Getting Better Sales Results by Understanding Personality Styles

Mar 24 Posted by Susan Saltonstall Duncan in Sales and selling

We have written previously (see How Can We Help Practice Group Leaders to be Successful? and What Rainmaker Traits and Skills are Required for Success?) on the typical personality traits and styles of lawyers and how they can impede or enhance their success. Understanding your own personality type helps you better address and tailor the way that you behave and react with those with whom you interact in your professional, civic and personal relationships. If you are a leader in a law firm, appreciating personality differences will be critical to your success in facilitating teamwork, recruiting, evaluating and advancing talent and working through interpersonal clashes. Many problems arise because people often do not understand the motivations and styles of others with whom they interact. Appreciating these styles is also the first step in being more effective at reading your clients and prospects and improving your selling results and relationship-building efforts.

Selling is an art more than a science and it requires the person selling to be a good listener and investigator at every stage of the process. As we discussed in our recent post How to Sell: Stop Pitching and Start Listening and Relating, lawyers need to take the pitch out of selling and to focus on creating a dialogue to better understand and begin solving a propsect's needs. In order to be fully effective, the lawyer doing the selling must also be really good at reading the signals and personality style of the prospect.

There are a number of personality profile diagnostic tools. The two most commonly used are the DISC Profile and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). DISC focuses on four primary styles: Dominant/Driver, Inducement/Influencer/Intuiter, Submission/Steady/Stable and Cautious/Compliance. In the DISC profile, you come out with a primary and back-up style. MBTI focuses on four pairs of profiles: Extrovert (E), Introvert (I), Senser (S), Intuiter (N), Thinker (T), Feeler (F), Judger (J) and Perceiver (P). Based on the MBTI, you typically come out with a four-quality profile, e.g., ENTJ or ISFP.

For this blog posting, we'll stick with the DISC profile in order to demonstrate how you can use this knowledge to your advantage in landing new clients, and to enhancing your relationships with existing clients (as well as partners, colleagues, and even spouses.)

Personality Style	**Key Personality Traits:**	**Some Tips For Selling to This Type:**
D = Dominant/Driver	• Controlled, in charge • Hate to waste time • Competitive, aggressive,	• Be direct and brief; get right to the point; avoid "small talk" • Use bullet points and headlines;

	confrontational • Action-oriented; move quickly • Speak quickly; dominate conversations • Like power; autocratic • Can be charming to reach goals • Risk-takers	short emails • Avoid social or personal topics • Since they hate to waste time, don't invite to lunch or breakfast • Want to know options and probable outcomes of success -- present several specific solutions and the probability of success of each option. • Never tell him/her what to do-let him/her decide
I = Influencer/Intuiter	• People-people, motivated by fun • Excitable; smile and laugh a lot • Warm, approachable yet competitive • Enthusiastic, react quickly • Quickly accepted in social situations • Highly opinionated; talk a lot and dominate conversations • Move quickly but less disciplined about time • Seek personal recognition • Optimistic dreamers - live in the future • Creative but may get carried away carelessly on hunches	• Develop rapport, happy to talk about “niceties” • Listen to them. • Tell them who they’ll work with; they like a team and working with others • Keep proposals short - use visuals • Use testimonial letters - the more prominent the person, the better. • Spend time dreaming with them and exploring their goals, vision. • Don't like to argue, so avoid adversarial approach. • Like social recognition so they like you to ask them to lunch. • Continue to nurture relationship long-term.
S = Steady/Stable	• Relationship-oriented; loyal • Harmonious, accommodating • Warm, friendly, cooperative, sentimental • Flexible and patient; even-tempered • Indecisive ; like to feel secure and avoid taking chances • Talk about people and socialize a lot • Need to be accepted by others	• Like to put themselves in others’ hands • Will require trust and genuine relationship before making decision; like “small talk” • Do not hurry them. • Use testimonial letters praising your work. • Share names or logos of other well-known clients • Present simple concepts, use conversational style. • Don’t suggest risky strategies or uncertain outcomes.
C = Cautious/Compliant	• Perfectionists; need to be right • "Numbers" cruncher/quantitative • Details, thinking-oriented • Live according to principals • Well-disciplined, exacting, controlled • Develop friendships slowly	• Stick to the facts, make sure facts are accurate (they love to find typos or errors) • Like lengthy proposals - the more facts, figures - the better. • Leave no room for surprises during the interview.

	• Reluctant to demonstrate personal warmth • Follow directions well	• Concentrate on the service you're offering and how you will work with them • Don't rush them; they will review, analyze and re-analyze • If nervous or uncertain, they may withdraw

All stages of a sales process require interaction and the sharing of information between you and the prospect or client. Once you have met with or spoken with a prospect a few times, you should have a good sense of his/her psychological profile. Being aware of this will help you in taking the appropriate next steps: how to communicate, whether or not to engage in small talk, whether to suggest lunch or not, whether to keep emails and proposals short or more lengthy and fact-filled. Of course, a lawyer or firm rarely interacts with a single person at a client or prospect company, so you will not only have to be adept at reading personality styles but also communicating individually and collectively with people of different styles and motivations. The bottom line is that no two people will be alike – therefore, no one rapport-building, credibility-building or selling approach will work with every prospect or client. A few things to do to help you and your team become more effective:

- Administer the DISC profile to those on your team and to anyone involved in helping pursue new business from a prospect.
- If you don't know the prospect before meeting with him/her, contact the person who referred you to the prospect or referred the prospect to you, and find out what kind of person he/she is.
- Share your observations and knowledge with others on your team who will be meeting with the prospect.
- Tailor your meeting agenda and back-up materials to what the prospect is likely to want.
- If the personality profiles of the prospect and you or the primary "salesperson" clash or cause paralysis (can often happen with two "D"s or two "C"s,) assign someone on your team who is well skilled at working with this style to oversee the sales meeting or process.

Clients hire lawyers they know, they like and they trust. Achieving those objectives will require different approaches depending on the personality of the person you are selling to.

Tags: Communication, personality, Propsecting, Sales

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