary handwriting traits **size** and **slant** and two sub-traits **regularity** and **shape** may be used to quickly identify the Social Style as well as to place the subject quite precisely on the assertiveness and responsiveness scale.

It must be emphasized that this approach based on two primary and two sub-traits of the handwriting is not a comprehensive analysis or a "short-cut" to replace a detailed analysis that considers many more graphic components and their inter-relationship. This technique is meant to provide the analyst with a quick insight into the broad character type into which the subject falls and the traits he would predominantly display.

REVIEW OF SOCIAL STYLES

Behavioral Patterns of the Social Styles

In 1984, Robert and Dorothy Bolton² described the predominant behavioral patterns of the persons in each Social Style. These have been expanded on below. The negative traits appear when the typical strengths and behavioral patterns are overextended and carried to extremes.

The **Expressives**, the most flamboyant Social Style, are found in the upper left quadrant of Figure 1. They are **action-oriented**. They combine a high level of assertiveness or dominance with much emotional expression. Expressives tend to look at the big picture, are imaginative and often take fresh and novel approaches to the problem and are willing to take risks. They are extroverted, spontaneous and enthusiastic and have the ability to charm, persuade, excite and motivate. They tend to decide and act quickly based more on feelings than on fact.

On the negative side, Expressives may be superficial, excitable and overbearing. They may use and manipulate others to achieve their goals. They may be impatient when things do not move according to their expectations, and act impulsively.

The **Driver** Social Style is located in the lower left quadrant of Figure 1. They are **result-oriented**. Drivers blend a high degree of emotional self-control (low responsiveness) with a high degree of assertiveness. They are task-oriented people who know what they want and where they are going. They get to the point quickly and express themselves succinctly. Drivers are pragmatic, decisive, result-oriented, objective and competitive. They are usually independent, willing to take calculated risks and valued for their ability to get things done. While they have strong social confidence, they interact with others more to achieve their objectives than because they like people.

On the negative side, Drivers may be aggressive, dictatorial and domineering. They may be lacking in sensitivity to others and their drive overshadows their empathy. They may be rigid, unbending and unable to look at another point of view.

Analytical is the Social Style found in the lower right quadrant of the grid of Figure 1. Analyticals are **process-oriented**. They combine a high level of emotional self-control with a low level of assertiveness. They tend to adopt a precise, deliberate and systematic approach to their work. They are questioning, factual and thorough. They usually gather and evaluate much data before acting and do not allow their emotions to come in the way of their decisions. Analyticals are generally industrious, objective and well-organized workers and tend to be specialists in their areas, limiting their interests to a relatively narrow field.

On the negative side, Analyticals may be negative, nitpicking and dogmatic. They are often unable to see the forest for the trees. They are generally introverted, suppress their emotions, are reserved and prefer solitude to socializing.

The **Amiable** Social Style is located in the upper right quadrant of Figure 1. Amiables are **people-oriented**. They combine a higher than average emotional responsiveness with a comparatively low level of assertiveness. They tend to be sympathetic to the needs of others and are sensitive to what lies beneath the surface behavior of another person. Of all the Social Styles, Amiables are the most likely to use empathy and understanding in interpersonal problem solving. Their trust in others may bring out the best in the people with whom they interact. They are receptive, warm, helpful, diplomatic and understanding. Amiables are non-confrontational and lack aggressiveness.

On the negative side, Amiables might be weak, indecisive and cowardly. They may be gullible and insecure and hesitate to take firm decisions. Their emotions play a major role in their responses and decisions. They may lack self-confidence.

Motivators of Social Styles

Based on their psychological make-up, different things appeal to different Social Style types. Figure 2 summarizes the factors that motivate the different Social Style types and

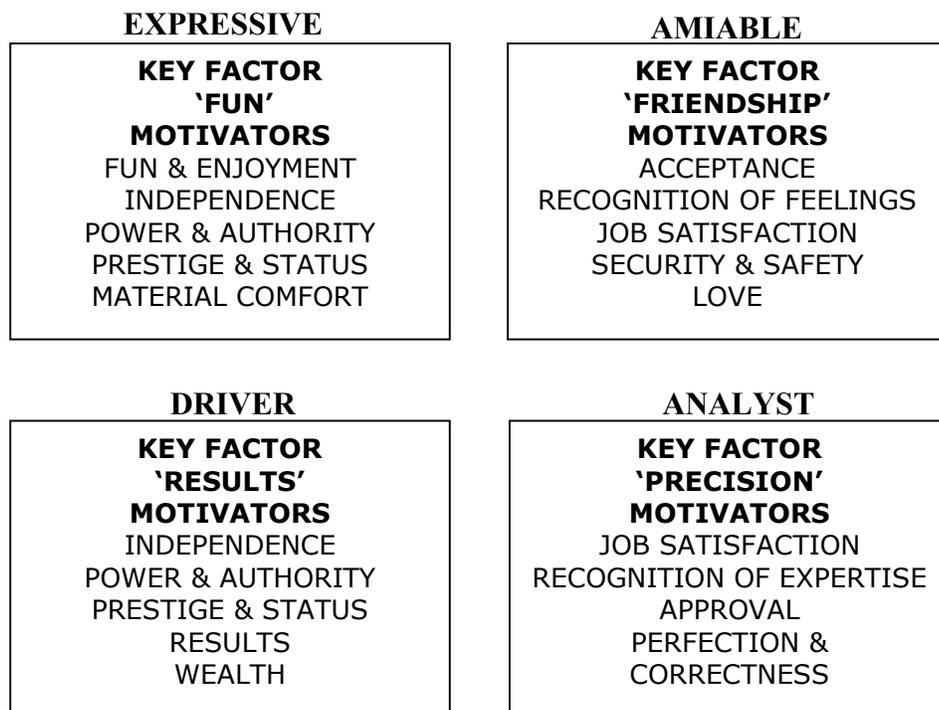


Figure 2. Factors motivating the different Social Style types.

make them tick. These motivating factors are direct functions of the degree of their assertiveness and emotional response.

Aptitudes of Social Styles

The categorization of the aptitudes of Social Style types shown in Figure 3 is by no means comprehensive and absolute, but only indicative. It is neither practical nor desirable to put people into boxes and expect them to conform to the ‘box parameters.’ For instance, successful managers and leaders may be found in any Social Style, each with his own style of management. Their management style however, would ideally conform to the particular Social Style. If a person’s management style differs significantly from his Social Style, he is probably operating outside his comfort zone and will not use his capabilities to their fullest.²

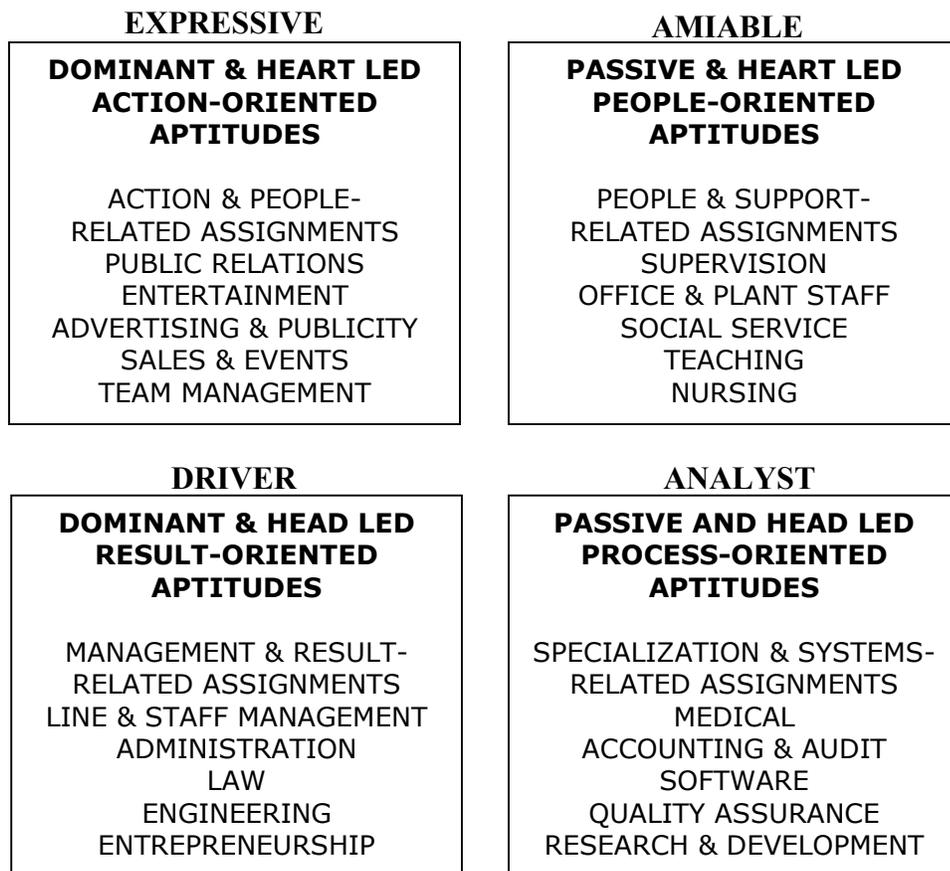


Figure 3. Aptitudes of the different Social Style types.

GRAPHOLOGICAL METHOD TO IDENTIFY SOCIAL STYLE

Graphology may be used not only to identify Social Styles with a high degree of accuracy, but also to subdivide each Social Style quadrant (Figure 1) into more precise subsets or sub-quadrants. This allows an individual to be placed fairly precisely on the **assertiveness** and **emotional responsiveness** scales and fine-tune an analysis of his nature, motivators and aptitudes. The handwriting traits that correspond to these two behavioral dimensions are **Size** and **Slant** of the writing respectively. If two other handwriting traits, **Regularity** and **Shape** of the writing are used, further insights into the display of strengths or weaknesses and variations from typical behavioral patterns of the Social Styles become available.

1. Size. Handwriting size is indicative of interpersonal abilities and how one impresses himself on the environment.³ The larger the handwriting the more extroverted and assertive is the writer most often is. It points to the social confidence of one who likes having people around him whom he can influence. Small handwriting is indicative of the introvert who hesitates to assert himself and who prefers to observe from a distance rather than get involved.

- Tiny - Isolated, lacks social & self-confidence.] *Less*
- Small - Introverted, modest, private.] *Assertive*
- Average - Able to interact and reach out to others.
- Large - Extroverted, confident, dominating.] *More*
- Huge - Domineering, arrogant, brusque.] *Assertive*

2. Slant. The slant of the writing is a highly significant sign that indicates the degree of emotional responsiveness.³ The more the handwriting slopes to the right of vertical, the greater the emotional responsiveness. Handwriting slanting to the left is indicative of emotional withdrawal. Figure 4 indicates the six commonly seen slants of handwriting.

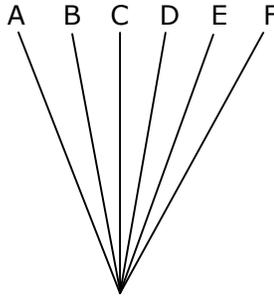


Figure 4. Different slants of handwriting.

The degrees of emotional responsiveness represented by the slant of the handwriting are:

- Slant A (far left) - Represses emotional response, head-ruled
- Slant B (less left) - Suppresses emotional response, head-ruled
- Slant C (vertical) - Cold, objective, logical, head-ruled
- Slant D (“normal”) - Emotionally responsive, sociable heart-ruled
- Slant E (forward) - Very responsive, demonstrative heart-ruled
- Slant F (far forward) - Highly emotional, strongly heart-ruled

3. Regularity. If the handwriting is regular, the subject is likely to express the ‘positive’ traits or strengths of the particular Social Style. An irregular handwriting is more indicative of the presence of the ‘negative’ traits or weaknesses of the Social Style.

4. Shape. The inclusion of handwriting shape in this analysis gives further insights into the nature of the subject’s responses and motivation

- Very Rounded - Laid back, avoids hard work, loves ease
- Rounded - Gentle, mild, peaceful, easily led, effort-oriented
- Angular - Determined, result-oriented, not easily influenced
- Very Angular - Rigid, unyielding, tense, narrow-minded

In this analysis, the **shape** of the writing is used as a parameter to check deviations from the ‘norm,’ e.g. angular writing in an Amiable, or rounded writing in a Driver would indicate variations from the typical behavior in respect of result orientation or its lack.

The traits of **Size** and **Slant** of the writing help place the subject accurately into a particular cell in one of the Social Style quadrants. This treatment allows a more precise analysis of the degree to which the individual exhibits the behavioral patterns of assertiveness and emotional response. If these handwriting traits are applied, the Social Style grid may be illustrated as in Figure 5. The upper left quadrant represents the **Expressives**, the lower left the **Drivers**, the lower right the **Analyticals** and the upper right the **Amiables**.

The cells, in column 1 and row 'F' represent extremely strong levels of assertiveness and responsiveness respectively. Cells in column 6 and row 'A' on the other hand indicate a total lack of these traits. Individuals placed in this outer layer of cells (shown in gray in Figure 5), particularly the corner cells, would demonstrate the extreme behavioral patterns of their Social Styles.

Individuals in the middle layer of cells (shown in white in Figure 5) are strongly representative of the typical behavior of the Social Style and those in the innermost layer of cells (shown with stripes in Figure 5) would show a mixture of the behavior of more

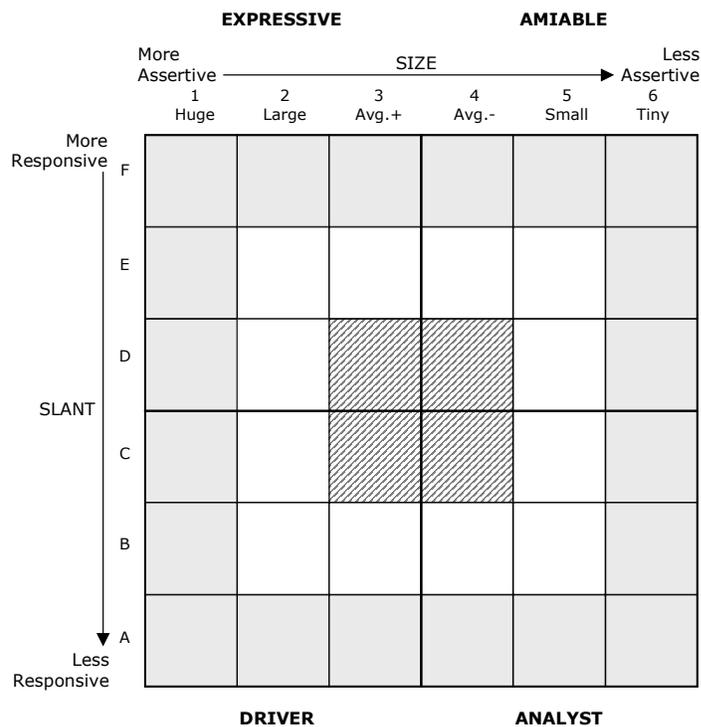


Figure 5. Social Styles identified by Size and Slant of handwriting.

than one style. The **regularity** of the writing is an indicator of whether the individual displays the strengths or weaknesses of his Social Style.

A summary of the personality traits both positive and *negative*, displayed by the four Social Styles is displayed in Figure 6. It will be noticed that the strengths of one Social Style are reflected in the weaknesses of the style in the diagonally opposite quadrant and vice versa. Strengths are indicated by the **regularity** and weakness by the **irregularity** of the handwriting. This graphological method of identifying Social Styles and pinpointing

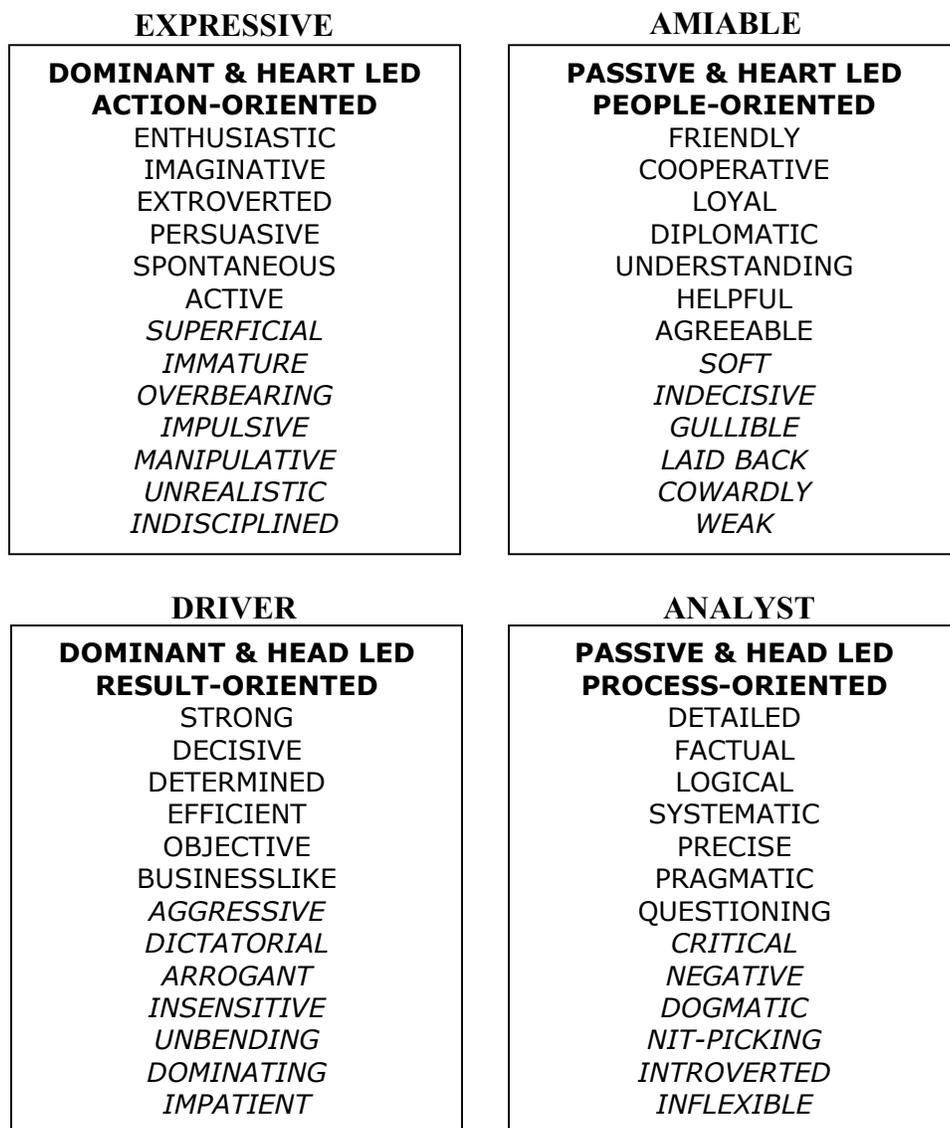


Figure 6. Summary of personality traits associated with different Social Style types.

behavioral and personality traits is simple, quick and yields much valuable information about the behavior of people.

EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL STYLES DETERMINED USING GRAPHOLOGY

In order to demonstrate the utility and ease of applying the graphological method to classify subjects into particular Social Styles, thirteen samples of handwriting (Annexure 1) were obtained from people in a variety of occupations. The primary graphic traits of handwriting Size and Slant were then used to determine the specific cell of the Social Styles grid into which the particular handwriting sample would fall. Table 1 displays the details of this classification along with the profession/occupation of each subject.

From the broad classification into a particular Social Style, it is possible to quickly gauge the social and professional traits of the subject and the class of profession that would suit the subject. More specifically, the classes of activities in which he might be a misfit are immediately clear. For instance, subjects 2, 6 or 13 in Table 1 would likely be unsuited for the professions typical of Analysts (systems-oriented, technical or specialized activities requiring the use of logic and attention to accuracy and detail). Similarly, subjects 1, 7, or 11 would not fit into professions typical of Drivers or Expressives (action-oriented activities requiring expressiveness, interaction with people and the use of intuition).

Table 1. Classification of handwriting samples into Social Styles.

Sample no.	Size	Slant	Cell	Social Style	Profession
1	Tiny	Vertical	6C	Analyst	Chemical Engineer
2	Huge	Vertical	1C	Driver	Public Relations Executive
3	Small	Vertical	5C	Analyst	Software Professional
4	Small	Right	5D	Amiable	Electronics Engineer
5	Large	Right	2D	Expressive	Human Resources Executive
6	Huge	Right	1D/E	Expressive	Senior Executive
7	Small	Left	5B	Analyst	Entrepreneur (Financial)
8	Small	Right	5D	Amiable	Housewife
9	Small	Right	5D	Amiable	Marketing Officer
10	Large	Vertical	2C	Driver	Housewife
11	Small	Vertical	5C	Analyst	Software Engineer
12	Tiny	Far Right	6E	Amiable	Unknown (Freelance)
13	Large	Right	2D	Expressive	Software Marketing

It is clear that the use of graphological concepts makes it possible to immediately place the subjects into specific cells in the Social Styles grid. This specific categorization allows a judgment of the degree to which the subject conforms to the typical personality traits of the Social Style. It is also possible to form a rough judgment of whether the subject is temperamentally suited to the type of profession/occupation they are engaged in. When the sub-trait of Regularity is applied, it becomes possible to judge the degree to which the subject expresses the 'positive' or 'negative' personality traits of the particular style. With the application of the sub-trait of Shape, further information regarding temperament and result-orientation emerges, which identifies whether the subject conforms to or contradicts the specific behavioral pattern of the Social Style in these important areas. It must be emphasized that this method is not meant to replace a detailed analysis but is an aid to the quick categorization of a subject into a particular Social Style (without the need to know or interact with the subject) and can be used as a starting point for determining character and career aptitudes.

CONCLUSIONS

Social Style is a concept that allows the way that people work and interact with others to be classified into one of four types based on their assertiveness and emotional responsiveness. Knowledge of a person's Social Style can broaden the understanding of his behavioral patterns, motivators and aptitudes. A method to identify Social Style based on the use of handwriting traits was developed. Handwriting **size** and **slant** are the traits representative of **assertiveness** and **emotional responsiveness**, respectively. The regularity and shape of the handwriting offer additional insights into the strengths/weaknesses and variations from typical behavioral patterns of the Social Style. The graphological method also allows identification of the degree to which a person uses different Social Styles. This simple yet powerful tool can give one a distinct advantage in dealing with, motivating and appreciating people.

REFERENCES

1. David Merrill and Roger Reid *Personal Styles and Effective Performance: Make Your Style Work for You*; Chilton: Radnor, PA, 1981.

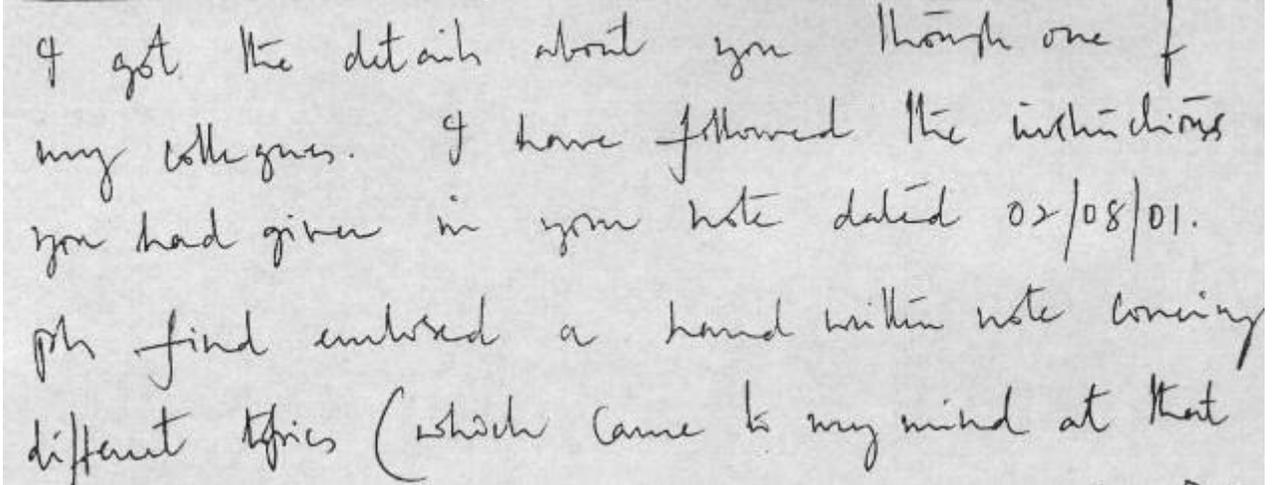
2. Robert Bolton and Dorothy G. Bolton *Social Style/Management Style*; American Management Association: New York, NY, 1984.
3. Reed Hayes *Between the Lines*; Destiny Books: Rochester, VT, 1993.

About the Author

The author, a management professional by training is a self-trained practitioner of Graphology for 30 years. He has analyzed over 3000 specimens of handwriting and by feedback, has obtained very high levels of accuracy. He provides consultation on Graphology to institutions and individuals for H.R., self-understanding and other functions. He has developed a method for analysis of drawings to identify attitudes to the current situation. Based in Bangalore, India, Keith Rosario is the only Indian Professional Member of the American Society of Professional Graphologists.

ANNEXURE 1 – Handwriting Samples with Brief Graphic Impressions

Sample 1: Profession – Chemical Engineer

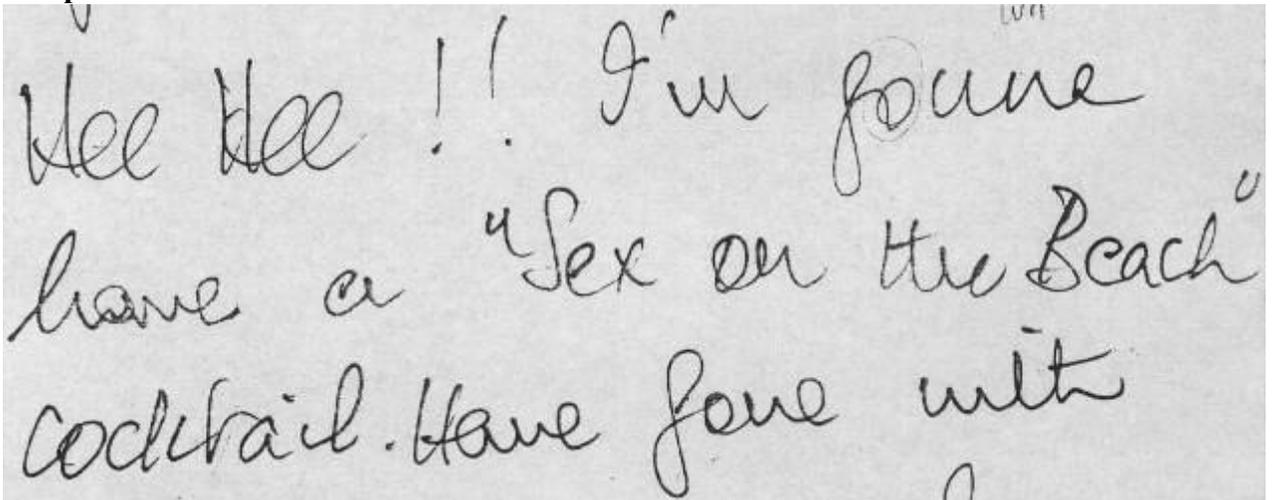


I got the details about you through one of my colleagues. I have followed the instructions you had given in your note dated 02/08/01. plz find enclosed a hand written note covering different topics (which came to my mind at that

Social Style Classification – Cell 6C, Analyst

The tiny writing and predominantly vertical slant is indicative of an ability to concentrate and focus on detail, logically and objectively. Angularity indicates an analytical and investigative mind that would question facts at face value. He seeks accuracy in all he does. The writer is predominantly introverted and prefers to work alone. The writing is slightly irregular indicating a mix of the 'positive' and 'negative' traits of the style. He seeks recognition, job satisfaction and freedom from conflict.

Sample 2: Profession – Public Relations Executive

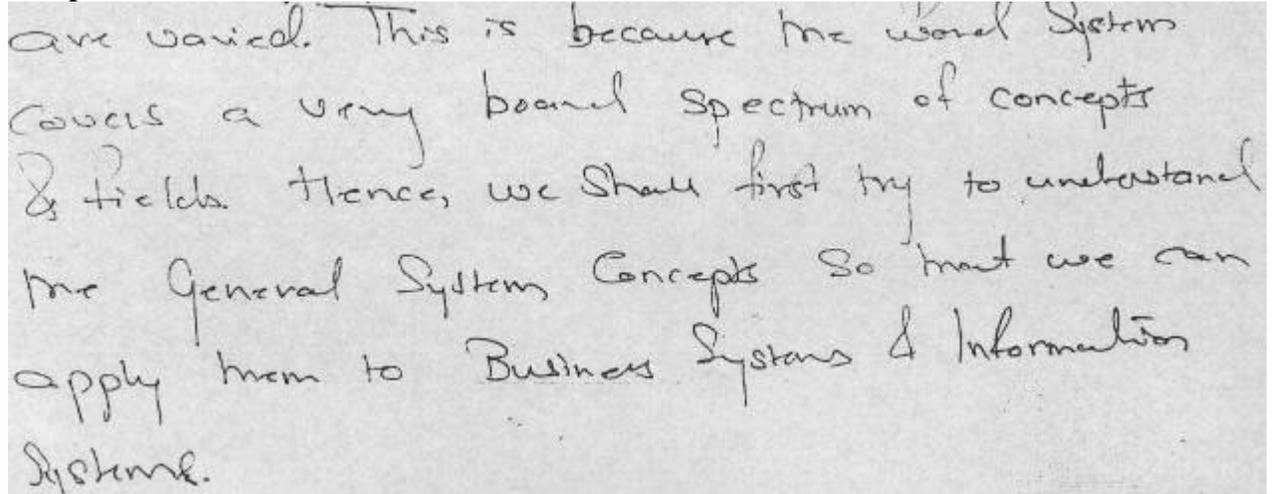


Hee Hee !! I'm gonna have a "Sex on the Beach" cocktail. Have fun with

Social Style Classification – Cell 1C, Driver

The writing is very large and the slant though predominantly vertical tends to vary. The handwriting is also angular. The writer is extroverted, can dominate a group and makes her presence felt. She leads a team with a strong drive for results. She is strong, extremely self-reliant in thought and action and very persistent. She is capable of shrewdly using people and situations and seeks advancement, challenge and power.

Sample 3: Profession – Software Professional

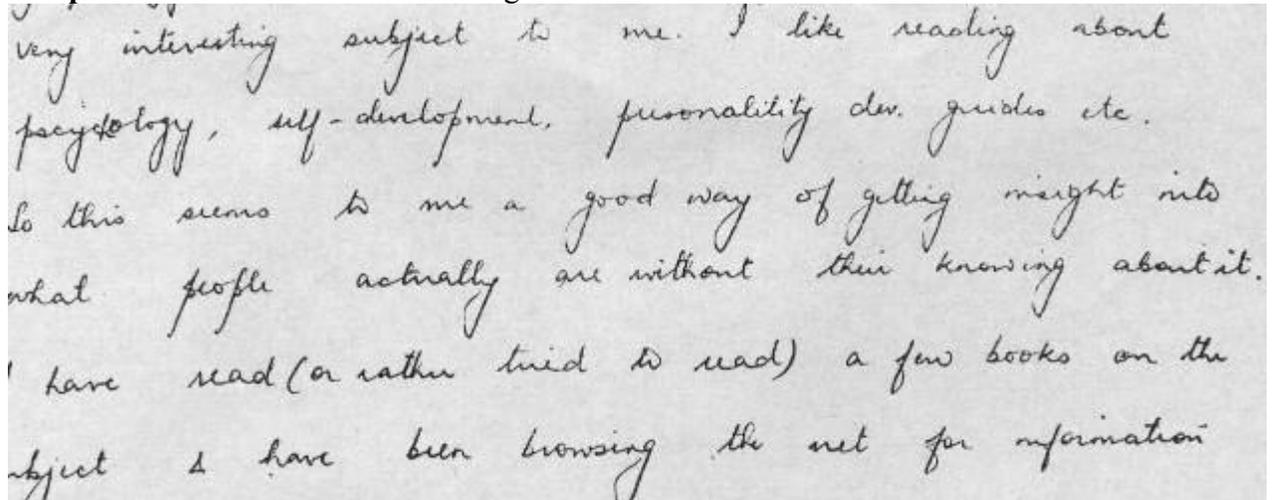


are varied. This is because the world systems covers a very broad spectrum of concepts & fields. Hence, we shall first try to understand the general system concepts so that we can apply them to business systems & information systems.

Social Style Classification – Cell 5C, Analyst

The small, vertical writing points to focus, the ability to concentrate objectively and specialize in a chosen field. The writer is a systematic and precise thinker capable of handling work requiring attention to detail and accuracy. He would evaluate himself and others by precise standards and adherence to standard procedure. He looks for job satisfaction and recognition of his expertise. Lacking in initiative he would expect specific feedback on his performance.

Sample 4: Profession – Electronics Engineer

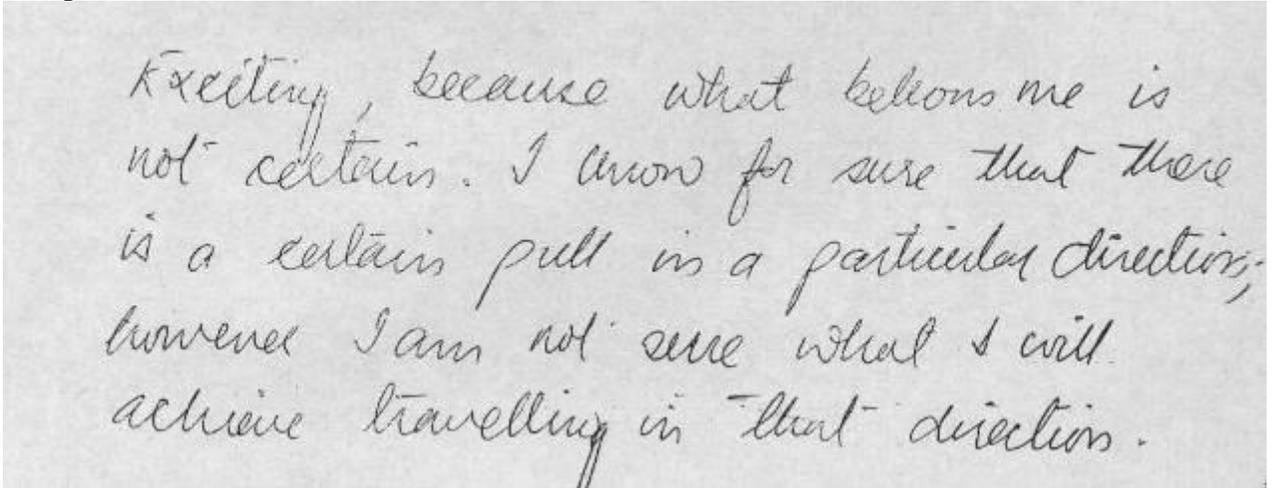


very interesting subject to me. I like reading about psychology, self-development, personality dev. guides etc. So this seems to me a good way of getting insight into what people actually are without their knowing about it. I have read (or rather tried to read) a few books on the subject & have been browsing the net for information

Social Style Classification – Cell 5D, Amiable

The regular, small and precise handwriting slanting to the right indicate that the writer exhibits the positive characteristics of an Amiable. The angularity of the writing also indicates that she is result oriented and hard working and can take stress and conflict if necessary. She is consistent, mature, dependable and steady. Cautious and hesitant to change she is predictable in her response. She looks for security, stability and good relationships with minimum conflicts.

Sample 5: Profession – Human Resources Executive

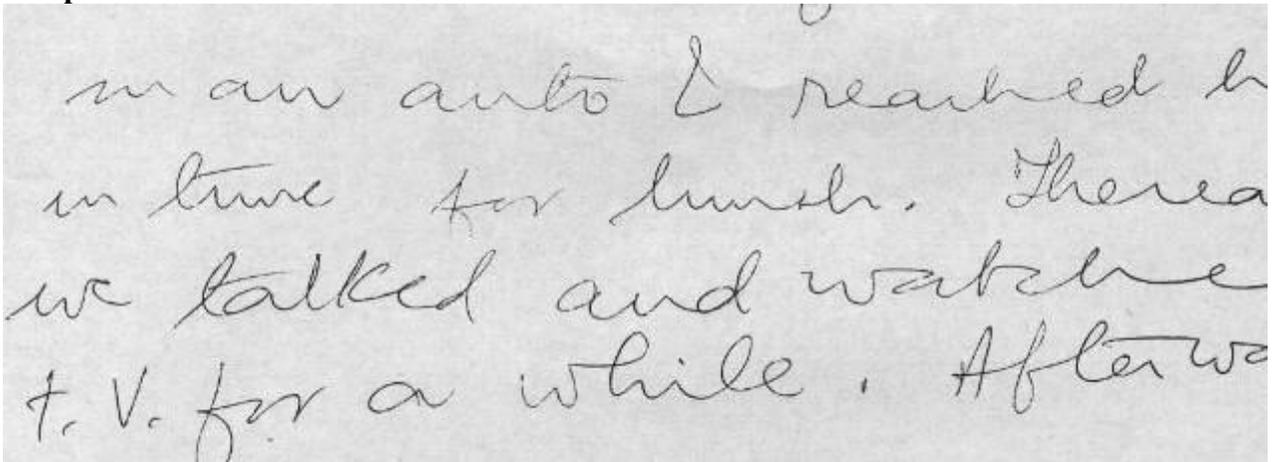


Exciting, because what belongs me is not certain. I know for sure that there is a certain pull in a particular direction; however I am not sure what I will achieve travelling in that direction.

Social Style Classification – Cell 2D, Expressive

Large, right slanting angular and not irregular; the writer is a strong people person-extroverted, expressive and result-oriented. He combines drive for results with empathy for feelings. While he might use direct methods to get results, people tend to view him as assertive rather than aggressive because of his demonstrations of consideration. He is persuasive and gets the cooperation of others. He is materialistic and seeks popularity, power and authority

Sample 6: Profession – Senior Executive

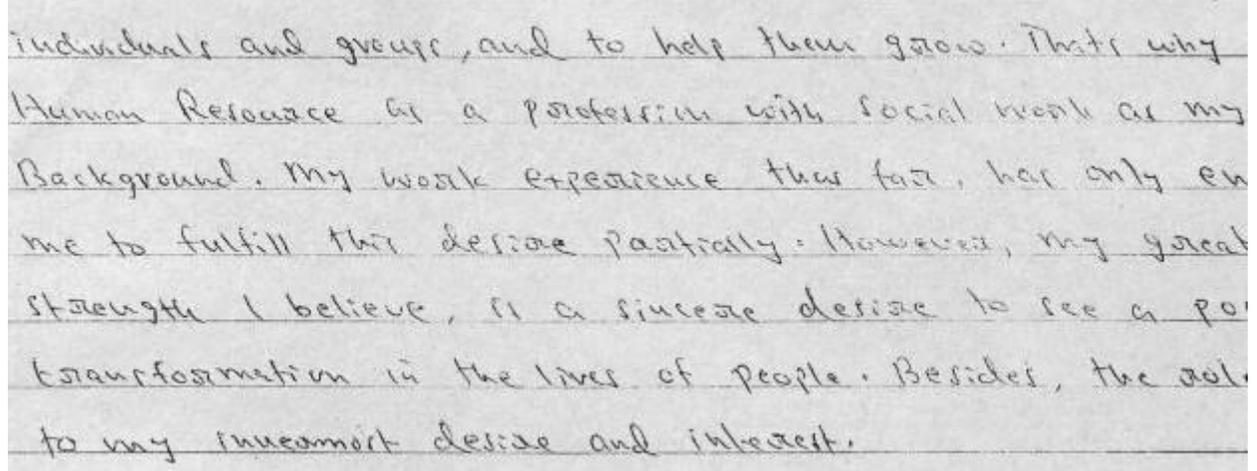


in an auto I reached h in time for lunch. Therea we talked and watched t. v. for a while. After we

Social Style Classification – Cell 1D/E (variable), Expressive

Strongly people oriented, active and somewhat unsystematic. He works through people and leads his team more by empathy than drive. Possessing an outgoing nature, he has the ability to gain the confidence of various types of people. He may overestimate his ability to change the behavior of others. He looks for material comfort, popularity, social recognition and for opportunities to make himself look good.

Sample 7: Profession – Entrepreneur (Financial)

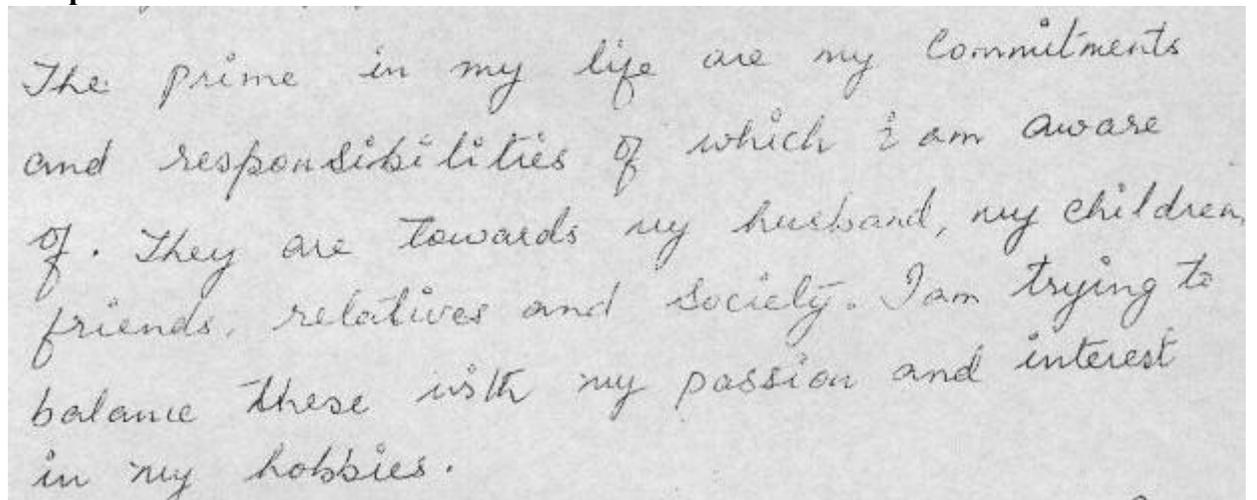


individuals and groups, and to help them grow. That's why Human Resource is a profession with social work as my Background. My work experience thus far, has only enabled me to fulfill this desire partially. However, my greatest strength I believe, is a sincere desire to see a positive transformation in the lives of people. Besides, the job is also to my inmost desire and interest.

Social Style Classification – Cell 5B, Analyst

The small and left slanted writing indicates a strongly self-focused individual who tends to live in a world of his own aspirations. Intellectual and strongly objective, he is concerned with the 'right' answer and may be indecisive in ambiguous situations. He lacks sensitivity to the feelings of others, can be critical and tends to overuse analysis. He looks for opportunities to demonstrate his expertise.

Sample 8: Profession – Housewife

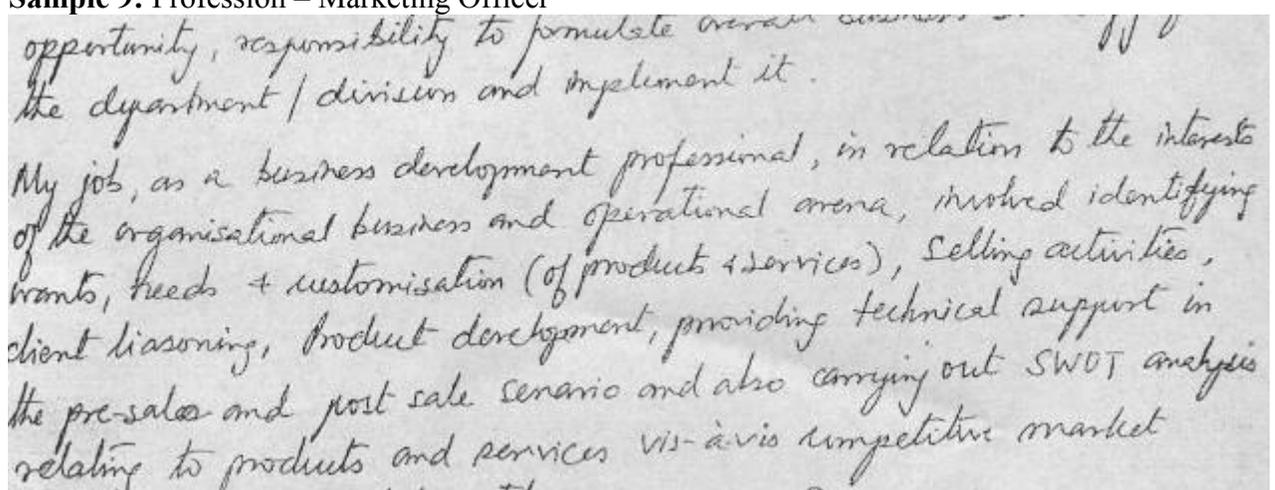


The prime in my life are my commitments and responsibilities of which I am aware of. They are towards my husband, my children, friends, relatives and society. I am trying to balance these with my passion and interest in my hobbies.

Social Style Classification – Cell 5D, Amiable

The small, regular and forward slanting writing is of a conscientious, warm, helpful and sensitive person who reaches out to others. Attentive to the needs of others, people have little fear of being rejected by her. The angularity also indicates the need for results. She appears to be something of a perfectionist who will gently but firmly achieve her objectives

Sample 9: Profession – Marketing Officer



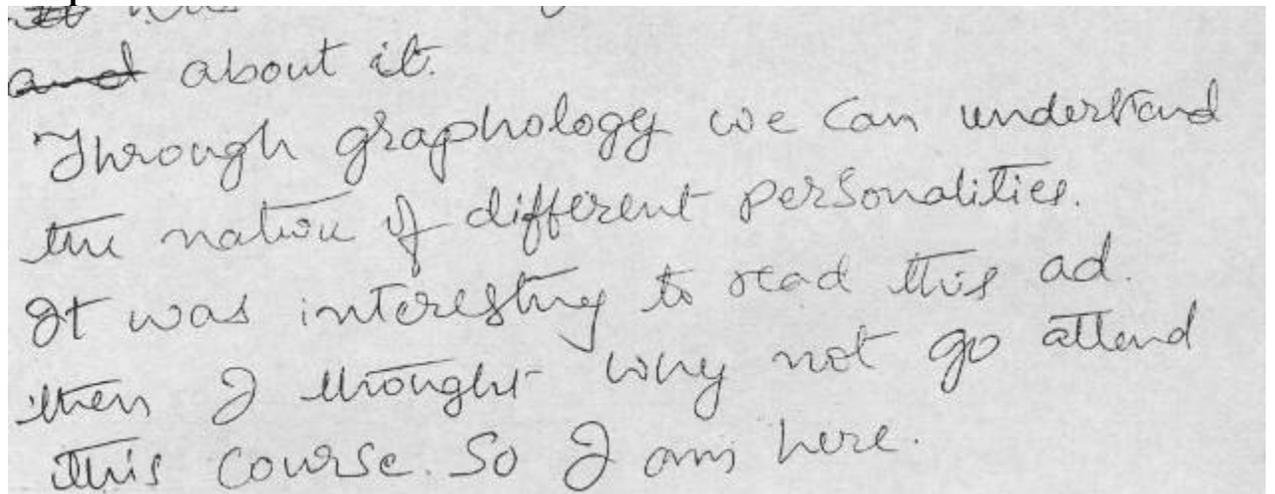
opportunity, responsibility to formulate overall business strategy for the department / division and implement it.

My job, as a business development professional, in relation to the interests of the organisational business and operational arena, involved identifying wants, needs + customisation (of products + services), selling activities, client liaisoning, product development, providing technical support in the pre-sale and post sale scenario and also carrying out SWOT analysis relating to products and services vis-à-vis competitive market.

Social Style Classification – Cell 5D, Amiable

The writer reaches out to others and needs people around him. Gentle, mild and perhaps easily led. Eager to be of service, he tends to be more effort oriented than result oriented. He looks for sincere appreciation of his contribution, security and a stable working environment free from conflict.

Sample 10: Profession – Housewife



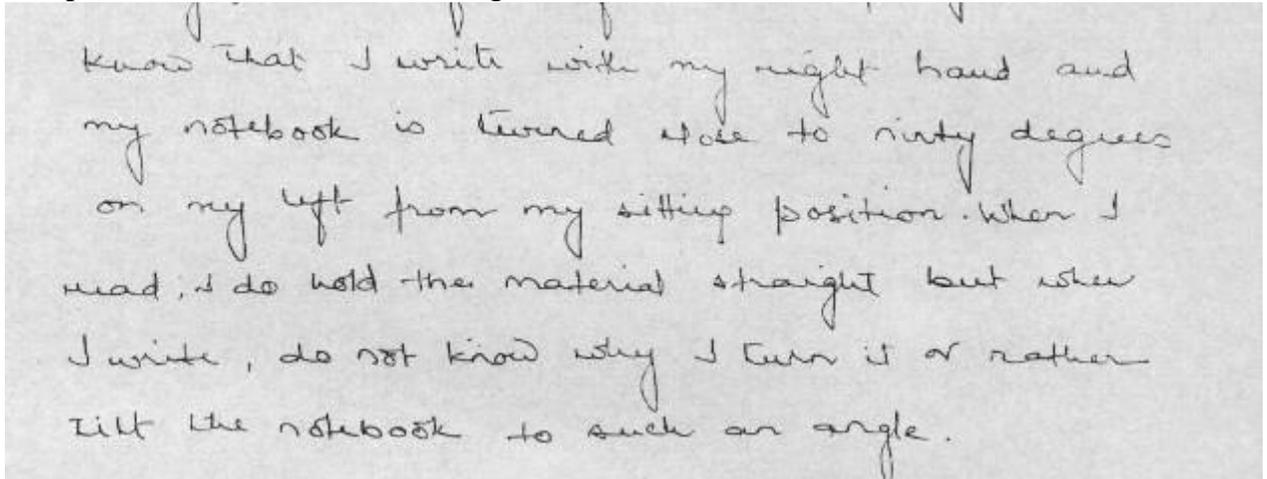
and about it.

Through graphology we can understand the nature of different personalities. It was interesting to read this ad. then I thought why not go attend this course. So I am here.

Social Style Classification – Cell 2C, Driver

The large and mainly vertical handwriting is of one who needs to be in control of her environment. She can be cold and determined to have her way and displays a self-confidence that some might mistake for arrogance. Certainly someone in the 'driver's seat.' She needs authority, social status and prestige.

Sample 11: Profession – Software Engineer

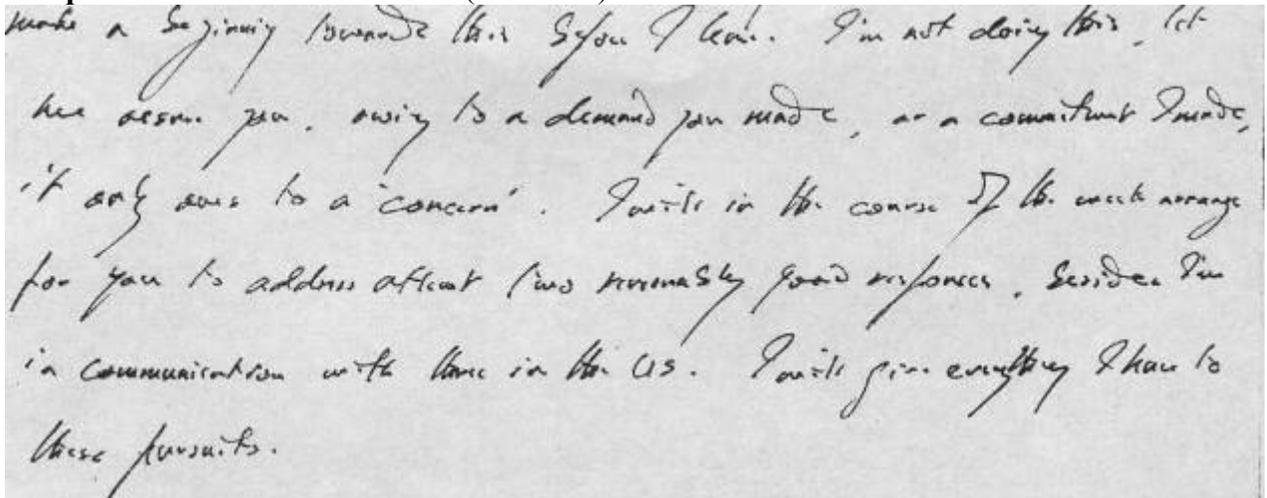


know that I write with my right hand and my notebook is turned about to ninety degrees on my left from my sitting position. When I read, I do hold the material straight but when I write, do not know why I turn it or rather tilt the notebook to such an angle.

Social Style Classification – Cell 5C, **Analyst**

Small, vertical, precise and somewhat angular handwriting that carries all the hallmarks of a cold, logical and investigative analyst who tends to be a specialist in his field. He is reserved and prefers to work alone or on a one-on-one basis. He concentrates on detail and looks for recognition of his expertise

Sample 12: Profession – Unknown (Freelance)

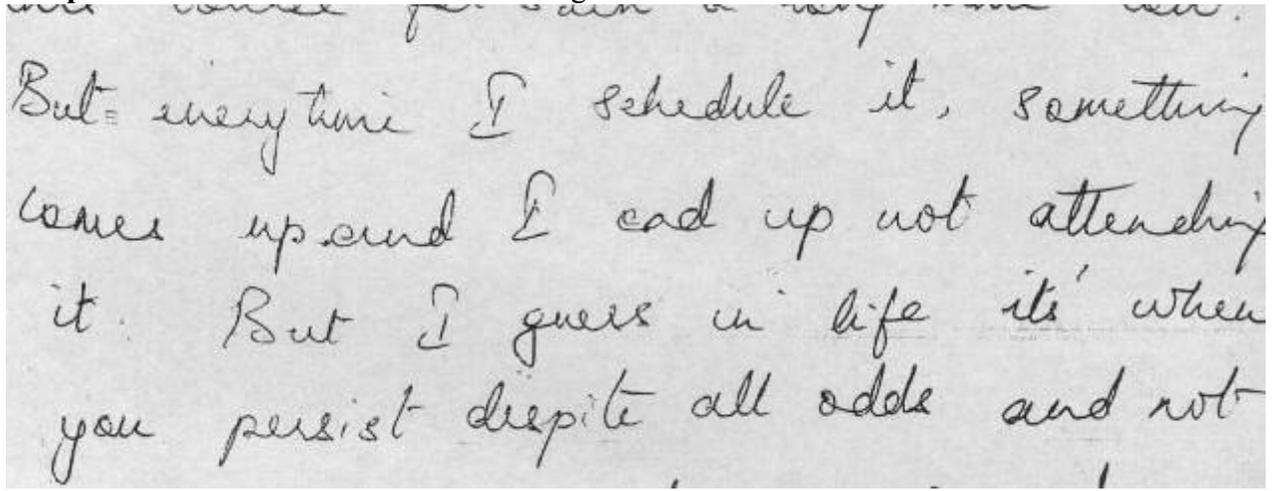


make a beginning towards this before I leave. I'm not doing this, let me assure you, owing to a demand you made, or a commitment I made, it only goes to a 'concern'. I write in the course of the week arrange for you to address atleast two reasonably good responses, besides I'm in communication with them in the US. I write you everything I have to these pursuits.

Social Style Classification – Cell 6E, **Amiable**

This intense, far-forward and tiny handwriting is irregular and illegible. It is the writing of a highly emotional person who appears to be crying out for understanding of his feelings. He needs acceptance by others and security. He lacks confidence and retreats into a small inner world.

Sample 13: Profession – Software Marketing

A photograph of a piece of lined paper with handwritten text in cursive. The text is written in dark ink and is somewhat slanted. The visible text reads: "But every time I schedule it, something comes up and I end up not attending it. But I guess in life it's when you persist despite all odds and not".

But every time I schedule it, something comes up and I end up not attending it. But I guess in life it's when you persist despite all odds and not

Social Style Classification – Cell 3D, **Expressive**

Extroverted, with a balance of empathy and drive for results the writer can reach out to others, form relationships is accepted for his consideration and understanding, while achieving his objectives. While he is competitive, he involves people in the task by using persuasive methods. He is tense and can be impatient when his standards are not met. He seeks prestige, social status and acceptance and material comforts.

Keith J. Rosario
Bangalore
August 2004