

# Personality and Persuasion



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# Personality and Persuasion

Developing an understanding of personality traits, thinking styles and learning preferences is a very useful way to improve our knowledge of behaviour, what motivates others and why it is sometimes necessary to adapt our individual style when trying to communicate effectively with others.

To communicate effectively and to lead others we must recognize that each one of us has strengths and weaknesses. How we play to those strengths and allow for weaknesses is critical to persuasion, motivation and leadership.

Most of us have the capacity to recognise different styles but often fail to see the position from anything other than our own.

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We are all different. It is important to recognise what type of person we are in order to build on our individual natural strengths and develop strategies to improve areas of weakness. Understanding individual personality helps us ascertain what type of tasks we are best suited to and when we might need to adapt our style. Underpinning all this is the importance of remaining authentic and being true to ourselves.

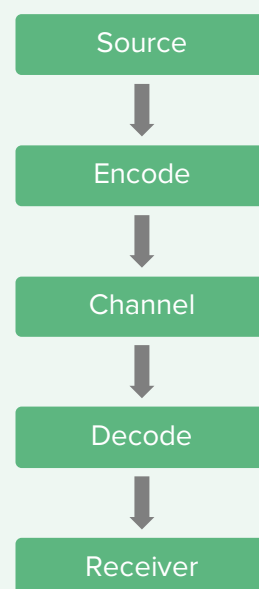
“ This above all: to thine own self be true,  
and it must follow, as the night the day.  
Thou canst not then be false to any man.  
*Hamlet, I,iii* ”

The better we understand ourselves, the better we become at reading others and working out what motivates them. Once we know what makes someone tick, we can think about things from their perspective and then present our thoughts to them in a manner which will appeal to their needs or fears. After all, almost everything we need in our personal and professional lives will depend on others to a greater or lesser extent.

The essence of effective communication is the transmission of a message that is encoded via a chosen channel which is then received and decoded successfully by the receiver. When our style of transmission matches the preferred style of communication to that of the receiver, our message will have a far greater chance of being understood in the way in which we intended.

Our favoured style of communication, whether transmitting or speaking, is largely dependent on our personality type; barriers to this communication are anything that prevents the receiver from understanding our message.

There are numerous personality type models, many of which are based on the work of Carl Jung and are useful in understanding ourselves and others. These should not be taken as precise scientific conclusions identifying individual personality but rather as useful tools in understanding who we are and how others behave so that we can adapt our own behaviour where needed.



Shannon, C. A  
*Mathematical  
Theory of  
Communication*  
1948



Some personality models use codes; others use colours and animals and more besides but all share the same basic themes.

There are four main personality types and these fit into the following categories:

- Drivers
- Analytics
- Expressives
- Team Players

These are sometimes represented by colours:

- **Red**
- **Blue**
- **Yellow**
- **Green**

### Key Characteristics

**Drivers or Reds** tend to be extroverted and high energy. They are action-oriented and direct and see the 'bigger picture'. They are enthusiastic, captivating, talkative, dominant, persistent and risk-seekers. Any discussion needs to be focused on results, to the point and straightforward. They are independent thinkers although often rely on the counsel of a trusted circle. Their attention span is often limited. Words such as 'results, actions, clarity, focus and proven' amongst others sit well with Drivers.

**Analytics or Blues** tend to be introverted and have a desire for detail and precision. They prefer written communication and will analyse everything. They are cerebral, logical and academic and are impressed with arguments that are supported by data. They can often out-think their competition and prefer to guard their emotions. Give Analytics their space to absorb and think about your ideas and come up with their own conclusion. Words such as 'quality, plan, expert, proof and sensible' will resonate with Analytics.

**Expressives or Yellows** are strongly extroverted, positive and friendly and are very concerned with human relations. Sociability is important to them as they are all about people. They can be good listeners but are impulsive and easily distracted and have a low boredom threshold. Expressives value endorsement from others and can sometimes be indecisive and generalised. They can be afraid of making the wrong choice so will seldom be first adopters and will tend to agree to things only if they have seen it done elsewhere although they will rarely admit this. They are reasonably easy to influence with proven methods and references and language such as 'expertise, similar to, what works well, innovative and demonstrated by' will resonate with them.

**Team Players or Greens** are very focused on values and being reliable and they value the individual. They are good listeners and very empathetic and are generally more interested in your opinion than theirs. They will work hard to build relationships and are generally good coordinators. They will be the most patient of the main personalities and respond well to language such as 'relationship, team, benefit, plan and advantage'.

In the spaces provided below, identify the words that describe the way you usually behave on a **most-to-least** basis.

Working across each row of words, give 4 points to the word you think best describes you, 3 points to the next, then 2 and finally 1 to the word that describes you least. You may find it easier to decide first which word describes you most, before moving on to the word that describes you least. Then compare the other two words to assign them 2 points and 3 points appropriately.

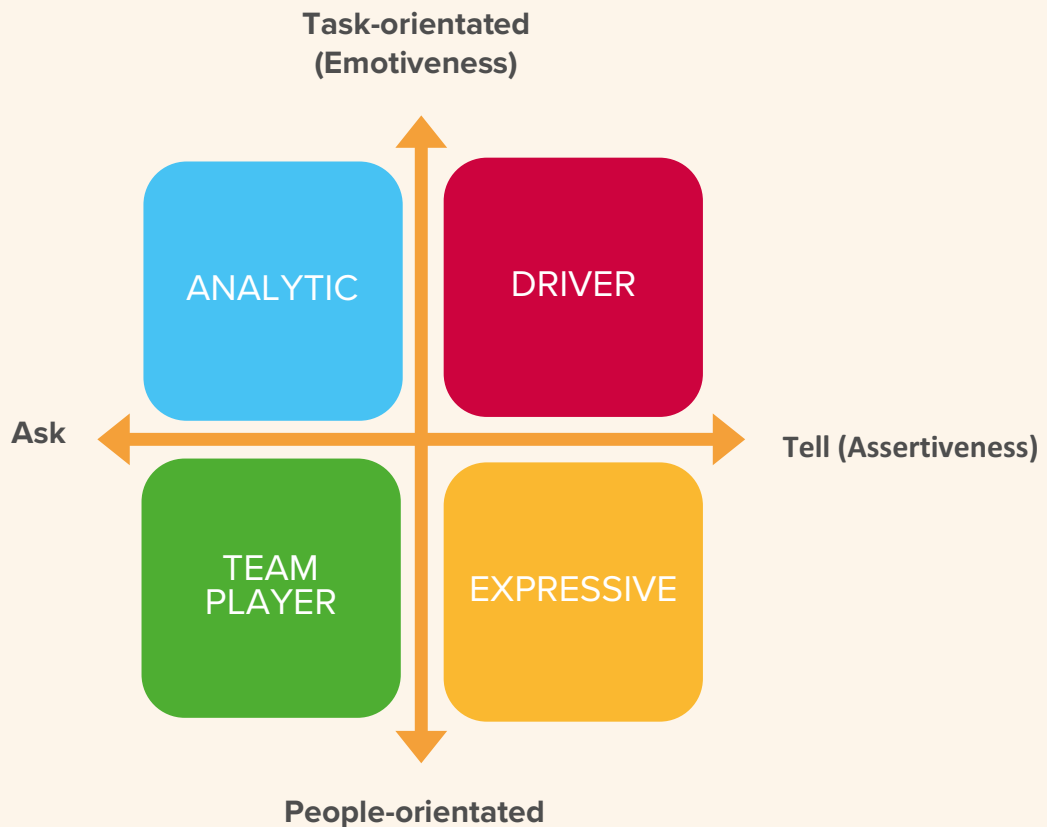
For example:

1	directing	2	influencing	3	steady	4	cautious	
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When finished, total the numbers at the bottom of each column. Check the accuracy by adding the four column totals together to see if they equal 100.

COLUMN 1		COLUMN 2		COLUMN 3		COLUMN 4		
action-oriented		enthusiastic		reflective		perfectionist		
direct		gregarious		patient		accurate		
daring		persuasive		loyal		fact-finder		
assertive		impulsive		diplomatic		predictable		
demanding		emotional		team-player		systematic		
forceful		conceptual		calm		conventional		
risk-taker		trusting		courteous		risk-averse		
adventurous		influential		thoughtful		conscientious		
decisive		affable		people-oriented		restrained		
inquisitive		sociable		relaxed		high standards		Accuracy Total
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>		

David Merrill, a Denver psychologist, describes people as falling into four approximate behavioural profiles or zones. It is a very handy way of thinking about behavioural differences. One of these four behaviour zones is, for you, a kind of "home plate" — a place where, day in and day out, other people see you as occupying. The four home plates together make up a big square as shown below.



The East-West axis it measures assertiveness: from "asking" to "telling".

The North-South axis measures responsiveness or emotiveness: whether we react in a controlled task-orientated way (top) or in an emotional people-orientated way.

Thus:

- A "driver" is a combination of task-orientated and assertive.
- An "expressive" is a combination of assertive and people-orientated
- A "team player" is people-orientated and non-assertive
- An "analytical" is a combination of non-assertive and task-orientated

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF DIFFERENT STYLES

### DRIVER

#### Speech

- Direct, commanding speaker with focus on his/her own objectives in a conversation
- Will give commands rather than requests. Speaks rapidly. Usually in a hurry to communicate ideas

#### Email/Written Communications

- Short, sometimes incomplete communication
- Often dispenses with communication formalities and salutations
- Sometimes won't thoroughly read correspondence

#### Listening

- Selective listener
- Tends not to hear everything said to him/her
- Does not like verbose explanations
- Needs to hear the point

### ANALYTICAL

#### Speech

- Tends to ask questions rather than make statements
- Quiet and observant speaker
- Cautious about revealing any personal reactions

#### Email/Written Communications

- Best with written facts and figures
- Will always have facts and in logical order
- Written communication is precise and logical with no room for error

#### Listening

- Will listen and assess everything the speaker says
- Facial expressions will reveal nothing about his/her reactions
- May discard information or the speaker if any fact is incorrect

### EXPRESSIVE

#### Speech

- Emotional, high energy speaker who personalises his/her speech with own stories
- Constantly seeks reactions from others to comments

#### Email/Written Communications

- Prefers to see people
- Likes a friendly style with personal reference

#### Listening

- Does not always listen well but can when needed
- Easily distracted
- Happy to do the talking
- Tends to hear underlying emotional tones in voices

### TEAM PLAYER

#### Speech

- Speaks slowly. Low key, quiet style
- Speech often about people issues

#### Email/Written Communications

- Will write clear, concise letters with excellent directions
- Excellent at any written communication that follows lines of existing practices

#### Listening

- A natural listener who always tries to hear and understand the speaker
- Will listen for ways he/she can help the speaker

# HOW TO INFLUENCE DIFFERENT BEHAVIOURAL TYPES



## DRIVERS

### Do

- Be direct, brief and to the point
- Stick to business and skip the chit-chat
- Be prepared. Know the requirements of the task at hand
- Organise your arguments into neat packages. Present your facts cleanly and logically
- Ask specific questions

### Don't

- Fish for answers
- Ask rhetorical questions
- Be bossy
- Disagree with the person (rather disagree with the facts)
- Persuade by citing endless objectives



## ANALYTICALS

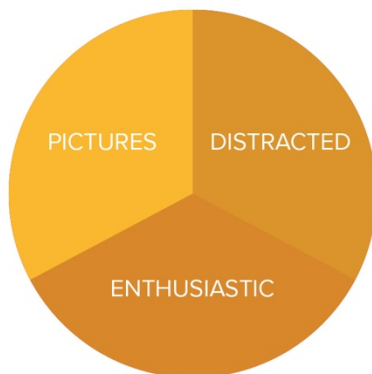
### Do

- Prepare your case in advance
- Take your time but be persistent
- Support their principles - show you value their thoughtful approach
- Be clear
- Follow through. Never break your word with Analyticals because they will remember

- Draw up a scheduled approach for any action plan and be specific on roles and responsibilities

### Don't

- Be disorganised
- Be casual, informal, loud
- Be invasive or flippant
- Stick to emotional arguments



## EXPRESSIVES

### Do

- Meet their social needs while discussing business
- Be lively and step up the energy
- Talk about their goals as well as the team's
- Be open and speak your mind
- Ask for and respect their opinions and ideas
- Keep your eye on the big picture not on the technical detail

- Support your points with examples involving people they know and respect
- Be friendly

### Don't

- Suppress their opinions.
- Bore them by going into too much detail
- Stick to routine



## TEAM PLAYERS

### Do

- Show respect
- Listen and be responsive
- Be non-threatening, casual, and informal
- Ask "how" questions to draw out their opinions
- Define what you want them to contribute to the task
- Be patient

### Don't

- Rush or force them to respond too quickly
- Spend too long on facts and figures
- Decide for them
- Be imposing or domineering



### How to Increase Emotiveness

General theme:

- Control feelings less, show feelings more
- Reveal how you are feeling to others
- Pay personal compliments
- Be willing to spend time on relationships
- Engage in small talk — socialise
- Be friendlier in language and behaviour

### How to Decrease Emotiveness

General theme:

- Control feelings more, show feelings less
- Talk less
- Restrain your enthusiasm
- Make decisions based on facts
- Stop and think before speaking
- Acknowledge the thoughts of others

### How to Increase Assertiveness

General theme:

- Tell more and ask less
- Get to the point
- Volunteer information
- Be willing to disagree
- Act on your own convictions
- Initiate conversation

### How to Decrease Assertiveness

General theme:

- Ask more and tell less
- Ask the opinion of others
- Negotiate with others on decisions
- Listen without interrupting
- Adapt to time needs of others
- Allow others to assume leadership more often

## LEARNING STYLES

Honey, P. & Mumford, A. (1982) *Manual Of Learning Styles*

Learning style	Attributes	Activities
<b>Activist</b>	Activists are those people who learn by doing. Activists need to get their hands dirty, to dive in with both feet first. Have an open-minded approach to learning, involving themselves fully and without bias in new experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• problem solving</li> <li>• group discussion</li> <li>• puzzles</li> <li>• competitions</li> <li>• role-play</li> </ul>
<b>Theorist</b>	These learners like to understand the theory behind the actions. They need models, concepts and facts to engage in the learning process. Prefer to analyse and synthesise, drawing new information into a systematic and logical 'theory'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• models</li> <li>• statistics</li> <li>• stories</li> <li>• quotes</li> <li>• background info</li> <li>• applying theories</li> </ul>
<b>Pragmatist</b>	These people need to be able to see how to put the learning into practice in the real world. Abstract concepts and games are of limited use unless they can see a way to put the ideas into action in their lives. Experimenters, trying out new ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• time to think about how to apply learning in reality</li> <li>• case studies</li> <li>• problem solving</li> <li>• discussion</li> </ul>
<b>Reflector</b>	These people learn by observing and thinking about what happened. They may avoid leaping in and prefer to watch from the sidelines. Prefer to stand back and view experiences from a number of different perspectives, collecting data and taking the time to work towards an appropriate conclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• paired discussion</li> <li>• self-analysis questionnaires</li> <li>• personality questionnaires</li> <li>• time out</li> <li>• observing activities</li> <li>• feedback from others</li> <li>• coaching</li> <li>• interviews</li> </ul>

(Harvard Business Review, 2002)

## 1. Charismatics

They want to move quickly from the big idea to the specifics—especially those details regarding implementation. Charismatics are often described as enthusiastic, captivating, talkative, dominant, and persistent. They are risk-seeking yet responsible individuals. They are impressed with intelligence and facts and not usually given to self-absorption and compulsiveness.

Although charismatics may show great exuberance for a new idea, getting a final commitment from them can be difficult. They've learned from experience—particularly from the bad decisions they've made—to temper their initial enthusiasm with a good dose of reality. They seek out facts to support their emotions, and if such data can't be found, they will quickly lose their enthusiasm for an idea. Furthermore, charismatics prefer arguments that are tied directly to bottom-line results and are particularly keen on proposals that will make their company more competitive.

When trying to persuade a charismatic, you need to fight the urge to join in their excitement. Your arguments must be simple and straightforward, and you should use visual aids to stress the features and benefits of your proposal. The attention span of a charismatic can be particularly short. In a meeting, you need to start with the most critical information

Although charismatics might appear to be independent thinkers, they often rely on other high-profile executives in the company when making major decisions. Addressing this tendency will help increase your chances of success. Also critical will be your quiet perseverance: Charismatics expect you to wait patiently for them to make a decision, which could take some time, even though their initial enthusiasm may have led you to believe otherwise.

**Words that can help hold a charismatic's interest include: results, proven, actions, show, watch, look, bright, easy, clear, and focus.**

## 2. Thinkers

They are often described as cerebral, intelligent, logical, and academic. Typically, they are voracious readers and selective about the words they use. They are impressed with arguments that are quantitative and supported by data. Not usually known for their social skills, thinkers tend to guard their emotions. They have two strong visceral desires in business—to anticipate change and to win—and they often pride themselves on their ability to outthink and outmaneuver the competition. They are driven more by the need to retain control than by the need to innovate.

Thinkers have a strong desire for comparative data, which can make it difficult to persuade them. To make a decision, they need as much information as possible, including all pertinent market research, customer surveys, case studies, cost-benefit analyses, and so on. Perhaps the single-most important piece of information thinkers need is the presenter's methodology for getting from point A to point B. They strive to understand all perspectives of a given situation. And, unlike charismatics, thinkers have a strong aversion to risk.

When trying to persuade thinkers, your best approach is to openly communicate your worries and concerns about your proposal, because thinkers work best when they know the risks up front. Often, they will ask a battery of questions to explore and understand all the risks associated with an option. Thinkers can be swayed when the arguments and presentation appeal directly to their intelligence.

Interestingly, their thought process is very selective but not always completely methodical. They will, for instance, sometimes circumvent their own decision-making processes if they feel a bargain—a relatively low-risk opportunity to save time or money—is in their best interest.

Thinkers will never forget a bad experience, so you need to make sure that your recommendations to them are truly the best options. One effective strategy for persuading thinkers is to give them ample time and space to come to their own conclusions. In a meeting, thinkers will often take contradictory points of view. This can be extremely confusing, but remember that thinkers do not like to show their cards up front, so expect that you may not be able to discern how they feel about any of the options you present. In fact, thinkers often do not reveal their intentions until they render their final decisions.

**Words and phrases that will capture a thinker's attention include: quality, academic, think, numbers, makes sense, intelligent, plan, expert, competition, and proof.**

### 3. Sceptics

Perhaps the most defining trait of sceptics is that they tend to have very strong personalities. They can be demanding, disruptive, disagreeable, rebellious, and even antisocial. They may have an aggressive, almost combative style and are usually described as take-charge people. They tend to be self-absorbed and act primarily on their feelings.

During your presentation, a sceptic may get up and leave temporarily, take a phone call, or even carry on a side conversation for an extended period. The good news is that you will know almost immediately where you stand with sceptics. You can almost always depend on them to tell you what they are thinking because of their strong personalities.

To persuade a sceptic, you need as much credibility as you can garner. Sceptics tend to trust people who are like them—for instance, people who went to the same college or worked for the same companies. If you haven't established credibility with a sceptic, you need to find a way to have it transferred to you prior to or during the meeting—for example, by gaining an endorsement from someone the sceptic trusts. Credibility can be transferred (from a colleague, for instance), but ultimately it must be earned, and you may have to go through some very aggressive questioning to establish it.



Although persuading a sceptic might sound daunting, the process is very straightforward. Sceptics want to move forward with groundbreaking ideas, but they first need to make sure that those ideas are from people they fully trust. Sceptics usually make decisions quickly—within days, if not right on the spot.

**Words and phrases to use with a sceptic include: feel, grasp, power, action, suspect, trust, agreeable, demand, and disrupt.**

#### 4. Followers

Because they are afraid of making the wrong choice, followers will seldom be early adopters. Instead, they trust in known brands and in bargains, both of which represent less risk. They are also very good at seeing the world through other people's eyes. Interestingly, despite their cautiousness, followers can be spontaneous at times. Above all, though, they are responsible decision makers, which is why they are most often found in large corporations.

Followers may engage you in long lists of issues and repeatedly challenge your position (similar to what a sceptic does), but don't be fooled. In the end, they will agree to something only if they've seen it done elsewhere. But followers won't admit this. In fact, they will seldom concede that they are followers; they would much rather have you believe that they are innovative and forward thinking. Frequently, followers are mistaken for sceptics. However, followers are not inherently suspicious; they prefer that you help them gain a better grasp of what they don't understand.

Although followers are often the most difficult to identify, they can be the easiest to persuade—if you know which buttons to push. To obtain buy-in from a follower, you need to make them feel confident about deciding to move in a certain direction by proving that others have succeeded on that path. Not surprisingly, followers tend to focus on proven methods, and references and testimonials are big persuading factors.

With a follower, don't try to sell yourself unless you have a strong track record of success. Instead, look for past decisions by the follower that support your views or find similar decisions by other executives the follower trusts. Ideally, followers want solutions that are innovative yet proven, new but trusted, leading-edge yet somewhat safe. At the end of the day, though, what followers need most is to know that they won't lose their jobs. This is why they rarely make out-of-the-box decisions. In fact, for some followers, the only way to persuade them to adopt a truly bold strategy is to get someone else to do it successfully first.

**Words and phrases to use with a follower include: innovate, expedite, swift, bright, just like before, expertise, similar to, previous, what works.**

#### 5. Controllers

They are usually described as logical, unemotional, sensible, detail oriented, accurate, analytical, and objective. Like sceptics, controllers often have strong personalities and can even be overbearing. In their minds, they are the best salespeople, the best marketing experts, the best strategists, and so on. Whereas followers are good at putting themselves in others' shoes, controllers see things only from their own perspectives and will frequently make snap judgments and remarks that alienate others.

Controllers can be loners and are often self-absorbed. When dealing with controllers, you need to overcome their internal fears, which they will pretend they don't have. In fact, they will cover them up by paying an inordinate amount of attention to the intricate details of processes and methods.

In a meeting, remember that controllers can be self-absorbed, so be prepared for long silences during your interactions. It is also crucial to remember that when cornered, controllers rarely capitulate. Furthermore, even though controllers seek accuracy and facts, that does not necessarily mean they will make intelligent, rational decisions. Often, a controller will jump to illogical conclusions. And unlike charismatics, who are willing to take responsibility for their decisions, controllers try to avoid being held accountable. When something goes wrong, they assume others are at fault.

To persuade controllers, your argument needs to be structured, linear, and credible. They want details, but only if presented by an expert. In practice, the only way to sell an idea to controllers is *not* to sell it; instead, let them make the choice to buy. Your best bet is to simply supply them with the information they need and hope they will convince themselves. Although controllers and sceptics share several characteristics, a key difference is that controllers need ample time to make decisions (they hate to be rushed). By contrast, sceptics are much quicker on the draw. One of the worst things you can do with a controller is to push your proposal too aggressively. When that happens, controllers are likely to see you as part of the problem and not the solution.

**Words and phrases to use with a controller include: details, facts, reason, logic, power, handle, physical, grab, keep them honest and just do it.**



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