

The Temperament Predictor

Communication

How can we understand or persuade people without communicating well? We cannot. The appeal and force of our arguments are not convincing unless we relate with our audience. Have we walked in their shoes? Do we value what they value? Do we present our ideas in terms they readily understand, or do we keep them shrouded in the trappings of our own images and style? I have met far too many salespeople shaking their heads, saying “Why don’t they get it? How can I explain it any more simply?” when all they need to do is to accommodate the temperament of their audience and relate with them in terms they understand.

It’s in your graphics...wording...just the right amount of details...the expression of emotional energy...and many other factors. These must all be considered to increase your odds of succeeding with any individual or audience.

There is no substitution for understanding how things work. Casinos love system players because they lose. The odds in blackjack are the same for everyone regardless. Only card counters win more than the average, and they are not allowed to play. Emotional players are beloved by casinos and sharks alike.

As a salesperson, if you adopt a system, you will lose if you do not also understand why and how it should work so you can modify it as you gain experience with it. From here into the future, you will have to be smarter to survive. The people in your markets are changing and you must anticipate and adapt your methods to their changes. The dynamics excite. If they do not, re-think your position.

The Four Main Keys to Knowing People

The four key testable elements in general use today all originate in ancient wisdom, beginning when man first accepted that our actions were not orchestrated by the gods.

The Roman physician Galen identified four humors: Sanguine (optimistic), Melancholic (doleful), Choleric (passionate), Phlegmatic (calm). Six hundred years earlier, Plato wrote in *The Republic* of the four temperaments attributed to Hippocrates: Iconic (artistic), Pistic (caretaker), Noetic (idealist), Dianoetic (rationale).

Where Plato had defined his four in terms of virtue, Aristotle defined his in terms of happiness: Hedone (sensual), Proprietari (asset gathering), Ethikos (moral) and Dialogike (investigatory). Aristotle thought of logical investigation as the route to the happiest existence because it is the most self-sufficient and relies the least on external conditions.

Paracelsus (16th century Viennese physician) offered four representative spirits similar to what Galen and Plato offered: Salamanders (impulsive and changeable), Gnomes (industrious and guarded), Nymphs (inspired and passionate), Sylphs (curious and calm).

It is enough to say that in the 20th Century, refinements in the four characteristics came from Adickes, Spranger, Kretchmer, Fromm, Myers and many others. In fact, over 5,000 reports on temperament, character and personality had been identified by the early 20th Century.

Myers’ work was the most practical and lasting. Identification and explanation of the four temperaments became easy when she and her mother (Briggs) developed the Myers-Briggs instrument of worldwide renown. You have probably taken this test and forgotten your four letter score.

The Myers-Briggs test instrument is now a bit cumbersome, and its design does not allow for fast results. Brevity and less detail are needed to make this test and system useable in tactical situations.

The Temperament Predictor

David Kiersey has spent a lifetime observing temperament and character, and more than any other author has brought insight and practicality to the topic. I highly recommend his work for use by salespeople, especially the book *Please Understand Me II*.

Kiersey writes: *...the idea that individuals are predisposed to develop into one of four different configurations of attitude and action has survived for well over two thousand years. Surely this idea would not have been employed for so long, by so many people, in so many countries, had there not been some sort of shared recognition of its usefulness.*"

Kiersey uses the Myers scale as the basis for his work.

The Myers Scale

Myers charted temperament through a testing of where individuals lie on each of four scales:

Introversion/**E**xtroversion

INtuitive/**S**ensing

Thinking/**F**eeling

Judging/**P**erceiving

Sixteen combinations are possible with the Myers-Briggs scale, but four primary types of character form the basis for them. Here is where Kiersey's work proves practical. You really only need to understand the four temperaments and apply what you know about them to selling. Unless someone can tell you his/her actual Myers-Briggs test score, that's as far as you should go anyway. Making fine decisions based on raw assumptions is perilous.

Kiersey's scale follows Myers' system and is based on an additional matrix of Abstract and Concrete intersecting with Cooperative and Utilitarian. The following depicts the Myers-Briggs test scale and Kiersey's fundamental description of the four key combinations.

NF—*Idealist-Abstract/Cooperator*

Myers' intuitive feeler is viewed by Kiersey as dealing with the abstract and cooperating with others. Idealists envision achieving lofty goals.

NT—*Rational-Abstract/Utilitarian*

Myers' intuitive thinkers are to Kiersey life's rationalists, seeking far away goals in a very pragmatic way, straight to the point.

SJ—*Guardian-Concrete/Cooperator*

Myers' sensing and judging types are Kiersey's guardians, using cooperation as a method to preserve institutions and traditions.

SP—*Artisan-Concrete/Utilitarian*

Myers' sensing and perceiving combination are Kiersey's artisans, working hard to uphold concrete values in a very pragmatic way.

These are snapshots of the four types Kiersey so clearly describes in his book. They are limited in their scope here. Read the book to learn all about what makes these prototypes click.

I recommend reading Kiersey's book because its explanations are presented in very clear and practical language. You can use what you learn easily in marketing and selling. The book also contains a self-scoring test that can identify your own Myers-Briggs type without the inconvenience of taking a much longer test and delays in scoring.

Kiersey bases his type definitions on what people do well, which is observable, and largely by what words they use, which is most observable. If his observations work—which they

The Temperament Predictor

do—Kiersey's way of viewing people becomes an easy way to assess clients' temperaments and to communicate with them in language most suited to their styles. If you have great ideas for supporting their financial futures, then communicating best how your client will understand and accept becomes imperative...and will increase your success.

Your process is clear: you ask questions to understand; you think up solutions to your clients' situations; you present your ideas in compelling ways. If you do all this well, you stand a good chance of succeeding. The expression of a question or description of a concept is what most distinguishes you from others. Language plays the important role here because it is the biggest, most prevalent clue you can read.

Danger Zone

Danger exists in using types, temperament and character test scores to manipulate people. When you manipulate clients—actively using psychological information and skills to get them to behave according to your goals—you violate the ethic of always allowing the client to make an informed decision and always putting the client first. You cannot rationalize it any other way. You jeopardize sales and expose yourself to future litigation.

The art is communicating more effectively. The more effectively you communicate, the better the understanding between you and your clients. The better the understanding between you and your clients, the faster and deeper trust develops between you. The deeper the trust, the longer the relationship will last. Trust is the pinnacle of good relationships.

Understand the four basic styles and how people with those styles operate. If you use a system or systems, modify it to accommodate each style. Develop the questions you will ask to learn the temperament and decision-making style of each potential client, then ask them. When this becomes second nature to you and your conduct, enjoy the smoother ride.

Happy Marketing!