



6 Things a DISC Certification Should Give You

by **Dr. Michael Abelson**

Facilitating dozens of DISC Certifications with 100s of now DISC certified practitioners has taught me a number of things about what makes for a quality DISC certification course. Below are six key components you should find in any quality DISC Certification experience. We build each into our DISC Certification course. You should make sure each is built into the certification course you choose.

#1: The Availability of a Quality DISC Assessment & Knowledge on How to Use the Report

In several other articles I have written about DISC, I point out 1) there are dozens of DISC assessments, 2) some are better than others, and 3) only a few are really accurate enough that you would want to be associated with that DISC. If you don't have an accurate DISC, nothing else works. You can't build a house worth owning on a shoddy foundation. In a study we conducted of 10 team building programs attended by 295 people, our DISC was reported by 93.6% of them to be 90 to 100% accurate. We are proud of the quality of the DISC we use. Make sure you will be proud to be associated with the DISC attached to the certification you choose.

Ask about the DISC assessment itself, not just about the certification. Can the DISC be used for the purposes for which you want to use it? For example, if you want to use it for hiring, does it have statistics that show it does not discriminate on the USA protected Equal Employment Opportunity (EEOC) classifications. You don't have to know what the classifications are. Ask the certification program. If they can't tell you, immediately look for another certification course. They should have statistics their DISC does not "adversely impact" the hiring process and does not discriminate when used for hiring. The DISC we use has that evidence. Theirs should also. Additionally,



if you want to use DISC with teams, does this company have an individual AND team assessment or just an individual assessment report? No team report means you should be moving on to look into enrolling in another certification course.

Ask about the reliability or consistency of the DISC tool. If a person's behavior does not change, the results of their answers to the assessment questions should result in a similar DISC profile time after time. If their behavior changes, so should the DISC profile scores. If they give you a reliability score for their DISC, make sure it is at least .8. Reliabilities range from 0% to 100% or 0 to 1.0. They never have a negative score. If the answer here is not in the .8 to 1.0 range, it's also time to look for another DISC certification course. You do not want to get certified on an inferior DISC assessment. Again, ours meets the criteria.

Does the certification course train you on how to use their DISC report? If there isn't at least a little training

on how to use the assessment report itself, or at least videos where you can learn outside of the course how to use the assessment report, yes you got it, start looking for another certification course. It's not very useful to be taught the concepts of DISC if you are not also taught how to use the tool (s) that measures those concepts.

#2: You Should Receive Knowledge of Key DISC Concepts, Strengths & Limitations & How to Use the Report to Motivate & Manage

The DISC certification course should, at a minimum, teach the general characteristics of at least the four major D.I.S.C. categories and ideally the 8 sub-categories. In addition, there is a huge need to have the knowledge of strengths and limitations, how to communicate with, motivate and manage the four major or 8 DISC sub-categories. Knowing the value people bring to the organization and their ideal environment are additional bonuses.

Some certification programs also offer training in motives and/or attitudes. This training is very valuable. Why? Think of two people with very similar DISC profiles, but who are very different from each other. Motives or values of each sometimes explains part or much of that difference.

#3: Practice for Better Understanding the Concepts – Make Sure It Uses Cases

Most people don't learn only from listening to a "talking head." This is especially true for people who aren't used

to sitting in a classroom or behind a computer during an online course. They (we) learn from doing and using. Cases that use the material being studied is one of the best ways to learn and remember materials. Harvard University's MBA program was built on the reputation of the case method. They, and 100s of other programs, still use the case method because it works.

We have an interesting twist on how we use the case method. We have our certification candidates working with one or two other people examining cases. Usually two groups examine the same case. Everyone then reports back their answers to the larger group and the instructor corrects (tactfully) and expands upon comments from the certification candidates. We actually rotate people from group to group, so everyone has an opportunity to learn from numerous certification candidates as well as the course faculty. It makes for lively, memorable, and extremely useful discussions and learning. We spend between 40 and 50% of the certification course time on examining cases.

#4: Practice Using Concepts & the Report in Real Life – Make Sure The Certification Uses Role Plays

One of the most fun and useful parts of any training is role playing. This way participants have the opportunity to experience and learn from activities using the DISC concepts. The best role plays are real uses of the tools. In a certification course this is relatively easy. Participants can use their reports to "role play" better understanding of others in the course. Role plays can use the DISC



reports as part of a hiring or other interview. Sections that focus on time management, motivation, enhancing communication and others can be used to have a realistic “role play” or true conversation about how each candidate can benefit from using the report. The types of real “role plays” goes on and on. I strongly recommend making sure the certification program uses role plays with reports to learn how to use the concepts, the reports, AND learn more about yourself.

#5: Built-in Continual Growth Opportunities

Are there any follow up opportunities? For example, does the certifying organization have a next level course so you can learn even more or take a deeper dive about the DISC concepts or the DISC tool? Ours does. Do they have videos available so you can relearn things you did not pick up during the certification course itself? We also have this as part of our certification. No one learns everything the first time they hear it. There is nothing wrong with listening over and over again to the same material. Repetition works.

#6: Instruction Led By a Person Extremely Knowledgeable of DISC & Effective Teaching Techniques

More and more certification programs are on CDs, videos, online, and other non-interactive techniques. That may be an efficient use of time, but it is far from an effective learning approach when it is the only means of learning in the certification course. Some allow for chat rooms where you can ask someone who really isn't very knowledgeable questions. They may be able to quote from the materials you already have, but they don't have the experience and knowledge of a true educator who

has engrossed themselves in DISC, used it in the field, and/or written articles or books about DISC. Those types of individuals don't staff chat lines. They only appear in class environments. Would you go to a psychologist or a medical doctor who learned from an online course? Of course not! Why would you think an online experience would sufficiently prepare you to use the DISC. It does not.

If you are going to pay for a certification course, we strongly recommend actually learning from a quality, qualified person who has expertise in teaching and using DISC as a tool. Anything less, and you won't be getting a course that prepares you to be an effective practitioner of DISC. It's your reputation and once you loss it, It's very difficult to earn it back.



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