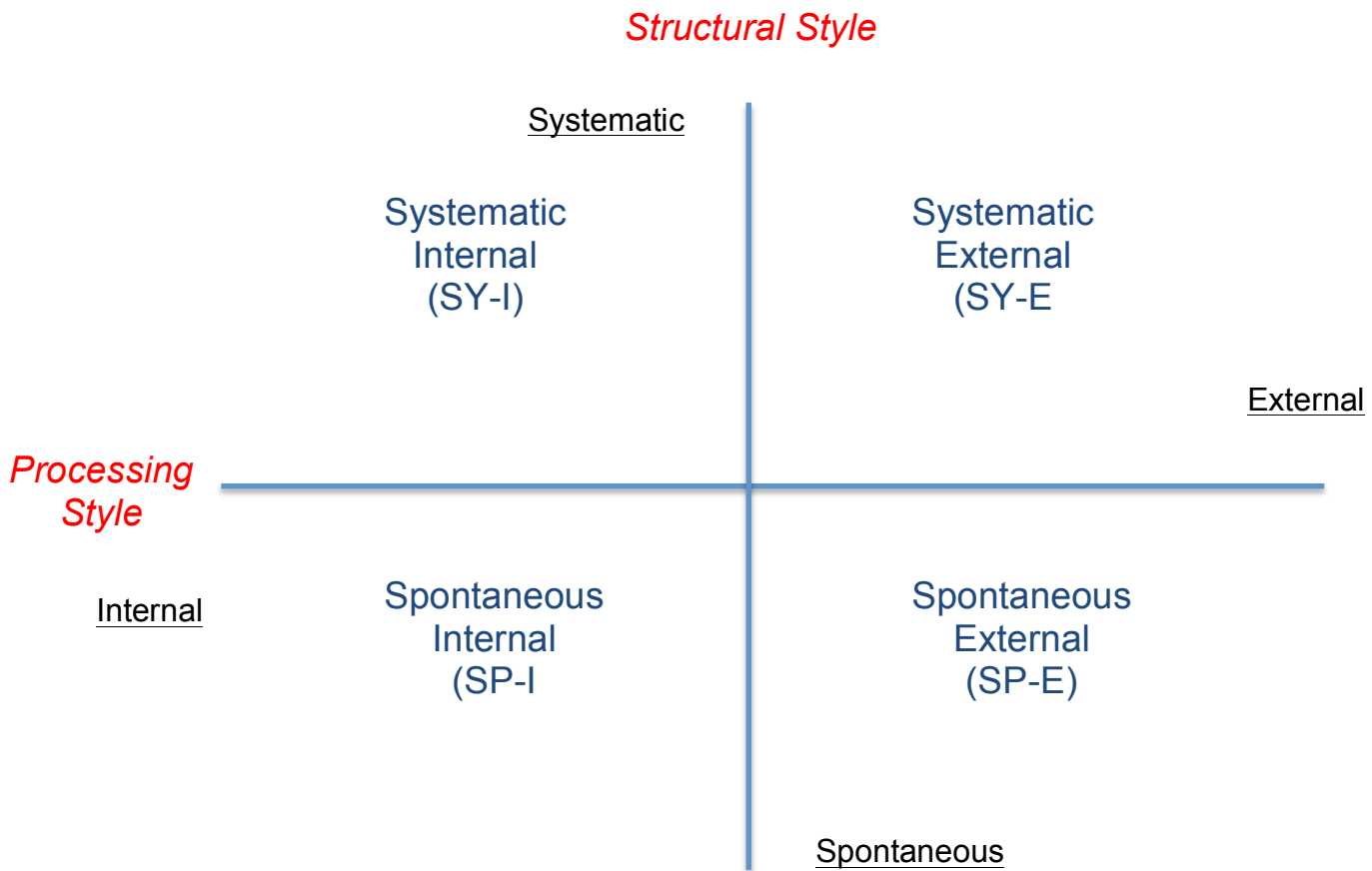


Decision Making Inventory

Johnson & Coscarelli

The work done by Johnson and Coscarelli (2007) in the area of decision-making style suggests that the most effective leaders are the ones who are able to adapt their decision-making style over time as their roles and responsibilities change.

In their model there are two major components: one called Structural Style and the other called Processing style. Both components are comprised of two different approaches on a continuum for making decisions. For structural style the two are a systematic approach and a spontaneous. For processing style the two are an internal approach and an external approach. These four components can be combined to make four different decision-making styles: systematic internal, systematic external, spontaneous internal, and spontaneous external. A visual representation of the model is shown below.



Coscarelli, W. (2007). *The Decision-Making Style Inventory*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Johnson & Coscarelli- Elements of Decision-Making Styles

Systematic: Systematics move from goal to goal in a deliberate manner. They are very aware of setting goals or tasks and are not likely to deviate from the goal until it is accomplished. When faced with alternatives, the systematic will weigh all alternatives before choosing. Having made a choice, they will stay with it for some time until more data are collected that will lead them to reconsider this choice. They think in a logical manner and approach their decisions in an analytical way. They are cautious in choosing (though this does not mean slow in choosing) and having made a choice will analyze and react to it by assessing the corresponding parts before reaching a final evaluation of the event. They will tend to be more tempered in their assessment of the event – avoiding extremes.

Spontaneous: The spontaneous will move from goal to goal easily and without deliberate thought. An established goal is easily forgotten or changed. When faced with a decision, the spontaneous will either imagine themselves living with such alternatives in order to evaluate them or act so as to be in that situation. One gets the sense they must live with the idea, however briefly, to understand what it might be like. Based on this understanding (most likely a feeling) they will accept or reject an alternative. Their thought process are thought chaining. They will often begin a conversation on one idea and then switch to another. Their reactions to events tend to be holistic – they will either like or dislike something and evaluate it in a global sense without reference to component parts.

Internal: The internal will prefer to organize their thoughts privately before speaking. If pressed to discuss an issue they have not thought about, they may become confused or irritated. The internal has need for introspection before making a decision. Internal will tend to tell you what they have already thought about without reference to either alternatives that were considered, though they can discuss these alternatives if asked. These people think then talk.

External: The external person will need to think out loud. They will be certain of a decision unless they have had the opportunity to talk about it. The more complex the decision; (i.e., the more information that needs to be processed) the greater the need for discussion. This behavior should not be confused with the spontaneous characteristic of imagining or acting on alternatives. but rather recognized to hear their words in order to process them. Externals will talk out loud to themselves when no one else is around to listen. These people think and talk simultaneously.

Ways to Offset Decidophobia

Questions to ask:

1. What exactly am I deciding?
 - a. What are the core aspects of the problem?
 - b. What are the boundaries of the decision?

2. What do I need to know?
 - a. What information is pertinent to the situation?
 - b. Where can I find this information?
 - c. How can I make sense of it after I have it?

3. How can I finally decide?
 - a. Select the best alternative
 - b. Check my intuition – does it “feel right?”
 - c. Talk with others
 - d. Think about it for a while
 - e. Gather more information if it is needed

4. How can I implement my decision?
 - a. Find out what steps are needed now
 - b. Determine what action steps are needed later.

Decision-making Styles: Suggestions for Advisors*

Spontaneous External

- Help them trace how they arrived at their decision
- Who influenced their decision?
- On what kind of information are they basing their decision? What additional information do they need?
- How does their decision “feel”?
- Help them become aware of their “thought-chaining
- Listen and reflect feelings when they talk
- Help them commit to a goal that seems realistic and obtainable

Spontaneous Internal

- Ask how they arrived at their decision
- Be prepared for pauses in the conversation
- Help them find the logic in their thinking
- What resources did they use to gather information? What additional information do they need?
- Be aware of silent “thought-chaining”
- Ask them to think about their feelings and talk about them
- Give them time to think before responding to issues new to them
- Help them commit to a goal that seems realistic and obtainable

Systematic External

- Ask how they arrived at their decision
- What were their sources of information?
- Who influenced their decision?
- How long have they been thinking about this decision?
- How does the decision “feel”?
- Help them become aware of their “thought-chaining
- What long-range goals have they established?
- How will they feel if they need to change plans?

Systematic Internal

- Ask them how they arrived at their decision
- What were their sources of information?
- Be prepared to pause in the conversation
- How long have they been thinking about the decision?
- Ask them to think about their feelings and talk them
- Give them time to think before responding to issues new to them
- What long-range goals have they established?
- How will they respond if they need to change plans?

* from Johnson and Coscarelli, 2007

