

# Typecasting

## Addressing Needs of Individual Personalities

### Objectives:

- A** Describe different types of customer personalities.
- B** Effectively handle different types of customer personalities.



1375 King Avenue, P.O. Box 12279, Columbus, Ohio 43212-0279

Ph: (614) 486-6708 Fax: (614) 486-1819

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Each of us has a unique personality. Think about your best friend—how is his/her personality different from yours?

So What

How do these differences affect your friendship and the actions you take on a daily basis? Let's say your best friend is a big risk-taker. How does this influence you?

Personality differences surround us every day—at home, at school, at work. We learn to adjust to these differences and to treat people accordingly. Successful salespeople do this as well.

They carefully identify each customer's personality type and use the appropriate sales techniques to meet the customer's needs and make the sale.



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A

## Just My Type

As a salesperson, your customers are very important to your success. They are important not only now, for their current purchases, but also for the ones that they make in the future as repeat customers. Each time your customers buy, it's as if they're casting a vote for you and your business. To win their votes, you must be able to deal with them effectively to meet their needs and wants.

Customers expect quality and service at a fair price. They communicate their satisfaction to others, and this communication is multiplied further as it's passed on to more and more people. If it's positive, this "word-of-mouth" communication can be invaluable to both you and your business. If it's negative, you may lose potential sales.

- ▶ *As a salesperson, your customers are very important to your success! You must be able to deal with them effectively to meet their needs and wants.*



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## The power of personality

Specific buying decisions are influenced by a customer's **personality**, the combination of his/her distinctive traits or qualities. Customers have unique personalities. Consider the following facts:

- Customers' personalities contain combinations of positive and negative traits. For example, a customer may be very pleasant and friendly, but he is also impatient and doesn't want to listen to the instructions about how to set up his new surround-sound system. Keep in mind also that customers' moods may change depending on the salesperson's actions. A customer may be in a poor mood when first meeting a salesperson, but the salesperson's friendliness and consideration may help lift his/her spirits.
- Customers are motivated by their needs and wants. Research has identified these as physical, safety, social, self-esteem, and self-fulfillment needs. Although it may recur, once a need has been satisfied, it will no longer motivate a customer to buy.
- Customers are reflections of their lifestyles. The amount of money earned, the use of leisure time, and the size of the family unit are just a few of the lifestyle factors that affect their decisions to buy.
- Customers' personalities may change over time. A change in circumstances may cause customers to switch from one personality type to another. Therefore, you need to look for clues to the existing personality, even if you're dealing with a repeat customer you think you know well.

Physical, safety, social, self-esteem, and self-fulfillment needs are explained by a principle called Maslow's Hierarchy. Learn more about Maslow's Hierarchy and how it affects sales by reading Alexa Colella's article "How to Boost Sales with the Maslow Hierarchy" at <http://www.abovethefold-mag.com/?q=article/how-boost-sales-maslow-hierarchy>.

## Customer personality types

In your group of friends, are there some who are always quick to make decisions? Do others wait to get all the facts before deciding what to do? Are there still others who act impulsively on limited knowledge? If you answered “yes” to these questions, then you are already familiar with some of the personalities you will meet in sales situations. Your ability to recognize individual personalities among your customers will help you to become a more effective salesperson.

Even though each personality is unique, most customers can be identified as one of six basic types—decisive, impulsive, fact finder, practical or frugal, informed, and difficult. Most of them—approximately 97 percent—will fit into one of the first five categories. Let’s explore them in a little more detail.

**Decisive.** Decisive customers know exactly what they want. Because of this, they tend to make purchase decisions very quickly, without taking a lot of time to browse or consider a lot of options. When you talk to them, they will be very direct and businesslike. Many times, they will straightforwardly ask you for exactly what they want or need. For instance, a decisive customer in a restaurant may say to the server, “I’ll take the prime rib, medium rare, a baked potato with sour cream, and bleu cheese dressing on my salad.” The server doesn’t even need to ask the customer any questions or present any options, because the customer has already decided.



▲ *Customers have many different types of personalities. Some customers are decisive—they know exactly what they want.*

**Impulsive.** Have you ever bought something on impulse? What was it and why did you decide to purchase it? Impulsive customers make decisions quickly. They shop leisurely, like to browse, and ask few questions of sales personnel. Often, impulsive customers are people who like their purchases to be noticed. An impulsive customer may notice an expensive pair of designer jeans on display and decide to buy them, even if s/he wasn't shopping for new jeans in the first place.

**Fact finder.** Customers who are fact finders are looking for information about products. As a salesperson, you are challenged to know your products inside and out so you can answer all their questions. Fact finders like to see variety and often comparison shop. For example, a fact finder might ask you to explain the differences between an iPhone and an Android phone.

**Practical or frugal.** Practical or frugal customers are very cautious with their money and want the best possible value for every dollar they spend. They usually like the simple, uncluttered life and dislike experimenting with new products. A practical customer might ask, "Are you sure this muffler is guaranteed for the life of my car? I want to make sure I'm getting my money's worth."



- ▲ *Customers who are fact finders are looking for information about products, so it's important to know your products inside and out!*



**Informed.** Informed customers have done their research on products beforehand and are confident about their choices before they even come in contact with salespeople. They spend for quality because they want the best. Informed customers are often trendsetters among their families, friends, and coworkers. Let's say you work at the Audi dealership, and today is the first day the new year's models are in. A customer comes in ready to test drive and purchase one of the new cars. That is an informed customer!

**Difficult.** Difficult customers can appear in many shapes and forms. They may be disagreeable, dishonest, domineering or superior, slow or methodical, or suspicious. Although most of the customers you deal with in your sales job won't be difficult, the ones who are can sure cause a lot of headaches! Picture an angry customer demanding his/her money back or demanding to see your manager. You'll definitely need to know how to address this customer's individual needs.

## THE GRAY ZONE

Some customers are impulsive, making quick decisions about their purchases. If a salesperson feels that a customer is about to make the wrong purchase decision or spend more than s/he can afford, does the salesperson have an obligation to say something to the customer? Or, should the salesperson keep quiet, serve the customer efficiently, and make the sale?

## Identifying personality types


How can you discover what type of customer you're dealing with at any given time? You can find clues to customer personalities in their actions, body language, conversation, and appearance. Observe their behavior—do they appear to be in a hurry? Notice what attracts their interest—do they reexamine items? Listen as they give their opinions—do they mention quality or value?

Keep an open mind when dealing with customers' needs and problems. Observe their appearances, but remember that appearances can be misleading. For example, a customer may come in dressed casually for a tennis game but may be interested in buying an evening gown for an upcoming special event.

For more information on how to determine customer personality types, check out David Weedmark's article "How to Ask Questions to Determine a Customer's Personality" at <http://work.chron.com/ask-questions-determine-customers-personality-3422.html>.

## Summary

Customers are very important to a salesperson's success. Even though each is unique, customers can be identified as one of six basic types—decisive, impulsive, fact finder, practical or frugal, informed, and difficult. Identifying customers' personalities will help you meet their individual needs.



1. Why are customers important to a salesperson's success?
2. Describe the following customer personality types:
  - a. Decisive
  - b. Impulsive
  - c. Fact finder
  - d. Practical or frugal
  - e. Informed
  - f. Difficult
3. How can salespeople identify customers' personality types?

## Get a Handle on It

How many of your customers will be better off because they have met and dealt with you today? To be successful in selling, you must adopt the attitude that serving customers well is the only reason for your being employed and the #1 objective of your job. Every customer deserves special attention and care. You must understand and empathize with their problems. Giving a personalized touch to selling makes customers feel that they have bought what is right for them. However, treating a customer as one of the masses, rather than as an individual, can create ill will and cause you to lose sales.

The better you serve your customers, the better you serve your business. Good customer service ensures the maximum in present and future sales. It just makes sense that a happy customer will spend more money than an unhappy one. A satisfied customer will continually do business with you and your company. Decades ago, many Americans wanted and bought many of the same things. Today's customers are different. They are very diverse, and they demand to be addressed as individuals.



▲ *Are you treating your customers as individuals? Every customer deserves special attention and care.*



## General guidelines for handling all types of customers

As a salesperson, you should strive to make each contact with a customer a good experience for you, for her/him, and for your business. Apply the following suggestions when working with all customers:

1. *Show a sincere interest in meeting customer needs.* Try to see the buying situation from the customer's point of view. Customers may dislike hearing your preferences, so avoid using expressions such as, "I have this model," or, "I like that color." Instead, sell your products by selling the benefits that appeal to the individual customer. Give customers as much time as they need to make buying decisions. Naturally, the amount of time will vary based on the personality type. Remember that if customers don't receive proper treatment, they may spend their money with other businesses. Treat them with care.
2. *Develop a sales vocabulary.* The language you use in a sales situation should be tailored to the individual customer, but there are a few general language guidelines that work for everyone. First, customers like to hear positive-sounding words. The most positive word to use is the customer's name—use it, especially near the end of your conversation. For example, you might say, "Thank you, Mr. Nelson, for doing business with us." Other positive words include *you, value, save, love, new, safe, and truth*. You should also use clear, meaningful phrases, such as "one-year, money-back guarantee" or "made in the U.S.A."

Second, you should avoid using technical terms that may be misunderstood and negative terms that may create doubt. For example, you should not use words such as *cheap, failure, risk, deal, difficult, liable, and flimsy*.



▲ *No matter what type of customer you're dealing with, you should show a sincere interest in meeting his/her needs.*

3. *Build two-way communication with the customer.* Establishing open communication with the customer is a requirement for determining his/her needs and wants. Several factors are involved, including:

- Listening. Keep quiet while customers are talking. Hear what they say and how they say it. By listening, you can learn what customers like and dislike, what they want and don't want, what they need and don't need.
- Observing customer actions. Does the customer appear hurried or relaxed? Has the customer focused on one product or service? The customer's interests and movements will assist you in determining his/her needs and wants.
- Asking questions. To learn as much as possible about the individual customer, you must ask questions throughout the sales talk. You should use probing, **open-response questions** early in the sales conversation. For example, you might ask, "What features are you looking for in a snow blower, Mrs. Johnson?" Near the end of the conversation, you should use **closed-response questions** to determine the customer's acceptance of the product. For example, you might ask, "Is this fabric soft enough?"
- Maintaining a positive attitude. Your courtesy will encourage customers to express their needs and wants more openly. When you make customers feel important, you keep them in a buying mood.



▲ *Maintaining a positive attitude is essential when it comes to handling all types of customers.*

For more tips on effective customer communication, watch the short video here—<http://www.teamsupport.com/video-do-you-think-you-communicate-effectively-with-your-customers-use-these-great-communication-strategies-to-help-deliver-the-best-customer-service/>.

4. *Personalize the product to satisfy customer needs.* Customers want to know what a product can do for them, not simply what the product does. To communicate a product's specific features and benefits, you will need to know your goods and services thoroughly and be able to effectively demonstrate that knowledge to your customers.

### Guidelines for handling specific customer personality types

As a salesperson, you should leave every customer feeling good about you, your business, and your products. You can ensure that satisfaction by recognizing and responding to individual customer personalities. Study the following guidelines to learn how to handle each type of customer effectively.

**For decisive customers.** Remember, decisive customers know exactly what they want and don't require much assistance from salespeople. For this reason, you should listen patiently and suggest substitutes only with caution. Serve decisive customers quickly and be tactful. For the customer who says, "I'll take the prime rib, medium rare, a baked potato with sour cream, and bleu cheese dressing on my salad," you might simply respond with, "Your order will be ready soon, Mr. Young. May I bring you coffee or tea while you're waiting?"



- ▲ *Decisive customers know exactly what they want and don't require much assistance from salespeople.*

**For impulsive customers.** Don't forget that with impulsive customers, it's all about moving quickly. They make decisions quickly, and you should serve them quickly as well. Give brief answers, and close the sale rapidly. Treat them courteously. However, if you see that an impulsive customer is about to make a mistake, such as purchasing the wrong size, don't be afraid to point it out.

**For fact finders.** Fact finders are looking for information, and you must be able to provide them with it. Show them a variety of products, emphasizing the manufacturer's claims. Exhibit confidence with tact. Suggesting care techniques can be helpful as well. For the customer who wants to know the differences between an iPhone and an Android, be specific. Compare the sizes of their screens, the availability of apps, battery life, etc. Translate these features into specific benefits for the customer.

**For practical or frugal customers.** When dealing with practical or frugal customers, be sure to stress the value of the product. Remember, these customers are looking to get the most for their money. Demonstrate the product if possible, and support your statements with hard proof. Be sure not to exaggerate, either. If you exaggerate, and your claims don't pan out, practical customers will be very upset. For the customer concerned about the muffler guarantee, give her/him a copy of the manufacturer's warranty to read over.



▲ *Not every customer is the same. Impulsive customers like to move quickly!*

**For informed customers.** Informed customers know exactly what they want, so you should serve them quickly and efficiently. Reassure them of the value of their purchases. Know what facts they still need to learn or what brand-new products they should see before making that final purchase decision.

**For difficult customers.** Dealing with difficult customers effectively will depend on why the customer is being difficult. In general, however, you should always remain calm and courteous. When you react calmly, the customer will often calm down as well. Do not become defensive. Instead, consider helping the customer to be a challenge you're gladly willing to accept. Accept minor points of disagreement with the customer, and try to find a way to compliment him/her. If the situation is more than you have the knowledge or authority to handle, calmly tell the customer you are glad to get your manager for further assistance.

For additional information and tips on selling to customers with difficult personalities, see the article "Selling to Difficult Personalities" at <http://www.sellingpower.com/content/article/?a=9949/selling-to-difficult-personalities>.




▲ *Every salesperson runs into difficult customers from time to time. It's important to always be calm and courteous.*



## Summary

Every customer deserves special attention and care. General guidelines for handling all types of customers include showing a sincere interest in meeting their needs, developing a sales vocabulary, building two-way communication, and personalizing the product to satisfy specific needs. Once you've determined a customer's personality type, tailor your actions and communication to the individual's personality.



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# TOTAL RECALL

1. What are the general guidelines for dealing with all types of customers?
2. Describe guidelines for dealing with the following customer personality types:
  - a. Decisive
  - b. Impulsive
  - c. Fact finder
  - d. Practical or frugal
  - e. Informed
  - f. Difficult