

THE INSIGHT TO ASSESS AND MANAGE PEOPLE



SELLING STYLES

Most of us have heard the expression “salespeople are born, not made”. This saying fits with our experience in measuring temperament/behaviour patterns. Since our temperament is established fairly early on in our life, we would expect that our selling orientation would also be established, if not at birth, then shortly thereafter.

The McQuaig System™ identifies eight behavioural characteristics:

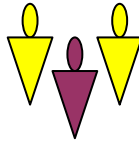
- Dominance/Acceptance
- Sociability/Analytical Thinking
- Relaxation/Drive
- Compliance/Independence

While we all have all eight of these characteristics in us, some of us have much more of some than we do of others. And it is the predominance of certain characteristics in us which predicts how we behave on the job.

The research that we have done with people in competitive sales roles over the past three decades has confirmed that there is a solid correlation between sales success and strong Dominance, Drive and Independence.

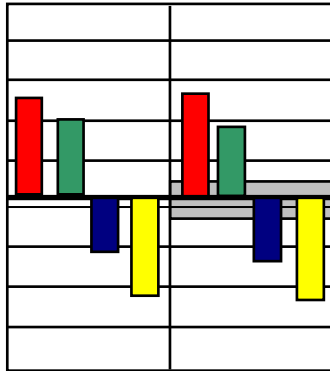
But for those of you with a background in sales, you know that, as the marketplace changes, customers buy differently, which in turn is reflected in the way we sell. A client of ours, a Sales Vice President, recently stated that the aggressive, hard-nosed tactics he had used when cutting his teeth in sales twenty years ago just wouldn't work in today's sophisticated selling environment. There has been plenty written in the past decade about “Consultative Selling”, “Relationship Selling”, “Conceptual Selling” and so on. These books and articles focus on the salesperson's ability to understand their customers' businesses and position their product as one that improves the customers' bottom line.

So how might the profiles of salespeople of the present differ from those of the more traditional salesperson – the one who knocks on a lot of doors and knows that it takes one hundred “no's” to get one “yes”? Let's take a look at some typical sales profiles we see in the marketplace and discuss how they do things differently. In the next few pages we answer the questions:



What turns them on about selling? What are they like when they are at their best and at their worst? What are they like around the office? What advice can we offer to help them be more effective?

Generalists



Generalists are what most of us think of when we think of a natural salesperson – they are competitive, goal-oriented people who like taking risks. They enjoy people contact, have a high sense of urgency and they like their independence.

They are not comfortable dealing with routine or a lot of detail work and they don't like to be told what to do.

What turns them on about selling?

The thing they find most gratifying about selling is the ability to influence others. They like the prestige of bringing home a big sale and they thrive on the recognition they receive as a result.

At their best...

They are self-confident, coming across as people who really know their stuff. They have a good story to tell and they can be visionary when it comes to how their product can solve a customer's problems. They push hard for results and are unlikely to spend their time unproductively.

At their worst...

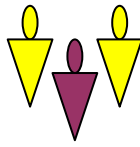
Because they can be both controlling and talkative, they are at times a sales presentation just looking for a place to happen – and once they get started, they're hard to stop. They're the reason why Purchasing Managers used to have security buttons installed on their desks. They have a tendency to oversell and, because they are weak with details, not follow through on their promises. They will call a potential customer daily until they make the sale and then drop off the face of the earth once the contract is signed.

Around the office...

They can drive people nuts – the sales support people don't like the fact that they leave everything to the last minute, yet somehow they always manage to convince everyone to put their stuff at the top of the pile. And their Sales Manager has been trying to track them down looking for last month's sales report. But somehow they still manage to be well liked because of their charming, persuasive approach.

Summary

The combination of Dominance, Sociability, Drive and Independence makes the Generalist well-suited for new business development situations where they are constantly challenged and can use their people skills to network and build new relationships. It is important to them to have specific targets to achieve. They like

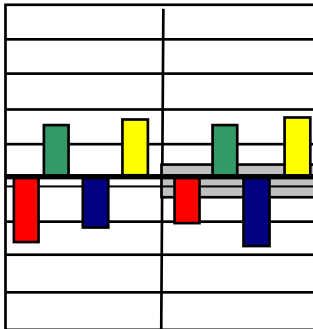


the prestige of selling and will seek opportunities to be in the limelight. They expect to be recognized and rewarded for their achievements.

Advice to the Generalist

Let the customer do more of the talking – turn it off occasionally. Ask more questions – even try listening to the answers once in a while.

Enthusiasts



All their lives, Enthusiasts have been told “you know, you really should be in sales”. They are outgoing, empathetic people with a lot of get up and go. They’re on everybody’s dinner list. They are supportive, harmonious people who do what they say they are going to do. They are the sort of people that everybody likes to have around. People buy from Enthusiasts because they like them.

What turns them on about selling?

They view a sale as a great way to satisfy customer needs and take their relationship to the next level. They’re more likely to talk about how they were invited to the customer’s exclusive country club, rather than the fact that they sold them €10,000 worth of product. They love making new contacts and the size of their Rolodex is something they’re quite proud of.

At their best...

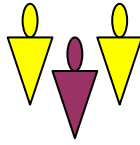
Customers feel that Enthusiasts are genuinely concerned about helping them meet their goals. They are responsive and accommodating, they do what they say they are going to do and they’re not too pushy. They’re fun to have around, their enthusiasm is infectious and customers are happy to introduce them to other stakeholders within their company.

At their worst...

Because their high Sociability is combined with low Dominance, they want to be liked and they feel awkward in situations where there is conflict. This produces difficulties in two areas that have long been considered fundamental to the sales process – dealing with objections and handling rejection. Enthusiasts run the risk of becoming “professional visitors”: plenty of activity, but no results. They will shy away from activities that may result in rejection, such as prospecting and closing. As a result, they will often focus on account maintenance rather than new business development.

Around the office...

Because of their congenial nature, they are well liked by operations, Sales Managers and support staff. Their spontaneous nature often results in a tendency to leave things to the last minute, but, because they are so friendly and apologetic, no one seems to mind.



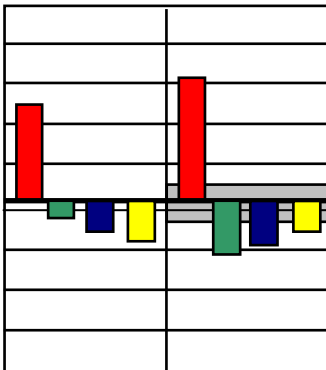
Summary

Enthusiasts are best suited for relationship selling with a minimal amount of cold-calling – where closing the sale is more a natural outcome of a strong personal relationship, rather than the ability to push the customer toward a commitment. High Compliance means they are good with detail and follow up. It also means that they place value on the structure and support their company provides – things like product brochures, an 800 number and an impressive client list. This profile is better suited for mature markets and not well suited to a start-up situation or aggressive new business development.

Advice to the Enthusiast

Review your top ten prospects – are they there because of a realistic analysis of their business potential or because you like them? When organizing your activities for the day, do the ones you hate first. They are the ones that will most likely lead to rejection or conflict – or maybe even a sale.

Pioneers



People are surprised to see Pioneers in a selling role. The Pioneer's analytical nature often results in a candid, direct, matter-of-fact approach to communicating, generally not seen as an asset in a sales environment. There are two factors that help Pioneers get around this:

First, of the four trait scales, the Sociability scale is one that we tend to be able to flex most, more so than our Dominance or Independence scales, for example. Most successful Pioneer salespeople (who are low in Sociability on the Real side) will act more sociably and enthusiastically

when they are with customers.

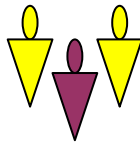
Second, their strong goal orientation – combined with their objective viewpoint – makes them very good at handling rejection. They can take 156 “no thank you’s” in a day without taking it personally. And they don’t mind asking for the order. They have an affinity for selling in tough environments and they don’t “cave in” to customer demands.

What turns them on about selling?

They are similar to the Generalists in that they like to win and they need to attain their goals – but they are less concerned with prestige or developing a relationship with the customer. They see the sale as a “target” that they have to “knock-off”, before they can move to the next opportunity.

At their best...

They are determined to exceed their targets (revenues *and* incomes of course) and they’ll do whatever they can to be Number One on the sales force. Additionally, they are concerned about selling profitable business – a Pioneer is less likely to give away the farm for a pie-in-the-sky future relationship. They are very focussed and unlikely to spend time on anything that doesn’t help them achieve their goals.



They are direct in their communications, can build a good business case and customers feel they are getting the straight facts.

At their worst....

Because they can be blinded by the need to achieve their targets, they may be seen as pushy by prospects, more concerned with their own needs than the customer's problem. This is the profile that is most likely to say, "Listen, you've got all the facts – let's make a decision now!"

There was a Long-Distance salesperson who used to brag that his success was due to his philosophy that if he really could save the prospect money, they would either have to sign-up or throw him out of their office. Although his tongue was a little in his cheek when saying this, he did have a higher proportion of customers cancel before their installation date.

Finally, the Pioneer's "telling" versus "selling" style might result in their missing some of the more subtle buying signals from the customer during presentations.

Around the office...

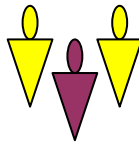
Their high sense of urgency and independent nature may result in problems with their managers and support people and, on top of that, they are often unlikely to use diplomacy or empathy when dealing with conflict. On the plus side, though, you really do know where you stand with the Pioneer. And they have a very realistic approach to sales forecasting, always aware of where they sit with respect to their targets, even if they do neglect filling out sales reports.

Summary

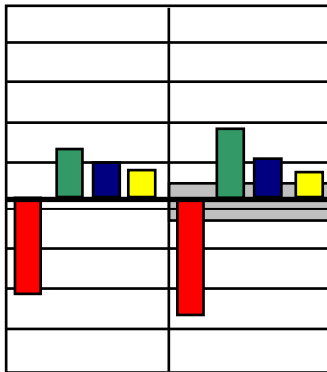
Pioneers are best suited for direct, new business development. They are good at prospecting and will create a sense of urgency in the customer's mind to close a sale. As the saying goes, selling is 10 percent inspiration and 90 percent perspiration. Pioneers are especially valuable in start-ups or developing territories – any place where grabbing market share quickly is key to survival.

Advice to the Pioneer

On presentations to customers, ask lots of questions – try to focus more on *their* needs and less on *your* product. Around the office, try to let those who provide you with support know what a great job they are doing from time to time.



Cooperators



Cooperators are like Enthusiasts in that they are pleasant and harmonious people with a strong desire to be well liked. They are empathetic, outgoing and enjoy meeting and building relationships with new people. People buy from Cooperators because they like them. They are methodical and detail-oriented and, when they say they're going to look into something for you, they take the time to research thoroughly before coming back with a response.

What turns them on about selling?

Because of their high degree of empathy, Cooperators become deeply involved in the customer's problem and view the sale as a way to resolve that problem. They truly believe they are in a partnership with their customers and a sale is a first step on the road to a long relationship. Like the Enthusiast, they love meeting new people and getting to know their clients on a more personal level.

At their best...

Cooperators are very friendly and tremendously good listeners. Customers feel that the Cooperator is genuinely concerned for their well being and, if they are having service or product problems, they know that the Cooperator will have their best interests at heart.

The ever-loyal Cooperator is the profile most likely to retain a "customer for life", as long as maintaining relationships is key. They are very accommodating and they try their best to do what they say they are going to do. They are organized and thorough. When they sit down with a client, they are well prepared.

At their worst...

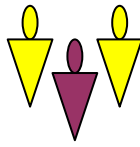
Many sales gurus feel that creating urgency in the customer's mind is key to getting them to move forward and place an order. The Cooperator will struggle in this area because they don't have a strong sense of urgency themselves, as indicated by their high Relaxation. Also, their laid back approach may make it difficult to function in other areas where a sense of urgency is needed, such as putting a rush proposal together, quickly responding to customer queries or dealing with an urgent crisis.

Because of the combined high Sociability and low Dominance – wanting to be liked and very accommodating – they experience difficulty in dealing with objections and handling rejection.

They will shy away from activities that may result in rejection, such as prospecting and closing. Additionally, The Cooperator's strong desire to please the customer may cause them to cave-in to customer demands.

Around the office...

The Cooperator gets along with just about everyone, from the CEO to the Warehouse Supervisor. They are liked by management and support staff alike because they are very conscientious when it comes to reports and documentation.



However, their laid back approach is a double-edged sword: they don't make unnecessary demands on anyone, but, at the same time, they tend to plod along and don't respond well to pressure. Similarly, even those who like the Cooperator's "go with the flow" attitude may become frustrated at their unwillingness to take a tough stand when needed.

Summary

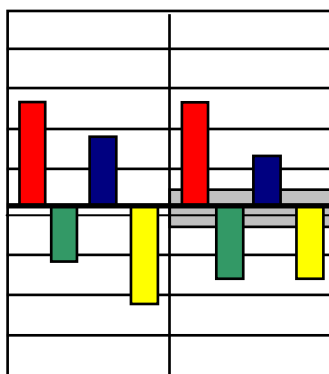
Like Enthusiasts, Cooperators are best suited for relationship selling with a minimal amount of cold calling – where closing the sale is more a natural outcome of a thorough needs analysis and a level of trust between the two parties. They score high on both Relaxation and Compliance, resulting in a thorough, methodical approach to selling. They are well prepared for sales calls and presentations and they place value on the structure and support their company provides – things like product brochures, an 800 number and an impressive client list. Cooperators will excel in more mature markets where there is an emphasis on account maintenance rather than aggressive new business development.

Advice to the Cooperator

It's time to get tough. Beware of your tendency to be over accommodating at the expense of your commission check. Try to be more demanding of your customers and yourself – you may like the result.

Recognize that, because of your high Relaxation score, you may be operating on a different time clock than your managers or customers – who may have greater urgency. The next time you are asked to complete a project for them, ask for a specific deadline – and come in ahead of schedule.

Administrators



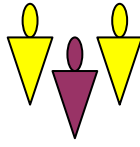
Administrators are similar to Pioneers in that they are competitive, goal-oriented individuals who take a factual approach to problem solving and enjoy working independently. Where they differ is that they do not share the Pioneer's high sense of urgency. So while Pioneers may be seen by both the customer and internal staff members as hi-energy and pressure-oriented, Administrators will be seen as more laid-back and easygoing. They are comfortable with the fact that some goals will require a longer time frame to achieve.

What turns them on about selling?

They enjoy winning and achieving their goals. They like the autonomy of selling and thrive on being out on the road where they can call their own shots.

At their best...

They are self-confident and, because of their analytical orientation, they prefer to build a fact-based business case for their products. They are persistent and will strive to overcome objections. As a bonus, because of their high Relaxation score, it is unlikely that prospective customers will feel that they are being pressured.



At their worst...

The Administrators' analytical nature results in a focus on quantifiable benefits, often at the risk of overlooking the client's personal or emotional motivations for buying. As a result, they may miss some of the more subtle buying signals from the customer during presentations.

Their high Relaxation score may work against them. Today's fast-paced, hard-driving prospects – accustomed to downloading product information from the Internet – want everything immediately, if not before. Administrators don't share that urgency.

Around the office...

The combination of high Dominance and an analytical approach can lead to a candid, sometimes undiplomatic communication style, although tempered somewhat by their laid-back character.

Their high Relaxed score is a double-edged sword. They don't leave things to the last minute, which is a much-appreciated fact around the office; however, they may be viewed as too easygoing and unresponsive by their managers. They will view sales reports and other paperwork as not directly pertaining to their goals and as a result will give these tasks a low priority.

Summary

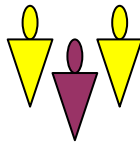
The combination of low Sociability and high Dominance makes the Administrator well suited for new business development situations, specifically where a high tolerance for rejection would be an asset.

Their numbers orientation makes them position their product as something that will save the customer money, increase productivity, reduce turnover, etc. They will feel less comfortable with emotional sales or anything with a "buy now!" emphasis.

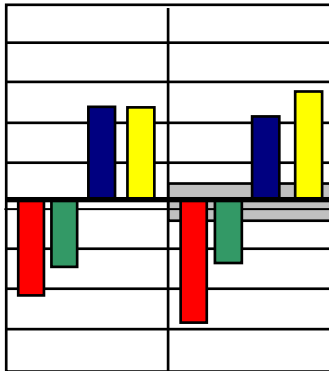
Advice to the Administrator

When building a business case for your products, try to factor in the emotional or "soft" reasons to buy into your spreadsheet. You may find it difficult to put a dollar figure on them, but the inclusion of these items in your presentations will ensure that they are not overlooked.

Pick up the pace and be more responsive. In the age of instant gratification, tomorrow is too late.



Specialists



Specialists are not often found in direct new business development positions. Their unassertive, analytical style makes them better suited for account maintenance roles or handling inbound product inquiries. They will also be effective in more technical sales positions where attention to detail and a thorough needs analysis are critical.

In situations where a more aggressive approach is required in prospecting and closing, they often team up.

What turns them on about selling?

Like Cooperators, Specialists get their motivation from helping the customer solve a problem. But where Cooperators are turned on by the relationship-building element, Specialists get their thrills analyzing the problem and proposing a thorough business case that covers all the bases.

At their best...

They will analyze the customer's problem like a surgeon, leaving no stone unturned. They will build a business case based on quantifiable benefits, present their solution objectively and, to a large extent, let the solutions do the selling. They will not oversell, outlining specifically what they can and cannot do, and potential customers will feel confident that they'll receive strong after-sale support.

They are perfectionists who believe that their job hasn't ended once the order is placed and, as a result, will usually stay on top of things until the product or service is delivered to the customer's satisfaction.

At their worst...

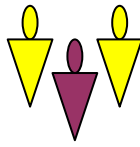
If sales success were based solely on the ability to present product features objectively and provide solid after-sales support, the Specialist would excel. However, in outside sales and new business development, selling has much to do with appealing to buyers' emotions, pushing them through the sales process and doggedly pursuing them until they sign on the dotted line.

Specialists will face a number of challenges in these areas. Their unassertiveness and lack of persistence will give them trouble closing. Their analytical, detailed approach may result in too much time spent over-preparing and researching prospects instead of actually calling on them.

On sales calls they may spend too much time presenting information that will not influence the prospect to buy and their lack of urgency may result in giving "hot" prospects too much time to cool off.

Around the office...

The Specialists' unassuming task-oriented nature will earn them respect as hard-working employees, although their accomplishments and successes often go unnoticed because they shun the limelight.



Their high scores on the Relaxed and Compliant Scales make for dependable and organized individuals who do what they say they're going to do. Yet, these same traits can lead to their appearing unresponsive in today's lightning-fast business world or their not being able to see the forest for the trees.

Summary

Specialists view themselves as experts committed to solving a customer's problem. For this reason they excel in more technical, information-oriented roles where they team up with "influencers" at various stages of the sales process. An influencer may be the company President who met a prospective client at an association meeting, or aggressive telemarketers who invited the prospect in for a demo and follows-up afterwards, or another sales rep.

In large-ticket sales, where extensive bids or proposals are required, you will often find Specialists as part of the selling team, but rarely in the lead role.

Advice to the Specialist

You are right in believing that building a sound business case for your product is critical in today's marketplace, especially on larger sales. But also recognize that most buyers may not have your passion for analysis or the intricacies of your offering. By the time you finish your presentation they may have forgotten what it is that you are selling. Focus on overall benefits and the results you'll deliver. Put the rest in an addendum.

Also, it's time to nudge your prospects gently towards making a decision. Look at each presentation in terms of *your* desired outcome – presenting information *cannot* be a desired outcome. The outcome will usually be a commitment by the potential customer to do something, such as signing the order, arranging for you to meet their senior management team or tabling your proposal at the next committee meeting. In taking this approach, you may feel a little uncomfortable at first because of your natural tendency to accommodate and appease. But you'll probably find that, with the multiple priorities your prospective customers have, a little pressure goes a long way in getting your proposals off the back burner.

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