

Newsday

Leadership Brings Out Our True Colors

By Patricia Kitchen, Change@Work

SO, WHAT DO YOU suppose Diane Sawyer and I have in common? Sure, we're both journalists -one just slightly higher-profile than the other. And sure, we used to go to the same hairdresser. But what we really share is the natural inclination to be what Shoya Zichy calls "green advocates." In Zichy's new book, "Women and the Leadership Q," she outlines eight leadership personality styles.

As representatives of the "green" group (about 17 percent of the population), Diane and I are -listen to this -"empathetic, humanistic and expressive," according to Zichy, who is a green advocate herself. We "see life as an unfolding cosmic pageant that presents infinite possibilities for people to grow and develop."

Her book goes a long way toward dispelling the myth that women share a common "female" style, often associated with nurturing and consensus building. In fact, she says, about 35 percent of the female population are "competitive, tough, analytical and task-driven...They do not take criticism personally. They handle confrontation with ease." (Bulldozers and all the more power to them -just like some, but not all, of the guys.)

What's more, even if your natural inclination is "green," you may still regularly dip in and out of abilities associated with other styles. As we mature, we actually seek opportunity to do just that, sometimes on the job, sometimes through volunteer work or other outside interests.

Still, it's most important to be able to identify our natural styles. "Self-knowledge," she says, "leads to self-management, which leads to self-confidence, which leads to accomplishment." That's why she also provides brief descriptions of each type's potential blind spots, as well as prescriptions for circumventing them.

Zichy, a former marketer with major financial institutions, is a Manhattan-based executive coach and training consultant who has expertise working with the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, a personality coding system developed by the mother and daughter team of Isabel Myers and Katharine Briggs.

For her book, Zichy interviewed 38 powerful women - Diane Sawyer, among them, as well as Hillary Rodham Clinton, Washington journalist Helen Thomas, playwright Wendy Wasserstein and several chief executives and other senior executives. The other styles she describes are: Golds (46 percent of the population), who are "grounded, realistic and accountable." These are the people, many of them administrators, who keep organizations ticking and who place a high value on order, planning, schedules, details. There's a blind spot for golds - they are not crazy about change, abstractions, surprises or

unproven, new ideas. This group includes "trustees," many of whom choose professions such as pharmacy, medicine, law or the military, and "conservators," who may be drawn to sales, private banking, human resources, catering or teaching. A famous gold? Elizabeth Dole.

Blues (10 percent of the population) are "theoretical, competitive and always driven to acquire more knowledge and competence." These skeptics and strategists go in big for logic and for precise thought and language - and they love improving ideas or companies. As for being drawn to sticking around to maintain things, fuhgeddaboutit. Nor are they naturally strong in the appreciation and explanation departments.

"Blue strategists" may find themselves in law, consulting, architecture or the corporate world. And "blue innovators" are drawn to areas such as marketing, real estate, journalism, academia and the entrepreneurial world. A famous blue? Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Reds (27 percent of the population) are "action-oriented, spontaneous and focused on 'now.'" As lovers of freedom and surprises, these people - great to have around during crises - excel at troubleshooting and negotiating. Of course, they tend to turn up their noses at schedules, hierarchies and long-term planning. "Red tacticians" often pursue careers as real-estate developers, stockbrokers, coaches and emergency-room workers. And "red realists" include politicians, travel agents, professional athletes, special-events coordinators. A famous red? N.J. Gov. Christie Whitman. And back to Diane's and my type-the greens, who can be "mentors" or "advocates." What, you might be wondering, are the blind spots that we advocates have to watch out for? Well, taking criticism personally, not prioritizing and the tendency to "start too many projects and get sidetracked." Ouch!

If you are interested in some similar self-revelations, you might want to catch Zichy when she speaks Wednesday at 12:30 p.m. in the Barnes and Noble store at Citicorp Center in Manhattan. Or on Jan. 9 when she leads a class at the Learning Annex in Manhattan.