

Making MBTI understanding work as a Sales Improvement Tool



The Myers Briggs Type Indicator[MBTI] is the most widely used psychological type indicator and has numerous applications across team building, group working and in the sales environment. Its basis is in the work of Carl Jung and its aim is to allow individuals to understand both themselves and others better so that they can flex their style to allow better/ more effective communications.

One of our clients recently came to us with a challenge - their sales teams had really enjoyed a day of completing MBTI for themselves and had found the personal insight of great value. The learning was reported as helping internal team working with staff better able to understand just why their colleagues acted differently from themselves.

A few weeks later however, line managers reported that the team were struggling to apply the learning back in the real world. For a typical sales person who may have a six to eight weekly call frequency [and a call lasting perhaps only 20 minutes] the identification of a full MBTI profile for a customer understandably felt like a dangerous and difficult exercise.

Our Solution...Making MBTI work with Customers

In the intensive one day programme the sales team were first reminded of the MBTI pairings : -

EXTROVERT - INTROVERT

SENSING - INTUITION

THINKING - FEELING

JUDGING - PERCEIVING

Our focus moved very quickly from MBTI theory to “*What to look for as indicators of your customers type in the sales call*”...the objective was to provide the sales team with a simple “shopping list” of behavioural indicators for each type...an example is shown below..

You may note that a buyer in a given organisation :

Likes to see all of the detail/numbers behind any argument

Appears to be rushed and his desk is always awash with piles of papers

He always turns down social invitations – politely

You have never heard much from him in over two years of trading about his private life or hobbies.

He gets stressed prior to meetings with many attendees and layers of senior management.

So – what does the above indicate...?

Fact 1 could indicate a **J**udging or **T**hinking preference

Fact 2 could indicate a **P**erceiving preference

Fact 3 could indicate an **I**ntroversion preference

Fact 4 could also indicate an **I**ntroversion preference

Fact 5 could indicate an **I**ntroversion preference

The above example demonstrates how caution is required when trying to determine a buyers MBTI type [this buyer has shown both **J** & **P** indicators] – people often act very differently in work environments – in particular, organisations have cultures or behavioural norms to which employees feel they have to adhere –so your buyer acting in an analytical or aggressive way may be little or nothing to do with his underlying type and more to do with a work “face”.

For this reason we suggested that the sales team never draw conclusions unless they had at least **three separate indicators** of a buyers type.

An example of our final “shopping list” is shown below :

Detailed below are **BEHAVIOURS** to look for when trying to identify type :

EXTRAVERTS

actively seeks involvement in social activities
is expressive of thoughts, and tends to think aloud
tends to get involved in many tasks
takes a broad perspective in discussions
tends to interact with people and the environment
has an outward focus, on other people or things
tends to act or speak first, and then think later
communicates where possible by face to face discussion
enjoys responding to issues as they come up

The second recommendation for the sales team we drew from the theories of MBTI type dynamics...rather than try to identify the entire MBTI profile we recommended that they try to spot only the DOMINANT and AUXILIARY TYPE of the individual...hence after careful consideration [and at least three behavioural clues in each area] a salesman might conclude that a buyer is INTROVERTED and a JUDGER.

With this information the sales person is in a position to start to change the way he/ she sells in order to connect and communicate more effectively with their customer.

The sales team were provided with a “**How to Sell**” guide for each type...an excerpt is shown below...

Selling to I Introverts

The types of tactics you should try when dealing with introverts include:

Don't interrupt the Introvert at his desk if he is deep in thought. Ask if he wants you to come back later.

Give advanced warning of the need to discuss an issue, or better still, give him something to read first.

Don't introduce too many topics into the discussion, and be prepared to go more deeply into one subject.

Don't force the Introvert to take action - allow him time to think about the subject and come to his own conclusions.

Encourage the Introvert to share his thoughts - don't interpret silence as agreement

Selling to J Preferences

When selling to those with J preferences try to :

Have a clear purpose for the meeting and an agenda that you have both agreed on

Adhere to timescales

Be predictable - if you need to introduce something radically different, give plenty of notice

Keep track of where you are in the Agenda - don't meander through the discussion

Focus on reaching decisions and then moving on to the next subject. Don't reopen subjects that have already been concluded.

Having understood the theory we moved on to provide a series of real life scenarios – pen portraits of real buyers [from KAM interviews] from which the sales team had to identify accurately the types on display. Having discussed the type [just two letters of the MBTI profile] the teams were then challenged to develop their tactics for successful selling across a number of areas :

~ type of presentation [PPT on PC/ formal paper based / pure verbal delivery etc]

~ length and style of presentation [eg. detail vs big picture, short but with supporting leave piece with detail etc]

~ language [the key words/phrases that they would aim to use]

~ delivery style [pace, pitch, tone etc]

~ ideal location/environment

A few weeks after the day of MBTI application we got more line manager feedback –the sales team were now applying their new knowledge with confidence and were finding that their results were improving – they were finding that customers responded more positively to their selling presentations [however delivered].

If you would like your team to really apply MBTI to sell more effectively please contact Chris Hudd on 07968-944552 or e-mail chris@springboardcs.com