

## A User's Guide to the *RGB Profile*

This document will aid in your understanding and use of the colorful graphic you created when you completed the RGB Workstyle Preference Inventory. (You may have already had some guidance and made some discoveries with *QWLC* consultants; this guide may serve as a reminder or even extend your learning.) Before we look at color schemes, however, let's take a minute for a bit of general orientation.

The Profile (to which we refer affectionately as "the RGB") shows its strengths not so much in stimulating insight in *one* person. The real gains lie in lighting up the space between *two or more* people, the space where they interact when working together to achieve successes (and avoid failures) in organizational relationships.

People are usually *hired* for their individual abilities, but they're often *fired* because of their inability to work effectively with others.

*The RGB enhances awareness of the impact on our working relationships of our natural inclinations or working styles.* Depending upon important differences in their response styles, people will vary in areas including:

- Situational structure
- Making decisions
- Change strategies
- Planning time frames
- Being with people
- Preferred activities

We can use these action and reaction categories to compare and contrast tendencies or response patterns. (We use the arbitrary designations, Red, Green and Blue, to avoid implications of superiority or hierarchy. One pattern is not superior to or more desirable than another.) We are demonstrating how Reds, Greens and Blues differ in their approaches to these fundamental organizational challenges.

In most cases, each of us prefers one of the three patterns outlined below. Dominance in one does not exclude capabilities in the others, however. *And it's a good thing! We believe people in high performance groups, teams and organizations draw upon the pluses and effectively manage the minuses in all three patterns.*

Integrated employment of all three patterns is essential for high performance at all levels. Deliberately choosing pattern compositions to match particular challenges enhances effectiveness. Being aware of under-represented or over-represented tendencies means a group or team can draw upon the "less natural" but vitally important secondary or even tertiary capabilities of its members when necessary. Even in a sea of Blue-Green, you may have enough

Red among you to satisfy task requirements!

***A little cautionary note!***

When we describe the Red, Green or Blue tendencies or patterns of response, we do not mean to imply that such things are genetic, given in your natural temperament. The particular pattern dominant in your profile *may* be due to “natural” inclination. And maybe not. You may respond due to the way you and others have defined your organizational role over time. Or your response pattern may be determined by the *culture of your organization*. Your natural inclinations, even what you do best naturally, may not fit into what is defined as acceptable belief and behavior (culture) in your organization. So, you may look at your profile graphic and believe it just doesn’t capture the “real you.”

Examining the tension you might feel in yourself created by the difference between what *you* think versus what the *profile* says can be a powerful stimulus to personal growth and increased effectiveness -- especially if you examine the differences in the context of your organizational relationships. Ask your mates for their ideas on the subject!

With this little bit of general orientation in mind, then, let’s get acquainted with the different patterns. See if the descriptions on the following pages enable you to validate the dominant, second-level and third-level patterns in your personal profile.

***A. Situational structure . . .***

***Reds*** prefer highly structured situations. High levels of clarity are essential, and frustrations will emerge when conditions are ambiguous.

When situations are either unstructured or unclear (or, God forbid, *both*), ***Reds*** will work hard to get things organized and tidy.

Though perhaps more tolerant of unclear and ambiguous situations, ***Greens*** will try to clarify them so as to determine the most appropriate responses.

***Greens*** are often great at seeking and obtaining clarity in the midst of confusion. Structure is not only less important to a ***Blue***, he or she would probably regard it as confining.

Too much structure would bother ***Blues***, because it would constrain the emergence of possibilities, spontaneity or serendipity.

***B. Making decisions . . .***

***Reds*** will decide quickly and select the most efficient alternative based upon previous experience.

They tend to avoid discussions comparing alternatives and prefer a fast decision to a broad and comprehensive one.

As long as someone else's decision can be explained logically, a Red would prefer to execute it and avoid being involved in laborious decision formulation.

Either slow or fast decision making suits *Greens*. It depends on the situation (a theme you'll hear often among Greens!).

They seem easily swayed from one position to another, because they can see the good points of both ends of the spectrum.

In fact, Greens see clearly the available alternatives and may be accused of being wishy-washy, often changing their minds before full implementation.

Because they want to get the decision they favor *implemented*, *Blues* seem to be slower in making decisions. Actually, they may reach a decision quickly but take a lot of time to ensure implementation support.

During that time, they are building relationships and support for the cause. Rather than having alternatives they try one at a time, Blues would try them all at once to see which emerged a winner!

### ***C. Change strategies . . .***

*Reds* tend to resist change, especially when change means "new" processes or procedures. The greater the clarity and precision and the less ambiguity in "new" situations, however, the more likely change will be welcomed as "improvement."

Change often means "having to figure things out," a pursuit Reds find frustrating. They would far rather implement a clear plan.

*Greens* find change good if it is adopted slowly and in "reasonable" increments.

Planned carefully and launched with high probability (read that certainty!) of success, change is great.

*Planning* for change is an ideal activity for Greens because they see the present and the distant future with equal clarity.

*Blues* are eager to change and will rarely do the same thing twice the same way. They will fix what "ain't broke" because change is regarded as good.

Greater ambiguity is preferred to a tightly specified way of doing things.

In fact, when processes are clear and well structured, Blues may introduce *reasonable* possibilities supporting a need for change.

#### ***D. Planning time frames . . .***

Planning in shorter time frames is preferable for **Reds**. Planning for a month or a six-month period is ideal.

Plans ranging over years may frustrate them because they prefer a short-term focus.

Reds will be best at implementing the full range of details in the immediate task, however. Reds rarely miss a close-in deadline.

Intermediate time frames, between six months and a year or so, are fine for **Greens**.

A combination of short and long range is ideal, depending on the conditions. And, since Greens are people-persons and catalysts, they will try to help others develop and implement *their* plans rather than creating plans of their own.

Long range thinking is normal for **Blues**. From a year or two to the end of the next decade are reasonable planning periods.

The joy of imagining all the possibilities makes plans more difficult to implement, but lots of great ideas are generated.

If a Blue does not meet immediate deadlines easily, completing long term projects on target will be a snap.

#### ***E. Being with people . . .***

**Reds** are good followers when they know where the leader is going. And in clear situations, Reds will often take the lead or even lead the charge!

If they must be in groups at all, Reds prefer small ones. One-on-one is better most of the time.

Reds often avoid meetings because they progress too slowly and leave work piling up back at the work station.

**Greens** like to be around people, one-on-one, small groups, crowds, you name it. Great networkers, they really work the room.

They like to be sure everyone is included in the conversation. Greens learn about people and try to improve their relationships with others.

They tell stories, jokes and love playing games that get everyone “involved.”

**Blues** tend to become “natural leaders” in the midst of chaos. They often lack a fear of the unknown and forge ahead when caution might be the wiser tack.

Their boldness in the face of uncertainty will attract followers, however, and the more the merrier!

Groups are preferred over one-on-one situations, and Blues thrive on lots of meetings and hectic schedules.

### ***F. Preferred activities . . .***

**Reds** often find supporting activities and roles ideal. They often feel unappreciated for the roles they play and the contributions they make supporting the efforts of others, however.

Reds’ preference for precision and structure makes numeric calculations or check list completion veritable fun.

Rely on Reds to get things done, help them with construction of a checklist to “make it happen” and then get out of the way. Once Reds understand the task, it will be managed with uncanny thoroughness.

Creating progress charts is an ideal activity. **Greens** are eager to make sure people can “see” where they are in a process or program.

Because of the people connections created, Greens love to correspond or chat, to get and pass information between people who might otherwise never speak to each other.

Any activity that makes connections will be a preference for a true Green. They bridge the gaps and bring together vital ingredients in Reds and Blues who might not link up if left on their own.

Any activity that is innovative or creative provides an ideal outlet for **Blues**. Since they like reinventing (even in cases where things are working well), any activity that leads to change will be welcomed.

Figuring things out (processes, policies, procedures) forms an ideal challenge. But don’t expect a Blue to be around for implementation.

A true Blue is satisfied with invention; application is typically less a challenge. In fact, by the time implementation phases roll around, Blues are probably enmeshed in a new project.

*These brief descriptions should help you recognize yourself and each other in the context of the RGB framework. (A later section of this guide will highlight some interactions among Reds, Greens and Blues worth watching out for.) Important right now, however, is a closer look at the*

*settings in which these patterns take shape.*

### ***G. Context and contradictions . . .***

Organizations in changing environments struggle to satisfy and balance contradictory needs. Stable and predictable processes and programs are desirable because their costs are easier to control and their efficiencies increase with time for continuous improvement. But, especially in turbulent environments where customer demands and other conditions change fast, flexible and innovative responses are also desirable, even essential. Flexible and innovative versus stable and predictable.

In fact, the not-so-famous critter from Dr. Dolittle's voyages, the Pushmi-Pullyu, should be the universal mascot for organizations. This Llama-like beast with a head on both ends struggled to respond to competing cues and stimuli -- a situation favoring paralysis in his case. In organizations, *legitimate, yet contradictory* needs compete for attention and resources. We have a paradox.

If you think about matching and mismatching Reds, Greens and Blues with these paradoxical challenges, things can get pretty interesting, yes? Oh, what tangled webs we weave! Do not despair, however, as there is a way out. An organizational culture aligned with the paradoxical and changing needs of living systems will prevail.

If the organization's culture supports the inclinations of Reds, Greens and Blues to find their ways to roles in which they are well suited, things work. Where there is a good fit between people and challenges, the organization has moved a long way toward effectiveness. There may be a pot of gold in this color scheme. On the other hand...

### ***H. Colors can clash...***

Two Blues might compete for the right to spell out *the* guiding plan or vision. A Red might try to draw a Blue out of the sky and onto the ground, and vice versa. Depending upon which one is the supervisor, a process could be stuck in the mud or up in the air. Two Greens might argue over strategy and miss a chance to do something with a great idea. Of course, the clash will probably be moderated by strong needs to tend to the relationship. Reds may argue over which details are important and which procedure more efficient. Greens and Blues work well in most cases, but they can overlook critical details a Red would spot in a New York second. In fact, when Red and Blue don't compete, their collaboration can leave all the bases covered.

One could speculate on the match-mismatch theme for hours. We don't recommend it. Instead, find out where you and your colleagues are in the RGB scheme, and then see if this insight will lead the way to new tolerance and understanding and, finally, to new levels of productivity and satisfaction in working together!