

Interpersonal Influence Inventory

How do you "come across" to others?



ASSERTIVE



PASSIVE



AGGRESSIVE

Theoretical
Background

HRDQ

Interpersonal Influence Inventory



An Excerpt from the
Facilitator Guide
Fourth Edition

HRDQ

Background Information

The core of the III is derived from leadership and persuasive communication literature. The literature suggests that direct expression of one's views, coupled with consideration for others, can help improve individual and organizational functioning. This type of behavior is often called assertive behavior.

Alberti (1977) defines assertiveness as:

Behavior that enables a person to act in his or her own best interests, to stand up for him- or herself without undue anxiety, to express his or her honest feelings comfortably, or to exercise his or her own rights without denying the rights of others we call assertive behavior.

Alberti (1977) also makes several important points about assertiveness, as follows:

- Assertiveness is a characteristic of behavior, not of a person: Individuals are not born assertive. Rather, assertiveness is a collection of skills that can be learned.
- Assertiveness is person- and situation-specific, not universal: No one behaves assertively or non-assertively 100% of the time. There are particular situations in which assertive behavior is more likely to occur.
- Assertiveness must be viewed in a cultural and situational context: Assertive behavior is in the eye of the beholder. What we call assertive in the United States may be viewed as rude in other cultures. Different situations call for different behaviors.
- Assertiveness is predicated on the ability of the individual to choose freely his or her actions: Assertive behavior is only possible if individuals have free choice. Individuals are often so constrained by the situation that assertive behavior is prohibited.
- Assertiveness is a characteristic of socially effective, non-hurtful behavior: Assertive behavior is not aimed at getting one's own way or intended to harm others in order to fulfill one's own desires.

Interpersonal Influence Model

It is perhaps easiest to understand assertiveness by examining the behaviors that produce influence styles and by contrasting assertiveness with other influence styles. Those behaviors are the basis of the Interpersonal Influence Model, from which the III was developed.

When one attempts to influence another, two dimensions of behavior produce an influence style. The dimensions of behavior are openness in communication and consideration for others.

Openness in Communication

Openness is an individual's willingness to disclose to another his or her thoughts, feelings, past experiences, and reactions. People are willing to disclose information about themselves to varying degrees. At one end of the spectrum are people who disclose very little, playing their cards "close to the vest." At the other end are people who speak their thoughts and feelings directly and fully.

Consideration for Others

Consideration means an individual's willingness to accord to others the same rights he or she expects for him- or herself. At one extreme are people who have very little respect for the opinions, feelings, and reactions of others. At the other extreme are people who defend and attempt to preserve the rights of others as strongly as they do their own.

The amount of openness and consideration that people show in their behavior determines the influence style they use. Depending on the relative use of openness and consideration, one of four influence patterns or styles results. These patterns are shown in figure 4.

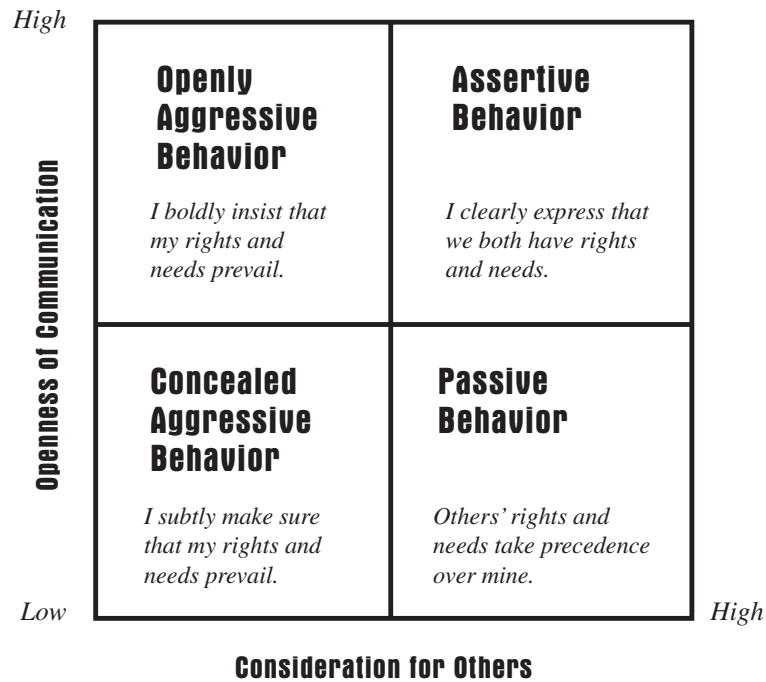


Figure 4. Interpersonal Influence Model

The four influence styles resulting from openness in communication and consideration for others can best be described by four indicators of influence style: (1) thoughts, (2) emotions, (3) nonverbal behavior, and (4) verbal behavior. The four influence styles are described on the following pages in terms of these four factors.

Assertive Behavior

Thoughts	Assertive behavior is accompanied by thoughts of self-confidence and a belief that all individuals have rights. Individuals who behave assertively believe that their desires should not be denied or pursued at the expense of others.
Emotions	Individuals behaving assertively are even-tempered. Any anger or frustration they feel is recognized and directed with control at the behavior or situation that produced it, not at other people.
Nonverbal-Behavior	Assertive nonverbal behavior consists of an upright, comfortable posture; direct eye contact; and appropriate tone of voice.
Verbal-Behavior	Assertive verbal behavior is clear, direct, and concise. Individuals speak in the first person and express themselves in an assertive manner. Their speech directly expresses their views while leaving an opening for alternative points of view.

The following Inventory items assess Assertive Behavior:

1. I believe I have the right to say “no” to others without feeling guilty.
5. I do not have difficulty maintaining eye contact with others.
9. I let people know when I disagree with them.
13. I express anger to others at the time it is most appropriate to do so.
17. I don’t mind asking for help when I feel I need it.
21. I am able to be up-front about my needs without feeling guilty.
25. I am able to express my feelings honestly and directly.
29. I accord others the same rights I accord myself.
33. I make decisions when I have a reasonable amount of information, even though I may be wrong.
37. I am not as concerned about winning as I am about negotiating reasonable arrangements and relationships with others.

Passive Behavior

Thoughts Individuals who behave passively believe that they should not speak their minds, either because they do not have confidence in themselves or they do not want to disturb the relationship. They do not wish to disagree, and they believe that they are inadequate. Passive individuals have concluded that others have rights but they do not.

Emotions Passive behavior entails hiding one's feelings from others. Feelings of victimization and depression are common. Resentment and anger held inside may eventually build to a breaking point, at which time the passive person may become aggressive.

Nonverbal-Behavior The nonverbal passive style consists of slumped posture, downcast eyes, nervous gestures, and similar behaviors.

Verbal-Behavior The passive style of behavior is expressed with many qualifiers such as, "I am probably wrong, but ..." or "If you wouldn't mind ..." A weak voice or stilted speech may be used. Passive verbal behavior puts down the speaker by belittling his or her opinion.

The following Inventory items assess Passive Behavior:

2. When I am angry, I keep my feelings to myself.
6. I'm afraid to admit that I don't know how to do something I am expected to do.
10. When people don't keep their commitments, I am reluctant to tell them I'm upset.
14. I feel uncomfortable when someone compliments my work.
18. I try to behave in ways that will make me popular with others.
22. I have trouble turning down people's requests.
26. I tend to be uncomfortable in unfamiliar surroundings.
30. I feel guilty when I have to ask others to do their share.
34. I have difficulty maintaining eye contact.
38. I don't like to say things directly that might hurt people's feelings.

Concealed Aggressive Behavior

Thoughts Concealed aggressive behavior is accompanied by hostile thoughts that are also found in openly aggressive behavior. The difference between the two styles is only in the expression of those thoughts. Concealed aggressive behavior involves thoughts about getting back at the other person in a devious fashion.

Emotions Concealed aggressive behavior is accompanied by hostility, anger, and tension, similar to openly aggressive behaviors.

Nonverbal-Behavior Rigid posture and glaring eye contact are characteristic of concealed aggressive behavior. The nonverbal behavior is controlled and icy as opposed to the more physical, openly aggressive behavior.

Verbal-Behavior Concealed aggressive behavior includes insults and threats, but they are aimed indirectly at others. Full and direct expression of anger is suppressed, but indirect anger is evident. Gossip and even sabotage are likely.

The following Inventory items assess Concealed Aggressive Behavior:

3. If my rights are violated, I find a subtle but sure way to get even.
7. When others annoy me, I say nothing, but I show my displeasure through my body language.
11. I like to control others with behind-the-scenes maneuvers.
15. When people take advantage of me, I silently even the score.
19. I don't disagree directly with others, but I make sure that they know when I'm upset with them.
23. If I don't agree with my boss, I may find a way to drag my feet quietly on projects he or she wants done.
27. I express my anger through various characteristic facial expressions.
31. If I don't like a person, I find a round-about means of letting him or her know.
35. When I am angry with someone, I shut him or her out.
39. I prefer indirect means of controlling others.

Openly Aggressive Behavior

Thoughts People who behave aggressively believe that they have rights, but others do not. They think that they should always be in control and that they are never wrong. They worry about themselves, but are not afraid of hurting others.

Emotions The feelings accompanying openly aggressive behavior are those of anger, hostility, and resentment. Individuals who behave aggressively feel that the world is against them. They are under stress and feel frustrated.

Nonverbal-Behavior Aggressive behavior is usually accompanied by a fighting stance. Individuals glare at others, maintain rigid and tense posture, and point and shake their fists.

Verbal-Behavior Individuals behaving aggressively speak in a loud and haughty tone of voice. They use insults and derogatory comments. Verbal abuse is common. Openly aggressive behavior involves direct, forceful, and rude interactions with others.

The following Inventory items assess Openly Aggressive Behavior:

4. I make sure others know that I am superior to them.
8. I am a demanding person.
12. I am not afraid to be rude to others.
16. If I have something to say that I think is important, I will interrupt a conversation.
20. I do not hesitate to accuse others when I believe I have reason to.
24. I stare people down.
28. I point my finger or use other gestures to add emphasis to my assertions.
32. I like to be in control of every situation.
36. My anger tends to be explosive.
40. I believe you must show others your strength regardless of the situation if you want to command their respect.

Factors Leading to Styles of Influence

Influence styles consist of specific behaviors that individuals choose to use. Therefore, it is helpful to know what factors cause individuals to develop particular influence styles. The model in figure 5 shows several of these factors.



Figure 5. Factors Affecting Influence Style

Individual Factors

Past Experience. Throughout an individual's life, he or she learns which behaviors lead to positive rewards. This learning can take one of three forms: associative learning, reinforcement, or modeling.

Associative learning occurs when an individual associates a feeling with a behavior without really thinking about it. For instance, aggressive behavior may produce a feeling of tension in the individual. If this continues to happen, the individual will automatically feel tense at the hint of aggressive behavior. The individual may then avoid aggressive behavior without really thinking about it.

Learning by reinforcement occurs when individuals learn the consequences of their behavior. When an individual acts, there is a consequence of that action. The consequence may take the form of reward or punishment. For example, if an individual behaves assertively and receives what he or she desires, the individual is rewarded. If assertive behavior regularly leads to rewards, the individual is likely to behave assertively.

Learning through modeling does not require that the individual perform an action and receive a reward or punishment. Instead, the individual learns the consequences of behavior by watching someone else perform an action and receive a reward or punishment. For example, an individual may watch a co-worker assert herself by asking for a raise she deserves. If she obtains the raise (a reward), the individual will learn that assertive behavior produces rewards. Thus, even though the individual has never tried to act assertively, he or she may do so in the future because he or she has learned that assertive behavior produces positive results.

Attitudes and Beliefs. As Zuker (1983) points out, the internal messages we send ourselves greatly influence our behavior. It is difficult for us to act assertively if we believe that we have no right to do so. Many beliefs that are learned from our culture work against our ability to act assertively and cause us to act more passively. Fears are a major inhibitor of assertive behavior; many people fear rejection if they express their opinions. For example, they fear losing friendships if they express disagreement with or disappointment in others and believe that others will be hurt by their assertiveness.

Another major inhibitor to assertiveness is feeling guilty when one has to say “no.” According to Kelley (1979), guilt is the number one inhibitor to assertive behavior. People feel an intense obligation to do what is asked, especially in a work environment. It is an effort to overcome guilt. Attitudes and beliefs work toward assertive behavior if the individual believes that he or she has the right to voice requests, disagreements, and pride.

Self-Confidence. Self-confidence is necessary if a person is to stand up for his or her own rights. Self-confidence refers to an individual’s feeling of self-worth and importance. Feelings of inadequacy may lead to passive or aggressive styles of behavior. Some people feel that they are worthless and therefore may not assert their rights at all. Others may try to regain feelings of self-worth by stepping on others. If one has self-confidence, however, assertive behavior is possible. Self-confidence and assertion feed on each other. Self-confidence enables assertion, which, in turn, boosts self-confidence (Kelley, 1979).

Situational Factors

Rewards in the Environment. The work environment in which individuals act contains certain rewards and punishments for different influence styles. Rewards in the workplace may take the form of verbal praise, acceptance, pay, or office space, for example. As an individual becomes socialized in a new work environment, he or she learns which behaviors will most likely lead to rewards. Unfortunately, assertive behavior is not always rewarded. Individuals may learn that those who obey orders and do not rock the boat end up succeeding. There are times when aggressive behavior may bring rewards in the form of attention and praise. Assertive behavior, however, is more likely to bring rewards over the long run if it is used effectively.

Costs of Influence Style. There are costs associated with each influence style, especially assertiveness. It takes time and energy to figure out what solutions will produce positive rewards. Phrasing one’s words carefully also takes more thought than just blurting out in anger. It is usually easier to sit back and say nothing than to speak up when something seems amiss. An individual must be willing and able to spend the time and energy it takes to behave assertively. At times the situation may not allow for this. However, the long-term costs of behaving aggressively or passively are greater than the immediate costs of assertive behavior.

Rules and Laws. Within a company or society there are rules and laws by which individuals abide. These rules limit the behaviors that are exhibited. Rules against assault prevent aggressive acts that might otherwise occur. In addition, rules against sexual harassment and unfair bias can create an environment in which consideration of others’ rights is not neglected.

Consequences of Influence Style

The influence style that a person uses will affect the individual's feelings and thoughts; others' feelings, thoughts, and behaviors; and the functioning of the organization. The assertive individual is more likely to achieve goals because being assertive means being more expressive and able to make choices. The assertive individual will not always attain his or her goals but will at least have expressed his or her views honestly and directly. Self-concept is also likely to be enhanced because the individual is true to his or her feelings. If a person never expresses his or her views, as in passive behavior, he or she is less likely to achieve the desired goals. Similarly, hostile and aggressive behavior will alienate others, and this alienation will inhibit the individual's achievement of his or her goals.

Assertive behavior usually leads to better feelings for both the assertive individual and others. The assertive person gains more control over the situation through the power to choose and be independent. Others receive accurate information and are more able to act in accordance with that information. Feelings of tension are reduced because everyone can trust the opinions being expressed.

When one behaves assertively, the open communication and expression of desires enhances organizational feedback and informational flow. Because assertive behavior is aimed at maximizing the rights of all parties, it usually leads to a win-win situation in which everyone involved obtains a favorable outcome. Assertive behavior leads to stability in the balance of power. Both passive and aggressive styles of influence lead to an imbalance of power because one side is apt to lose, while the other wins. As a result, an unstable situation arises in which the loser feels resentment and may try to regain power through aggression. Thus, both passive and aggressive styles of behavior lead to a loss for everyone. Although these styles may yield rewards in the short run, in the long run they cause more harm than good.

Interpreting the III

There are a number of aspects of the III that make interpreting respondents' results a sensitive task. First, the respondents may associate special meanings with the labels aggressive, passive, and assertive. These meanings may be contrary to what is intended in the instrument. For example, many people have come to associate assertiveness with aggressiveness. Being labeled aggressive or passive may arouse feelings of inadequacy or guilt, especially if revealed in a group. It is therefore important to stress that aggressive, passive, and assertive behaviors are behavioral styles, not personality traits. The respondents should not think of themselves as aggressive, passive, or assertive people.

Respondents tend to score higher on the assertiveness scale than on the aggressive or passive scales. Some individuals, however, will have high scores on the aggressive and passive scales. It should be made clear that at times it may be appropriate to behave nonassertively. Situations sometimes permit or even reward different types of behavior.

The Interpersonal Influence Profile provides the respondent with another way of visualizing his or her scores. Respondents may graph their raw scores on the chart on page 8 of their Participant Guides. This Profile contains ranges for each behavioral style based on the mean and standard deviation of each style obtained from a sample of 218 respondents. An example of a completed profile is presented in figure 2 on page 5 of this Guide. The boxed scores represent the exact mean scores for the sample.

Using the very low, low, average, high, and very high ranges on the vertical axis, the respondent can easily see how he or she scored in relation to this particular sample. Of course, the characteristics of this sample may differ from the respondent's sample. The Profile is meant to provide an approximate picture of how the respondent scores in relation to others who have taken the Inventory.

In general, if the score of one influence style is high and the other three scores are low, the respondent's behavior is probably characteristic of the style with his or her highest score. If the respondent scores high on more than one scale, several interpretations are possible:

- One style is preferred and the other is a back-up style, used when the preferred style fails to achieve the desired results.
- The two highest styles could be in opposition to each other and create considerable tension and personal conflict for the respondent. For example, high aggressive and high passive scores would probably be a source of inner tension for the respondent.
- The respondent may behave differently in a given situation depending on what he or she perceives to be the demands of that situation.
- The respondent may be generally inconsistent in his or her behavior, responding in a random way to different situations.

- The respondent may not have a clear understanding of how he or she behaves or may not have taken the time and energy to weigh his or her responses carefully.
- Some respondents may have a response bias in which they always respond with high scores or always respond with medium or low scores. This may obscure differences among the styles.

Technical Development

The idea for a training instrument that could shed light on personal influence style grew out of the author's experience in training managers to improve their negotiating skills. It was evident that many individuals subscribed to models of behavior closely related to bargaining. Bargaining is defined as: getting one's needs satisfied as quickly and as cheaply as possible, without regard for the other party's needs. Negotiating is defined as: mutual need exploration, followed by joint problem solving aimed at providing a measure of satisfaction for both parties. In developing a more collaborative, problem-solving-oriented style, it was necessary to examine personal beliefs and approaches to influencing another party in the decision process. A search of the available instruments did not appear to satisfy this need.

The need for a new inventory prompted a thorough review of the literature regarding styles of influence. The Interpersonal Influence Model, discussed in detail earlier in this Guide, appeared to offer a foundation for helping people understand how to move from bargaining to negotiating, and in general, how to express their needs while considering another's needs. In a further review of the literature, it became evident that influence style was important not only for negotiators but for managers at all levels, and indeed for workers at all levels, as they attempt to express their thoughts and desires.

Data Analysis

HRDQ uses the following statistical concepts in its technical development: Reliability, Validity, Norms, Ranges, Means, and Standard Deviations. The results, which follow, are based on a sample of 218 individuals who have responded to the *Interpersonal Influence Inventory*.

Sample Size

To determine sample size, HRDQ uses a simple random sampling method. This method allows us to determine the appropriate size of sample needed to accurately report our results. For the *Interpersonal Influence Inventory*, we determined that a sample size of 143 was suitable. Based on the simple random sampling method, this gives us a 95% confidence level with only a 5% margin of error that the data presented are representative of the population who will use this instrument.

Reliability

A measure of reliability expresses the degree to which an instrument is consistent in its measurement. The numerical value for reliability (a reliability coefficient) provides the measure for which the correlation of reliability is determined. The range of reliability coefficients is -1 to +1. As the coefficient approaches zero the strength of the relationship (i.e., the correlation) decreases until there is no correlation between the variables. However, as the reliability coefficient approaches either -1 or +1, the correlation increases and thus the higher the reliability. While there are no commonly accepted standards for reliability in training and development instruments, reliability coefficients near .60 are considered acceptable.

HRDQ uses Cronbach's Alpha as a measure of reliability. As seen from the table below, the instrument's four categories (i.e., assertive, passive, concealed aggressive, and openly aggressive) all lie within the acceptable range and can be relied upon to provide consistent results for participants in a training context.

Category	Reliability-Alpha
Assertive	.642
Passive	.626
Concealed Aggressive	.754
Openly Aggressive	.639

Validity

The validity of an instrument is the degree to which it effectively measures what it claims to measure. Keep in mind that an instrument's validity is dependent upon how the instrument is used. For example, if this instrument is to be used in the context of a training experience, then the instrument can be considered valid. If it were to be used as a predictive tool for selection purposes, then it would not be valid.

Face Validity

Face validity answers the question, "Does the instrument seem to make sense to the average person and will it help him or her learn more effective behavior?" To determine the face validity of the III, we distributed the assessment to a group of department store managers and retail store buyers, who responded that the instrument does, in fact, possess face validity.

Content Validity

Content validity answers the question, "Is the content of the instrument representative of the theory on which it is based?" HRDQ's mission is to provide theory-based, results-driven training. Recognizing this mission in all our products, a thorough and comprehensive review of the literature regarding styles of influence was completed.

Construct Validity

Construct validity answers the question, “Do the items measure what they claim to measure?” HRDQ takes pride in the amount of attention and time we devote to the development of an instrument’s dimensions and its items. Not only do we select each of an instrument’s dimensions and items on the basis of theoretical constructs; we also execute rigorous factor analysis procedures.

To create the assessment, 40 items were developed by the expert panel method and refined through responsive feedback. The 40 items were grouped into four scales of 10 items each that measure assertive, passive, concealed aggressive, and openly aggressive styles of influence.

The first analysis conducted was a factor analysis on the responses to the 40 items. A factor analysis is a technique used to summarize relationships among variables. In this case, the variables of interest were the responses to the items on the III. Instead of looking at the relationship between each variable and every other variable, our factor analysis attempted to find factors that were common to different variables. By finding common factors, meaning could be extracted from all the item relationships. In the case of the III, we were hoping to find that the factors corresponded to the four influence styles: assertive, passive, concealed aggressive, and aggressive.

The factor analysis indicated four factors or underlying dimensions. After a rotation of the factors, it was evident that the four factors could be labeled assertive, passive, concealed aggressive, and openly aggressive. Rotation makes the factors easier to understand while maintaining the amount of variance explained by the factors.

The second step in our factor analysis was to determine which items corresponded to each factor to see if the items we labeled as a particular influence style related strongly to the factor representing that influence style. An item’s relationship to a factor is represented by the loading on that factor. The loading is the degree of relationship and can vary from -1 to +1. A loading of -1 means that the item has a strong positive relationship with the factor. A loading of +1 means that the item has no relationship at all to the factor. For our purposes, any item that had a loading stronger than +/- 0.30 was said to be related to a factor. In general, the factors hypothesized produced coherent relationships with the items.

Ranges, Means, and Standard Deviations

Ranges show the highest and lowest scores attained by the sample. Mean scores are the statistical average of all the scores. Standard deviation scores indicate how closely the score data cluster around the mean. For example, if the standard deviation is large, the scores will be more spread out.

As can be seen from the table below, all scores are in the acceptable range for this instrument in its present stage of development.

Category	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
Assertive	23–49	38.00	4.59
Passive	14–41	26.20	4.77
Concealed Aggressive	11–41	23.50	5.31
Openly Aggressive	15–40	25.28	4.84

Norms

HRDQ assumes a normal, bell-curve distribution of scores when determining norms. These norms (which are divided into three categories — Below Average, Average, and Above Average) are deliberately broad and intended to offer the respondent only the most general information about where he or she stands relative to others who have taken the instrument. The normative data for the four influence styles are as follows:

Category	Below Average	Average	Above Average
Assertive	10–32	33–43	44–50
Passive	10–20	21–31	32–50
Concealed Aggressive	10–18	19–29	30–50
Openly Aggressive	10–19	20–30	31–50

Facilitators should caution respondents to interpret their results as approximations. With training and development instruments, individual scores are simply benchmarks to help the respondent consider what needs to be changed or improved in his or her work behavior. It should be noted that the normal curve is a convenience and does not suggest any normal behavior in nature or in the behavior being measured.

ABOUT HRDQ

HRDQ is a trusted developer of soft-skills learning solutions that help to improve the performance of individuals, teams, and organizations. We offer a wide range of resources and services, from ready-to-train assessments and hands-on games, to facilitator certification, custom development, and more. Our primary audience includes corporate trainers, human resource professionals, educational institutions, and independent consultants who look to us for research-based solutions to develop key skills such as leadership, communication, coaching, and team building.

At HRDQ, we believe an experiential approach is the best catalyst for adult learning. Our unique Experiential Learning Model has been the core of what we do for more than 30 years. Combining the best of organizational learning theory and proven facilitation methods with an appreciation for adult learning styles, our philosophy initiates and inspires lasting change.

For additional information about this publication, contact the HRDQ Client Solutions Team at:

Phone: 800.633.4533
610.279.2002

Fax: 800.633.3683
610.279.0524

Online: www.HRDQ.com