

## Learning about behavioral styles helps improve customer service *and* sales by Connie Brubaker

One of the most enjoyable parts of my job is teaching people about behavioral styles.

I know, I know — at first glance, the words “behavioral styles” conjure up memories of that old Intro to Psychology course you took in college, or remind you of some episode of Dr. Phil you caught last month. But trust me on this: behavioral styles are real, they’re relevant, and even a basic understanding of

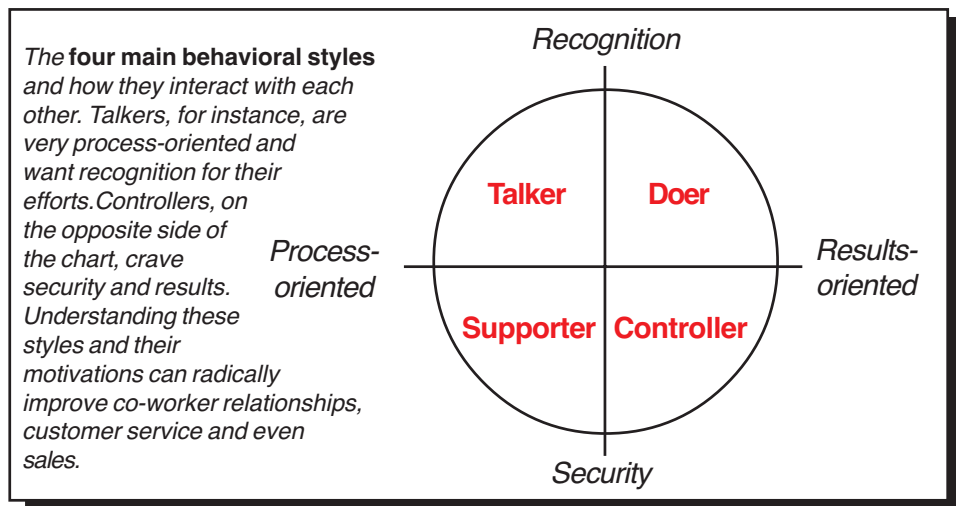


*Connie's Comments*

them can increase your sales and result in more satisfied clients and customers. Behavioral styles can be categorized into four main groups: talkers, doers, controllers and supporters. Keep in mind that these labels are solely descriptive — there’s no such thing as an inherently good or bad style.

**Talkers** are “people” people. They are outgoing, friendly and very sociable. They like being with people, talking to people and being in social situations. Not surprisingly, they’re approachable and easy to talk to. They have high energy and they’re emotionally responsive. Because of their natural charisma, talkers can be great salespeople, although they often have a tendency to take rejection personally (but they usually bounce back just as quickly). They also make wonderful trainers.

**Doers** are bottom line, get-it-done types. Often they tend to be impatient, dominating, restless people, seemingly



always pressed for time. Doers are usually the movers and shakers within an organization. They want to make decisions and get on with things, and aren’t afraid of taking risks. Remember too that doers want recognition for the results they get, so status is important.

**Controllers** are logic-driven, fact-oriented people. They tend to be reserved, distant and unemotional. They gravitate toward provable facts, numbers, details and accurate information and are not swayed by enthusiasm and personality — they may even be turned off what they consider excessive displays of emotion. They demonstrate lower energy and emotional responsiveness. Despite a tendency towards confrontation at times, controllers make good planners and strategic thinkers.

**Supporters** are easygoing, steady, dependable, salt-of-the-earth people. They want to take things slowly and carefully, conscientiously collecting information along the way. Security and

continuity are very important for supporters — they are definitely not risk-takers and may walk away if pressed for a quick decision.

Understanding these different behavioral styles is more than an academic exercise. The better people understand each other within a company, the more tolerant they become of each other.

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## Problem-solving in 4 easy steps

*Sometimes it feels like customer service reps should receive hazard pay when dealing with irate clients. Here are some tips to defuse those incendiary situations.*

**Step 1: Define the problem.** Get the facts, listen without becoming defensive, and repeat the problem as you understand it. Actually writing down the problem can also be helpful.

**Step 2: Pinpoint the cause of the problem.** This isn't about pointing fingers or assigning blame — it's simply a necessity to diagnose what went wrong before committing to a solution.

**Step 3: Identify possible solutions.** When appropriate, involve others in this step. For customer service problems, for instance, suggest options and solicit the customer's input. Agree jointly on the best course of action. If the problem isn't customer-focused, consider involving co-workers in a brainstorming session, ask advice, or simply write down every realistic solution that comes to mind.

**Step 4: Solve the problem.** Remove the cause or take corrective action. Make sure the customer is satisfied with the solution.

## Behavioral styles offer clues to better sales

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other's behavioral quirks. I know of one company that color-coded their employees' name badges so co-workers could easily identify the four styles in action. Thanks to that innovation, people who were once offended by the guy who walked down the hall without saying hello now understood that he was a controller style focused intently on his mental checklist and completely oblivious to their greeting.

Customer service reps schooled in the four behavioral styles demonstrate a better understanding of customer complaints and more empathy for the person involved. That in turn leads to more satisfied customers more quickly.

In sales, if you learn to adapt your behavioral style to match your clients, you'll better understand why people buy, and what specifically they're looking for from you. Controllers want detailed facts and figures. Talkers tend to value the experience and the personal connection with the salesperson. Doers will take risks if they see big benefits,

while supporters need reassurance that they're making a good decision.

We tend to gravitate towards people whose styles are similar to our own. Interestingly, though, my

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husband's style is the exact opposite of mine. We've learned how our respective strengths complement each other to create a better partnership.

Businesses need diversity, too. A great team is composed of different styles, and each adds a valuable perspective. Each is uniquely suited for a specific role. Even if that co-worker (or client, for that matter) drives you nuts from time to time, respect the contribution they can make. The very best teams, after all, are more than the sum of their parts — or their behavioral styles.

In this issue of SOLUTIONS:

- Use behavioral styles to increase sales, service and relationships.
- Four steps to better problem solving skills.

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