

Achieve Success Through Personality Style Versatility

It is impossible to calculate the sales dollars lost when a salesperson misses important clues provided by the customer. Mission Facilitators International, a human performance improvement company, found that Fortune 500 top sales performers possess the ability to identify and respond to their client's specific personality styles.

Studies indicate that when salespeople do not adjust their behaviors to the buyer's, they experience an 80% rate of failed sales. As financial advisors, identifying your clients' personality styles is imperative to building long-term relationships.

Determining a client's personality style can be accomplished through careful listening and astute observation. By focusing on two key dimensions of human behavior – Assertiveness (the way a person attempts to influence others) and Responsiveness (how they express emotions) - versatile agents can identify their client's personality style preference - Analytical, Driver, Expressive or Amiable. Each person primarily expresses one of these personality styles.

How To Spot and Respond to Each Personality Style

Analytical: Look for slower pace, business like person who is time conscious, focused on facts and data, likes to be right and dislikes making decisions.

Respond by: Slow down. Use facts and historical data. Make the buyer right. Give guarantees. He or she may need the weekend to decide.

Driver: They are fast paced people, focused on results; time conscious, likes control and not very good at listening. They dislike idle chatter and actions that don't show a result.

Respond by: Be professional with these people. Plan ahead. They want results, now! Give them options so they can be in control. Reduce chit-chat.

Expressive: They are fast paced personalities who enjoy variety, big picture projects and recognition. They dislike a lot of detail work.

Respond by: Personalityize. Give these folks recognition and approval. Use words like “gut”, “intuition” “feel” when asking them to review your proposal.

Amiable: They are slow paced people who are excellent at building relationships, listening, sharing their own personal life. They dislike taking big risks and stuffy, impersonal conversations.

Respond by: Establish a personal relationship. Give personal guarantees. Occasionally reconnect with the Amiable to uncover hidden issues.

Personality style flexibility can be your greatest asset. In 1994, I was giving a sales presentation for a big accounting firm in Seattle. Back then, accounting firms were just beginning to require their accountants to sell. In a world of crunching numbers, giving presentations and closing deals was foreign and frightening to the average accountant.

The people I was meeting with were all Analyticals. I, however, was as an enthusiastic, fast-paced, big-picture Expressive. Soon, eyes glaze over and watches were checked. To put it bluntly, my presentation was bombing, and fast.

I quickly changed my approach and began slowing my pace and talking quieter. I allowed my arms to fall at my sides. I proceeded to relate to the analytical approach of my audience by stating facts such as, “*based on our results with XYZ Company our sales training program helped them realize a 20% annual growth rate.*” I drew ROI figures on a flipchart. I also offered a money-back guarantee if they didn’t achieve impressive results.

Since I am not an Analytical, this presentation style initially felt unnatural to me, yet, I got the sale. I attribute my success to understanding my personality style, having the ability to identify the personality style of others and adjusting accordingly.

Personality style flexibility isn't about becoming a chameleon. It's about common sense - being genuine and sincere, and focusing your attention on the client and his or her needs.

Selling is the subtle art of relationship building. There are two ways to break a sales relationship. Both involve personality style inflexibility.

Perception of Indifference: Customers don't start conversations with "*Hi, I'm David. I want to be treated in the following manner....*" They also don't tell you why they're dumping you for your competitor. In fact, 68% of customers dissolve business relationships due to a perception that the advisor is indifferent to the buyer and his or her needs. "*She just doesn't seem to really care. I'm just a commission to her*" is an example of what such a client might say. Practicing personality style flexibility puts the focus on the client and makes him or her feel valued.

Not Correcting a Wrong: Studies show that dissatisfied customers tell 17 people of their poor experience within two weeks. "*You cannot believe the kind of poor service I got from the telephone company.*" Not all problems can be fixed, but an attentive advisor who responds quickly and demonstrates empathy and personality style flexibility can often keep a customer from defecting.

Broken relationships can be costly. Consequently, solidifying relationships with current clients can be quite profitable. We've seen that when customer retention is improved by only 5%, there's a 25-100% increase in profits. Personality style flexibility can improve or repair sales relationships.

Knowing your personality style preference, being able to identify the preference of others, and when appropriate, adjusting your style to align with theirs is the backbone of

developing long-term customer relationships. Practicing personality style flexibility can make a good relationship builder a great one.

Dean Newlund is the President of Mission Facilitator's International, a leadership development firm. He can be reached at 623-444-2164 or dean@missionfacilitators.com