

tailoring your own communication skills, part 2: adapting

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This article builds on the skills learned in part 1 (identifying personality types) by applying that new found knowledge to your firm in particular. While it could just as easily apply to how you manage people, this entire issue applies it to new business development: the initial call, building a relationship with the prospect, communicating about your firm, and then working with groups comprised of more than one type.

In part one of this two-part series we looked at how to quickly identify personality types. In this part we look at what to do with that information in order to be more effective at communicating internally and externally.

Adapting To Connect

Once you have an understanding of your own personality and that of your prospect, we move to step three: adapting to connect. Understanding your prospect's personality preference is useless unless you can adapt how you present who you are and who your company is to

meet the expectations of the prospect's personality.

Translating, Not Manipulating

This may sound somewhat manipulative but it's really more about "language translation." If I speak English and you speak Spanish and I'm trying to sell my product to you I will either find someone to translate for me or learn to speak Spanish myself. That's the point of tailoring your selling to the personality of your prospect. It is about presenting the wonderful company that you represent, and the person

that you are, in a way that your prospect will understand and more importantly "like." Being versatile allows you to see the prospect's situation through their eyes and adapt your own personality to connect with them (see Figure 4).

Using this Information

How do you use all this information on a day-to-day basis? Personality Identification is valuable at every stage of the selling process. From talking to prospects on the phone to making presentations, personality identification will allow you to win because they "like you better."

Uses: Prospecting

Let's say you are calling a prospect for the first time and you know nothing about their personality. You hear them answer the phone in a very loud, direct manner. Their voice is on the monotone side. A common mistake is to jump to the Results quadrant right away, but remember the most effective method is to ask yourself the two key questions: is this person more oriented to task or people, and are they more or less assertive?

Back to the call. Once you've informed the prospect of the reason for your call, they quickly say that Joe in Marketing handles that and then they transfer you to Joe.

Back to the questions. This person is definitely task-oriented, as evidenced by the very little warmth they expressed to

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

While there is no magic in convincing people, every little “edge” you can wield is important.

Don’t let anybody tell you that any particular method is going to solve all your problems. This is hype—if it were true, the person making the claim would be lots richer than

they are. But having said that, learn from each system and apply as much as you are comfortable with.

This is just one tool that you should have in your toolbox. You have to be true to your own per-



sonality or you’ll no longer know who you are, but that doesn’t mean that you can’t “open doors for people” by tailoring the delivery to suit them.

That’s different from changing the message. ●

personality preference, you must decide how to go about building a relationship with that personality. In this case you’ve identified the prospect as a Loyalty personality. You spent much of the first conversation getting to know each other personally. You found some things that you share in common. One thing that stood out was a love of baseball.

So, to begin the relationship building process you may do something like sending George Will’s new book on baseball. You may go so far as to send your own personal copy of the book with the inscription, “Dear Prospect, I loved reading this. It perfectly captures the spirit of the game. I hope you enjoy it as much as I have. Happy Reading, Your Name.”

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Tailoring, part 2...

you. And as for assertiveness, they are almost off the scale, so yes, this is definitely a Results personality.

So now that we’ve been delegated to Joe what do we do? Remembering that Results personalities like to be in control but don’t want to waste time, you decide to continue to build awareness and eventually a relationship with Joe, but you will keep the Results personality in the loop by copying him/her on all important matters.

What happens when you do this? Quite often, seemingly out of the blue, you’ll receive a phone call from the prospect

asking you to come in to discuss a possible assignment, project, or their account as a whole.

Uses: Relating

Now that you have talked to the prospect and have made an initial identification of their

FIGURE 4: PRACTICAL USES



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PERSONALITY PREFERENCE EVALUATOR

Instructions: In each of the following rows of four words across, place an X before the one word that most applies to you. Continue through all 40 lines, being sure that each line is marked. If you are not sure which word "most applies," think of what someone who knows you very well would say. Take your first "best guess." Don't think too hard about each choice. When you are finished, photocopy this page and then score your answers on the reverse of this sheet (see page 4).

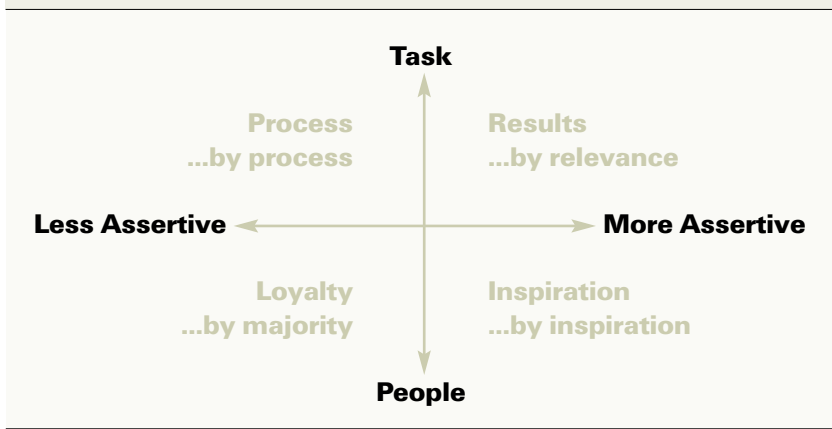
1	<input type="checkbox"/> Strategic	<input type="checkbox"/> Careful	<input type="checkbox"/> Constant	<input type="checkbox"/> Influencing
2	<input type="checkbox"/> Attentive	<input type="checkbox"/> Gesturing	<input type="checkbox"/> Pushing	<input type="checkbox"/> Discreet
3	<input type="checkbox"/> Methodical	<input type="checkbox"/> Forceful	<input type="checkbox"/> Reliable	<input type="checkbox"/> Amicable
4	<input type="checkbox"/> Goal-Oriented	<input type="checkbox"/> Restrained	<input type="checkbox"/> Logical	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick
5	<input type="checkbox"/> Cheerful	<input type="checkbox"/> Exact	<input type="checkbox"/> Calm	<input type="checkbox"/> Determined
6	<input type="checkbox"/> Dominant	<input type="checkbox"/> Precise	<input type="checkbox"/> Sociable	<input type="checkbox"/> Even-Tempered
7	<input type="checkbox"/> Familiar	<input type="checkbox"/> Talkative	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident	<input type="checkbox"/> Orderly
8	<input type="checkbox"/> Concise	<input type="checkbox"/> Vigorous	<input type="checkbox"/> Genial	<input type="checkbox"/> Stable
9	<input type="checkbox"/> Direct	<input type="checkbox"/> Detached	<input type="checkbox"/> Loyal	<input type="checkbox"/> Active
10	<input type="checkbox"/> Socializer	<input type="checkbox"/> Clear	<input type="checkbox"/> Accommodating	<input type="checkbox"/> Challenging
11	<input type="checkbox"/> Powerful	<input type="checkbox"/> Relating	<input type="checkbox"/> Thinking	<input type="checkbox"/> Expressive
12	<input type="checkbox"/> Amenable	<input type="checkbox"/> Hopeful	<input type="checkbox"/> Assertive	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-Contained
13	<input type="checkbox"/> Questioning	<input type="checkbox"/> Steady	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-Confident	<input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrative
14	<input type="checkbox"/> Initiating	<input type="checkbox"/> Quiet	<input type="checkbox"/> Persuasive	<input type="checkbox"/> Reflective
15	<input type="checkbox"/> Faithful	<input type="checkbox"/> Social	<input type="checkbox"/> Consistent	<input type="checkbox"/> Resolute
16	<input type="checkbox"/> Certain	<input type="checkbox"/> Correct	<input type="checkbox"/> Helping	<input type="checkbox"/> Merry
17	<input type="checkbox"/> Results-Oriented	<input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging	<input type="checkbox"/> Show-Off	<input type="checkbox"/> Specific
18	<input type="checkbox"/> Valuing	<input type="checkbox"/> Deliberate	<input type="checkbox"/> Fast	<input type="checkbox"/> Scatterbrained
19	<input type="checkbox"/> Outgoing	<input type="checkbox"/> Meticulous	<input type="checkbox"/> Reserved	<input type="checkbox"/> In-Charge
20	<input type="checkbox"/> Firm	<input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative	<input type="checkbox"/> Detailed	<input type="checkbox"/> Gregarious
21	<input type="checkbox"/> Accurate	<input type="checkbox"/> Task-Oriented	<input type="checkbox"/> Peaceful	<input type="checkbox"/> Impulsive
22	<input type="checkbox"/> Straightforward	<input type="checkbox"/> Rational	<input type="checkbox"/> Spontaneous	<input type="checkbox"/> Amiable
23	<input type="checkbox"/> Unassuming	<input type="checkbox"/> Analyzing	<input type="checkbox"/> Competitive	<input type="checkbox"/> Friendly
24	<input type="checkbox"/> Robust	<input type="checkbox"/> Entertaining	<input type="checkbox"/> Responsive	<input type="checkbox"/> Painstaking
25	<input type="checkbox"/> Observing	<input type="checkbox"/> Active	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal	<input type="checkbox"/> Emotive
26	<input type="checkbox"/> Controlling	<input type="checkbox"/> Apart	<input type="checkbox"/> Affectionate	<input type="checkbox"/> Trusting
27	<input type="checkbox"/> Concerned	<input type="checkbox"/> Eager	<input type="checkbox"/> Reasoned	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong-Willed
28	<input type="checkbox"/> Purposeful	<input type="checkbox"/> Engaging	<input type="checkbox"/> Perceptive	<input type="checkbox"/> Particular
29	<input type="checkbox"/> Settled	<input type="checkbox"/> Formal	<input type="checkbox"/> Efficient	<input type="checkbox"/> Fun-Loving
30	<input type="checkbox"/> Reinforcing	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderating	<input type="checkbox"/> Principled	<input type="checkbox"/> Popular
31	<input type="checkbox"/> Tolerant	<input type="checkbox"/> Analytical	<input type="checkbox"/> Animated	<input type="checkbox"/> Decisive
32	<input type="checkbox"/> Laid-Back	<input type="checkbox"/> Disciplined	<input type="checkbox"/> Immediate	<input type="checkbox"/> Charming
33	<input type="checkbox"/> Abrupt	<input type="checkbox"/> Spirited	<input type="checkbox"/> Patient	<input type="checkbox"/> Controlled
34	<input type="checkbox"/> Empathetic	<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluating	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong	<input type="checkbox"/> Lively
35	<input type="checkbox"/> Impartial	<input type="checkbox"/> Enthusiastic	<input type="checkbox"/> Well-Argued	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerate
36	<input type="checkbox"/> Daring	<input type="checkbox"/> Studious	<input type="checkbox"/> Informal	<input type="checkbox"/> Good Mixer
37	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic	<input type="checkbox"/> Driving	<input type="checkbox"/> Counseling	<input type="checkbox"/> Inspirational
38	<input type="checkbox"/> Independent	<input type="checkbox"/> Prepared	<input type="checkbox"/> Optimistic	<input type="checkbox"/> Caring
39	<input type="checkbox"/> Attacking	<input type="checkbox"/> Supportive	<input type="checkbox"/> Organizing	<input type="checkbox"/> Upbeat
40	<input type="checkbox"/> Playful	<input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful	<input type="checkbox"/> Consensus-Driven	<input type="checkbox"/> Impatient

PERSONALITY PREFERENCE EVALUATOR: SCORING SHEET

Instructions: Transfer each X from the Evaluator to the corresponding words on this scoring sheet and add up your totals. For example, if you checked Strategic on the profile, check it on this scoring sheet. (Note: The words are in a different order on the evaluator and the scoring sheet.) If you have two or more columns with equal scores, take the evaluator again and review the results with someone who knows you well. Though rarely true, you might not have a predominant personality type.

1	<input type="checkbox"/> Strategic	<input type="checkbox"/> Careful	<input type="checkbox"/> Constant	<input type="checkbox"/> Influencing
2	<input type="checkbox"/> Pushing	<input type="checkbox"/> Discreet	<input type="checkbox"/> Attentive	<input type="checkbox"/> Gesturing
3	<input type="checkbox"/> Forceful	<input type="checkbox"/> Methodical	<input type="checkbox"/> Reliable	<input type="checkbox"/> Amicable
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5	<input type="checkbox"/> Determined	<input type="checkbox"/> Exact	<input type="checkbox"/> Calm	<input type="checkbox"/> Cheerful
6	<input type="checkbox"/> Dominant	<input type="checkbox"/> Precise	<input type="checkbox"/> Even-Tempered	<input type="checkbox"/> Sociable
7	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident	<input type="checkbox"/> Orderly	<input type="checkbox"/> Familiar	<input type="checkbox"/> Talkative
8	<input type="checkbox"/> Vigorous	<input type="checkbox"/> Concise	<input type="checkbox"/> Stable	<input type="checkbox"/> Genial
9	<input type="checkbox"/> Direct	<input type="checkbox"/> Detached	<input type="checkbox"/> Loyal	<input type="checkbox"/> Active
10	<input type="checkbox"/> Challenging	<input type="checkbox"/> Clear	<input type="checkbox"/> Accommodating	<input type="checkbox"/> Socializer
11	<input type="checkbox"/> Powerful	<input type="checkbox"/> Thinking	<input type="checkbox"/> Relating	<input type="checkbox"/> Expressive
12	<input type="checkbox"/> Assertive	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-Contained	<input type="checkbox"/> Amenable	<input type="checkbox"/> Hopeful
13	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-Confident	<input type="checkbox"/> Questioning	<input type="checkbox"/> Steady	<input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrative
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25	<input type="checkbox"/> Active	<input type="checkbox"/> Observing	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal	<input type="checkbox"/> Emotive
26	<input type="checkbox"/> Controlling	<input type="checkbox"/> Apart	<input type="checkbox"/> Trusting	<input type="checkbox"/> Affectionate
27	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong-Willed	<input type="checkbox"/> Reasoned	<input type="checkbox"/> Concerned	<input type="checkbox"/> Eager
28	<input type="checkbox"/> Purposeful	<input type="checkbox"/> Particular	<input type="checkbox"/> Perceptive	<input type="checkbox"/> Engaging
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30	<input type="checkbox"/> Reinforcing	<input type="checkbox"/> Principled	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderating	<input type="checkbox"/> Popular
31	<input type="checkbox"/> Decisive	<input type="checkbox"/> Analytical	<input type="checkbox"/> Tolerant	<input type="checkbox"/> Animated
32	<input type="checkbox"/> Immediate	<input type="checkbox"/> Disciplined	<input type="checkbox"/> Laid-Back	<input type="checkbox"/> Charming
33	<input type="checkbox"/> Articulate	<input type="checkbox"/> Controlled	<input type="checkbox"/> Patient	<input type="checkbox"/> Spirited
34	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong	<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluating	<input type="checkbox"/> Empathetic	<input type="checkbox"/> Lively
35	<input type="checkbox"/> Well-Argued	<input type="checkbox"/> Impartial	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerate	<input type="checkbox"/> Enthusiastic
36	<input type="checkbox"/> Daring	<input type="checkbox"/> Studious	<input type="checkbox"/> Informal	<input type="checkbox"/> Good Mixer
37	<input type="checkbox"/> Driving	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic	<input type="checkbox"/> Counselling	<input type="checkbox"/> Inspirational
38	<input type="checkbox"/> Independent	<input type="checkbox"/> Prepared	<input type="checkbox"/> Caring	<input type="checkbox"/> Optimistic
39	<input type="checkbox"/> Attacking	<input type="checkbox"/> Organizing	<input type="checkbox"/> Supportive	<input type="checkbox"/> Upbeat
40	<input type="checkbox"/> Impatient	<input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful	<input type="checkbox"/> Consensus-Driven	<input type="checkbox"/> Playful
Totals	___ Results	___ Process	___ Loyalty	___ Inspiration

FIGURE 5: GROUP DECISION MAKING



Uses: First Meeting

You identified the prospect’s personality preference in the first call as an Inspiration personality and continued to use that information as you’ve built a relationship with the prospect and now he has asked you to come meet with him to discuss an opportunity he has. When you arrive at the prospect’s office you quickly note that the receptionist has shown you into a conference room rather than to the prospect’s office. This confirms your initial assessment that this is an Inspiration personality.

When he enters the room he is wearing brightly colored trendy clothing, providing further confirmation of your initial assessment. As you talk he continually drops the names of the important people he knows and speaks of his own accomplishments.

You respond in kind, laughing, smiling, asking flattering questions about the business but more importantly about his role in the great things the business has done. All the while taking the energy level in the room higher and higher. Finally, you

get around to the issue that brought you there.

Uses: First Description

You’ve talked on the telephone, you’ve built a relationship, and you’ve been called in to discuss a pertinent issue. The prospect has been identified as a Process personality.

How do you describe your firm? Do you talk about the great results you’ve gotten for your clients, or do you approach it from the perspective of the awards you’ve won and the level of recognition you’ve gained for your clients? Do you tone down the discussion and speak in a more casual, relaxed manner?

Clearly none of these approaches quite fit the Process personality as well as you would like. Instead you decide to explain the proprietary processes you follow to get the best results for your clients. Then when you depart their office, you leave behind a binder that goes into more depth about the process.

As you get up to leave, the prospect has already opened the binder and begun reading.

Uses: Presentation

The prospect has decided to conduct a review of their account relationship. Because you have done such a good job of understanding your own personality, understanding the prospect’s personality, and adapting your personality in order to connect with the prospect, you have been asked to be part of the review.

This time, however, there is a little fly in the ointment.

You’ll be presenting to a committee composed of four people, each of which has a different personality preference (you discover this from your own investigation).

Rather than panic, though, realize that there’s an easy way to adapt and connect even in this situation. When presenting to a group first identify the group leader’s personality. The group leader is usually (though not always) the person with the highest title. Use Figure 5 to walk through group dynamics based on the personality of the leader in the group.

Results: When presenting to a committee headed by a Results personality, the Results personality will make the final decision and the rest of the committee will go along. In essence, you will be presenting to the Results personality and the rest of the committee will just be on-lookers. So be brief and be relevant.

Process: Unlike the Results personality, to the Process personality relevance is decided by the process not the prospect. The process usually includes a

beforecast

“The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.”

—Samuel Eliot Morison, *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, 1919

“What we’ve got here is a failure to communicate.”

—Frank R. Pierson, *Cool Hand Luke*, 1967

list of categories on a scorecard with a specific scoring system to be followed by each member of the review committee.

Therefore the personalities of the other committee members only come into play in regard to the categories on the scorecard. In this case the key to winning is preparation. Do everything in your power to find out what categories they will be judging. Make sure you are thoughtful, methodical, precise, and detailed in every aspect of your presentation. And of course, have well-organized volumes of leave behinds to satisfy their analytical nature.

Loyalty: When the Loyalty personality is the head of the committee you have a unique challenge. Knowing that the Loyalty personality’s style is to be accommodating, you must look to the other personality types when creating your presentation. The decision will be made essentially by taking a poll of the committee to determine a winner. In the case with a variety of personality preferences you have to calculate whether one personality type constitutes a majority. If it does you have a choice of pursuing that personality’s vote exclusive-

ly or creating a presentation that will fit several or all four of the personality types. In this case there are all four personality types represented. We know the Loyalty personality will go with the majority unless that decision violates their core values as a person. So we have one Results personality, one Process personality, and one Inspiration personality left to present to. Or do we? Actually we have two choices in designing our presentation. First, we could focus on the Task orientation of the Results and the Process personalities. Second, we could focus on the More Assertive nature of the Results and the Inspiration personalities. My suggestion would be to focus on the Task orientation for the sole reason that the Results and Process personalities will both have more solid reasons for hiring you than the Inspiration personality. However, I have seen success either way. Again, the key is to gain the majority vote of the committee.

Inspiration: Inspiring this personality is the goal when the Inspiration personality is head of the review committee. This is a fun presentation to give. It needs to be creative, high ener-

gy, and party-like. The focus must be on status, recognition, and excitement. Doing big things like bringing your entire staff of twenty people to the presentation or wearing a t-shirt or button with “I Love JR Widgets” will have a profound impact on the Inspiration personality. Anything you can do to make the Inspiration personality feel like you will make them more important in the eyes of their peers and their industry will take you one step closer to winning their account.

Conclusion

Tailoring your selling to the personality of your prospect will help you win the game of likability that we all play whether we like it or not. Remember, the Likability strategy involves three steps. The first is understanding your own personality. The second is understanding the personality of your prospect. And the third is adapting your personality in order to connect with the prospect. It’s that simple really. It’s about versatility by communicating in their language! ●

Charles Collie is the president of Collie & Associates, a management consulting firm that helps business leaders discover what is innovative and valuable in themselves and their companies.

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