



Service, Selling and Style

By Adam Halpern, President, Soft Sell

When it comes to music, clothing or automobiles people have their own unique tastes and styles. The same holds true for interactions with people.

In businesses development situations, most salespeople use only one style when they interact with customers. The reason for this is that they have developed one method of interacting with customers that is most comfortable for them. They do not realize the need to adjust their communication style to match the customer's behavioral style. However, the really successful salespeople know that before a customer will listen to you, they first must "emotionally" buy-in to you as a person.

They know that people prefer to do business with people they like and trust. The most effective salespeople adjust their communication style to match the behavioral styles of their customers and associates. Learning how to interact more effectively will help you to be more effective and put you far ahead of your competition.

So how do you build this rapport?

About Behavioral Styles

The first key is to recognize that different behavioral styles do exist among customers. You've probably seen from your own experience how one approach worked great with one person, yet you got a very different reaction from someone else.

Behavioral styles impact:

- How a prospect wants you to sell to them.
- How a prospect wants you to present information.
- How much information you present.
- How a prospect makes buying decisions.

The same approach won't work with everyone. As you learn to adapt your approach to make the customer feel more at ease, the relationship will improve and more sales will eventually result.

Most psychologists agree that there are four major types of behavior

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categories. For now, let's call these behavioral styles, and everyone at your company who communicates with customers should learn how to read behavioral styles and how to adapt each interaction.

You can identify an individual's behavioral style preference by using the Personal Profile System® developed by Inscape Publishing. It classifies behavior into four styles: "D", "I", "S", and "C".

Characteristics of Each Style

"D" Style

"Dominant," or "D" behavioral-style individuals, are usually results-oriented. They thrive on the challenge of solving problems and making quick buying decisions. These individuals are fast-paced and like to be in charge. They can become impatient with people or situations that hinder them from accomplishing their goals. This is one of the reasons why they're more task-oriented than people-oriented.

You can recognize these individuals as being fast-paced and direct when speaking – they're more interested in telling you information than in asking your opinion. They tend to think in terms of the bottom line. These individuals may have more formal, "can't read" facial expressions than other styles.

Dominance styles say things like - "I hate to lose! I sometimes demand what I want. I sometimes ask a lot of questions. I want others to know I'm the boss. I might say things to surprise people. I want to be the best at everything I do."

Selling to the D Style - When selling to the "D" style, don't bog them down with excessive socializing or details – get to the point quickly. Directly focus on how your product or service can help them achieve their goals. Emphasize the results you can help them obtain, while always letting them feel they're in charge. In other words, don't waste their time. Make your sales presentation direct and meaningful toward helping them achieve their objectives.

"I" Style

"Influence," or "I" behavioral-style individuals are frequently thought of as "people persons." They're enthusiastic and upbeat – enjoying the interaction with others in a humorous, lighthearted way. These individuals can appear to be the eternal optimists, usually seeing the glass as half-full rather than half-empty, and can be quite persuasive about things they're passionate about.

You can identify them as being outgoing and direct, very talkative and interactive. These people tend to speak quickly, use animated expressions, and express their feelings freely. They can appear to be casual and friendly in their interactions with others and love to express themselves in a jovial, humorous way. Sometimes you'll notice trinkets

or fun gadgets in their office – it's their way of adding levity to the work environment.

Influence styles say things like - "When I talk, people listen. I know how to express myself and still not hurt anyone's feelings. I want to be popular. I enjoy being the center of attention. My friends say I can talk my way out of anything. I am rather charming."

Selling to the "I" style - When selling to the "I" style, match your pace and presentation to their energetic approach. Be friendly and sociable – let them know you like them personally. Where appropriate, take them to lunch. You need to provide testimonials and personal stories on how other people have responded to your company's product or service. Show enthusiasm for the benefits your product or service can provide. Also, make sure you support the individuals by providing whatever detailed follow-up work is necessary; don't ask them to do it. Make it easy for them to buy from you.

"S" Style

The "Steadiness," or "S" behavioral style, is also people-oriented – but at a much slower pace than the "I" style. The "S" person doesn't like to be forced into making changes or quick decisions. They're patient, loyal, and calm, making them excellent listeners and "peacekeepers" when conflict breaks out. Their focus is on cooperating with people.

You can identify these individuals by their reserved, indirect, but people-oriented approach to others. Their speech may appear softer, with an open posture. They will have relaxed, warm facial expressions and prefer a casual approach.

Steadiness styles say things like - "I don't like confrontations. People will compliment me for how hard I try, whether at work or play. Once I start something, I finish it. I'm a good team player, gentle and easy to get along with. I take pride in keeping my temper when others often lose theirs."

Selling to the "S" Style - When selling to the "S" style, it's important that you listen to them. They need to feel you understand their needs. Assure the individuals that you and your organization are customer- and service-oriented. Just don't push them into quick buying decisions. Show how you're interested in a long-term relationship with their company, and that they can depend on you whenever necessary. The "S" style customers are more loyal to you when other vendors come knocking on their door.

"C" Style

The "Conscientiousness," or "C" behavioral style, is quality-focused, slow-paced, methodical, and task-oriented. They focus on the details and are primarily concerned about doing things the "right" or "correct way." These individuals are analytical and frequently set higher standards for themselves than others.

You can recognize them as being reserved and more indirect than other styles. These people are formal, with a closed posture and “can’t read” facial expressions. They don’t like to express their feelings readily.

Conscientiousness styles say things like - “Anything worth doing, is worth doing right. I like to know the exact answer all the time. I keep my desk and my things organized. I do not like to say things that will upset matters. I find the process of solving problems exciting.”

Selling to the “C” Style - When selling to the “C” style, make sure you have your facts straight. You’ll need to answer analytical questions, showing references where possible. These individuals don’t need you to socialize with them – they really don’t want you to. These people want you to provide detailed information in order to make a correct buying decision. Then they will thoroughly assess your information before coming to a conclusion. Be slow-paced and formal in your approach with them – don’t become overly enthusiastic or animated. Focus instead on facts, logic, and detailed analysis.

Applications

Although individuals have the ability to behave within all four styles, they tend to use one or two most often. There is no right or wrong style. Each has its own strengths and limitations. However, there are three key steps when applying the knowledge of behavioral styles to a sales situation:

1. Understand your own behavioral style in the sales environment.
2. Identify the prospect’s behavioral style.
3. Adapt your approach to best fit the prospect’s behavioral style needs

About Adam Halpern.....

Adam Halpern is the president and principal consultant of Soft Sell Training, a sales consulting firm based in Houston, TX. After years of developing and leading successful sales training programs for organizations throughout the United States, Soft Sell President Adam Halpern realized that a huge, untrained group of employees were influencing sales and customer retention opportunities: non-sales front line employees. Soft Sell was founded based on a basic truth of business: Every customer interaction is an opportunity to build a profitable relationship. Soft Sell’s common-sense approach to sales training is a product of Adam’s professional experience in organizational development and direct sales. For more than twelve years, he has worked with executive decision makers in training, sales, field marketing, and customer service. As a lead corporate trainer, he worked in extremely competitive business environments such as NetIQ, Symantec (formerly BindView), and American Express. As a sales and operations executive for the advertising firm ADMS Inc., he developed highly effective value-based sales methodologies for selling in complex business development environments. He is a part time philosopher and

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