

Management of Field Sales
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Lecture – 04
Communication Styles in Field Sales

Hello, I am Jayanta Chatterjee. We are discussing over 4 weeks this topic of Management of Field Sales. Today is our 4th session. And as you would remember from the previous discussion I am going to discuss in great depth that how do we create style flexibility in our communication with the customer in the person to person selling. The core of field sales activity how do we manage ourselves so that we are in a better position to create trust with the customer through empathy and through good understanding of the other persons verbally communicated and unspoken needs understood from deeper understanding of the interaction including understanding of nonverbal communication.

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Communication Styles in Field Sales

- Impressions of others are developed by observing your behavior.
- And that is both real and virtual world behavior

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So, communication style in field sales is basically managing your own behavior. You cannot control your customers behavior that is something that you have to take as a given and it is your responsibility as a sales person not to be subservient, not to go as per whims and fancies of the customer, but create a situation that a positive win communication happens. And as I mentioned yesterday that processes to first start by

understanding of your own behavior and that behavior remember in today's context it is not only your face to face real world behavior, but that behavior is also depicted through the emails that you send, through the phone conversations you have, through the Facebook messages that you send, through the WhatsApp messages that you send. So, your real world communication and your virtual world communication, your spoken, written and electronic communication all contribute towards your communication style.

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Communication Style

How does communication style influence the relationship process in sales?

- **Communication style** is the pattern of behavior that others observe.
- **Adaptive selling** is defined as altering sales behaviors in order to improve communication with the customer.
- Communication style is an important element of adaptive selling.

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So, your communication style is the pattern of your behavior that other people observe. And adaptive selling through adaptive communication is defined as managing your own behavior in order to improve the communication by understanding the other persons behavior better. And this is absolutely key to adaptive selling that we are now discussing.

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Communication Style Bias

What happens when we interact with someone whose communication style is different from our own?

- **Communication style bias** develops when we have contacted with another person whose communication style is different from our own.
- However, many salespeople have learned to manage their selling relationships more effectively through the study of communication styles.

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You must understand this concept of bias in communication style. Bias means that we are all human beings and therefore, we have likes and dislikes, we have personal circumstances, we have our physical and mental well-being or situation at any particular point of time. So, therefore, the communication of today may have to be managed tomorrow depending on the circumstances or how the customer behaves on the following day. The bias means that if you remain fixed on your position, if you only have your own dislikes and likes guiding in your communication, if you are too centered on yourself interest then you have bias. And understand the customer may have a bias, but that is something that is your responsibility to understand and adapt to.

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The Dominance Continuum

- We all fall somewhere on the continuum between low and high.
- Someone low in dominance may be reserved, unassertive, and easygoing.
- Someone high in dominance may be decisive, opinioned, self-assertive, and vocal.

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So, I am going to go into a little bit more theoretical understanding of communication style. The first concept I bring to you is what we call the dominance continuum. Dominance means that you know all the activities that are assertive and forcing the other person persuading forcefully at the other person to agree to you. So, usually when we say somebody is dominating, we mean that the that person is usually decisive very opinionated and very strongly assertive vocal and so on. These are various words that we use.

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The Dominance Indicator Form

- How do you perceive yourself?

Check your flexibility-adaptability

I PERCEIVE MYSELF AS SOMEWHAT	
Cooperative	Competitive
Submissive	Authoritarian
Accommodating	Domineering
Hesitant	Decisive
Reserved	Outgoing
Compromising	Insistent
Cautious	Risk taking
Patient	Hurried
Complacent	Influential
Quiet	Talkative
Shy	Bold
Supportive	Demanding
Relaxed	Tense
Restrained	Assertive

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And this is a research presentation in front of you where on the left hand side we have what we usually call low dominance. If this word low is not exactly appropriate here, I would say one side of dominance and on the right hand side, we have what we can conventionally be understand is a person who is highly dominant, so that is why the left hand side can be called low dominance right hand side can be called high dominance.

And please understand here that no human being is entirely I would not say no human being generally, most people are on this continuum that means, they are somewhere in between cooperative and competitive, somewhere between submissive and authoritarian. Now, very interestingly you can note that the buyers for people who are in purchase management function or buying function they are naturally somewhat on the right hand side. So, they try to be authoritarian, domineering, insisting, but it does not mean that they will be everything on the right hand side. Somebody who is very decisive and domineering may not necessarily be talkative, may not necessarily be very bold or risk taking.

In fact, a customer may be depending on the lifecycle situation of that product or technology may be risk averse or maybe we will discuss it in more detail next week when we start on product characteristics and the lifecycle positions of products and technologies to give you a deeper understanding that which kind of customer is attracted to which kind of products and solutions. And that will tell you that somebody is not always assertive somebody way may be authoritarian domineering, but may also be risk averse.

So, which means fundamentally it may appear that usually salespeople should be on the left hand side and buyers will be on the right hand side, but that is not correct. The salespeople for example, often will be highly competitive and may be trying to be domineering in the conversation which will of course be a wrong approach. But you have to understand that if your customer is talkative then, if you are also talkative, then it is a bad transaction, then it is going to be a lower quality of communication exchange. So, if the buyer is talking, the salesperson must be patient to listen more and talk less.

So, the left hand side and the right hand side represent two types of dominance characteristics. And the key point which is right there on the top of this chart is that check your flexibility and adaptability. So, what is the key point here? The key point is

are you always on the left or on the right or can you depending on the situation or depending on the other person can you flex your style, can you may be normally hesitant, but it may be important for you when dealing with the decisive people to be also very precise and not hesitant, then you will immediately create some kind of distrust in the part mind of the other person.

So, can you actually manage your own emotional depiction or your own behavior pattern to synchronize to some extent not act you know or I would say you know there is a good theoretical concept here what we call deep acting and surface acting. Deep acting happens when you deeply understand your role in the context of other roles this is this comes from theater. But it is applicable here because it is a kind of a person to person interaction communication situation which is not very different from a staged situation where the actor is on stage and trying to communicate.

So, sometimes as you know even from theater the actors silence can be highly communicative in a situation. So, you do not have to always speak. So, it is in a good play we see this flexibility, we see the use of communication tools which are not uni-dimensional and that is what you should understand from this particular slide that there are two sides to this dominance indicator. And the key point is how you create flexibility to go from one side to the other side as needed and may create a mix which we can call the style mix which is situation sensitive.

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The Sociability Indicator Form

• How do you perceive yourself?

Check your flexibility

I PERCEIVE MYSELF AS SOMEWHAT		
Disciplined	/ / / / / / / /	Easygoing
Controlled	/ / / / / / / /	Expressive
Serious	/ / / / / / / /	Lighthearted
Methodical	/ / / / / / / /	Unstructured
Calculating	/ / / / / / / /	Spontaneous
Guarded	/ / / / / / / /	Open
Stalwart	/ / / / / / / /	Humorous
Aloof	/ / / / / / / /	Friendly
Formal	/ / / / / / / /	Casual
Reserved	/ / / / / / / /	Attention seeking
Cautious	/ / / / / / / /	Carefree
Conforming	/ / / / / / / /	Unconventional
Reticent	/ / / / / / / /	Dramatic
Restrained	/ / / / / / / /	Impulsive

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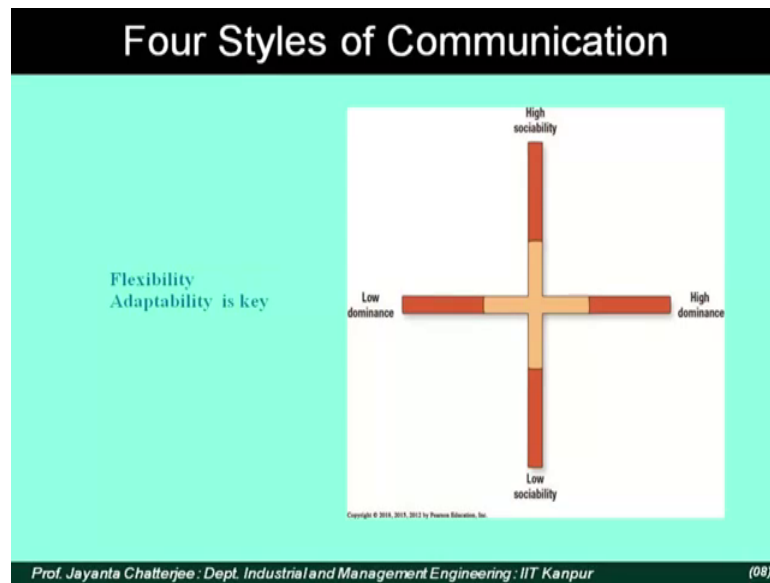
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Then the other dimension is what we call sociability. Sociability is like the other part which is the dominance part the dominance indicator usually relate to technical quantitative objective communication, fact based communication. So, you know your discussion with the customer on specification on what horse power is needed for the customer's requirement of a motor or what kind of chemical reaction process will be more suited to that particular customers need. Those will be little bit dominance driven. But when it comes to nonverbal communication or when it comes to the mix of objective quantitative with qualitative information and communication, we have to pay attention to this what we call sociability indicator.

Here again as you see on the left hand side we have factors like disciplined, controlled, serious, methodical, calculating, guarded and cautious and so on and the on the other side we have easygoing, expressive, light hearted, spontaneous, open, friendly, humorous. Again as you see here you may feel that that the salespersons must be on the right hand side and the buyers are usually on the left hand side again and that is not universally applicable. You as a salesperson need not always be humorous, because if the other person is not responding to humor, then by trying to be humorous in every situation you will create a bad communication.

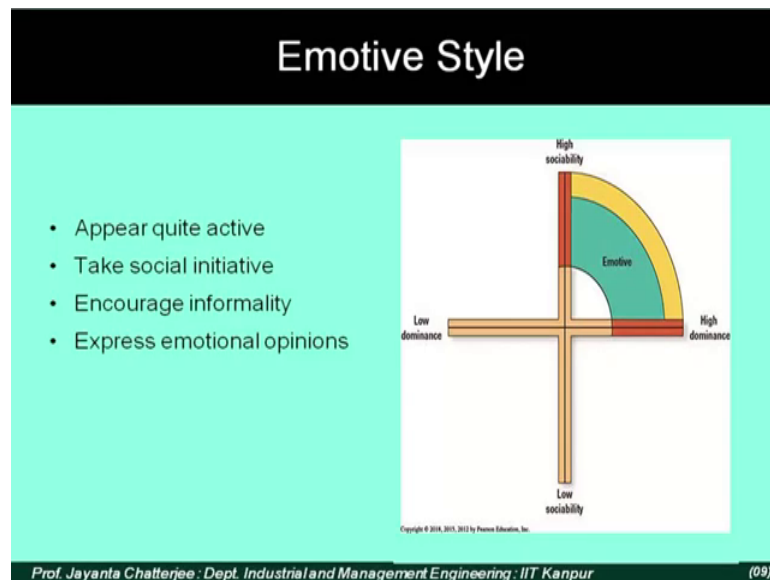
So, again it is important to understand that the sociability it has these two sides and important is flexibility, adaptability, your ability to understand where the other person is because you can well profile the other person on this chart. And then when what we mean by flexibilities how do you manage your side of the chart in a way that it creates good productive communication.

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So, we can actually put it on a matrix. And on this graph as you see we have on the y-axis high sociability low sociability and on the x-axis we have low dominance to high dominance. And using this the usual you know we are in management we are very fond of this 2 by 2 matrices.

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We can create different understanding of how to create good communication. So, the high sociability and high dominance this high-high situation will actually be quite emotive and it actually will be lot of informality, lot of emotional exchange. In sales

situation of say something which is a specialty product like jewelry or shopping product like your dress, this type of style may be relevant because the quantitative technical content in that sale may not be that important as will be issues relating to emotion and lifestyle needs. So, in a that kind of a sales process, we may go for this kind of a combination.

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Emotive Style: Key Words

- Sociable
- Emotional
- Personable
- Spontaneous
- Unstructured
- Persuasive
- Zestful
- Excitable
- Dynamic
- Stimulating

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So, in the emotive style the key words that you will see is excitable, stimulating, zestful, persuasive and all these which mean which means if you are selling a car, you are selling jewelry, you are selling even something like a high value insurance, you may have this emotive style as an appropriate style. But again I must warn that no style is uni-dimensional you may need to mix and match.

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Directive Style

- Appears to be quite busy
- May give impression of not listening
- Displays a serious attitude
- Likes to maintain control

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We can see this other style which is the directive style which is high dominance oriented, but may go from high sociability to low sociability. This is a very usual sale situation in business-to-business or in a technical sales. Here there may be a lot of because we are dealing with often high value sales and it may therefore appear that you know you are facing a tough customer the customer will usually project a very serious attitude will try to control the process. And the customer may be giving an impression that he or she is not listening to you, you have to understand this that this is a situation driven behavioral pattern which may be reinforced by the natural behavioral pattern of a person. So, a top level management person in a B2B sales situation may actually project a very strong directive style.

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Directive Style: Key Words

- Aggressive
- Serious
- Opinionated
- Intense
- Determined
- Impatient
- Demanding
- Frank
- Bold
- Pushy

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So, there will be these words that you can immediately see that you know aggressive, demanding, impatient, pushy, because the customer would like to have something which you would like to have 1 million rupees maybe wanting to get it at 100000 rupees.

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Reflective Style

- Controls emotional expression
- Displays a preference for orderliness
- Tends to express measured opinions
- Seems difficult to get to know

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Because you know this kind of bargain again in the Asian context is also very nominal. A virtual style you know some of two good styles is this the reflective style, where you actually respond to this earlier style which is the directive style with controlled emotional response, measured opinions. And you can therefore, mix and match elements from the

profile that we had seen before to respond better to a customer who is trying to strongly dominate the communication or.

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Reflective Style: Key Words

- Precise
- Aloof
- Serious
- Deliberate
- Scientific
- Industrious
- Questioning
- Preoccupied
- Stuffy
- Disciplined

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So, here you can actually use the words some of these words that you see as a response mechanism.

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Supportive Style

- Appearance of being quiet
- Listens attentively to other people
- Tends to avoid use of power
- Makes decisions in a thoughtful and deliberate manner

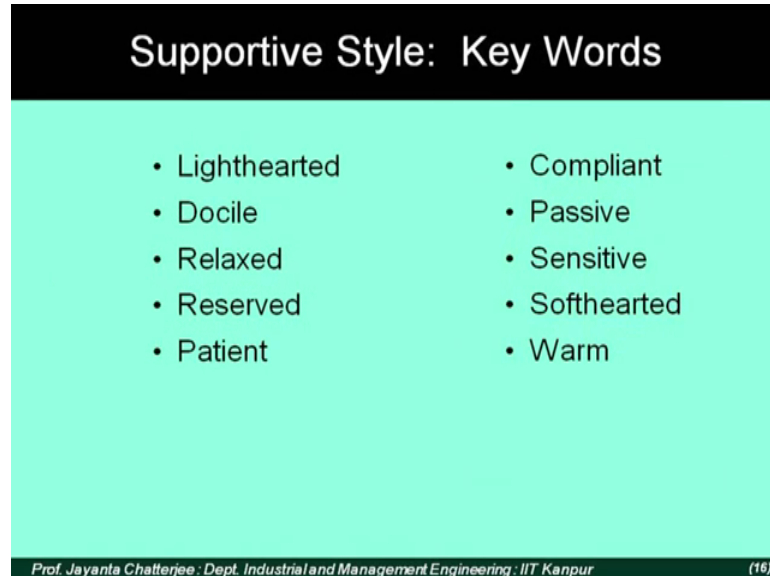
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But the one style which is most sale situations demand today for the sales person is what we call the supportive style. Here we are paying attention to the flexibility issues to the

issues like listen more and talk less, a quiet confident fact based approach, but tempered with empathy and warm communication not power play thoughtfulness deliberateness.

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And this way of flexible approach expressed to some of these words that are shown here, but more importantly in this style diagram that we see here, using this diagram we can create your own strategy for managing your own behavior in response to different kind of customer behavioral profiles in different kinds of sales situations. This we will understand a bit more when we discuss about the nature of the buyer in different kinds of product or technologies situation next week when we discuss that.

Then you will understand that the same buyer may behave differently while buying machine versus while buying some much staple consumables. And therefore, if you are selling soap to a as a consumable to an automobile factory, your be a same buyer will behave in a certain way and therefore, you will have to manage your behavior in a certain way versus a situation where that same automobile factories wanting to buy a large CNC machine that will cause a change in the behavior pattern of the same buyer. And you as a salesperson therefore, will have to understand that situation as well as the behavioral preferences of your buyer and manage your own behavior style.

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Minimizing Communication Style Bias

- Communication style bias is a barrier to success in selling.
- A highly adaptable salesperson can usually build a rapport with customers regardless of their communication style.
- The term versatility describes a salesperson's ability to minimize communication style bias.
- Adapting to the customer's preferred communication style can enhance sales performance.

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And key to that is minimizing your own bias that means, you do not stick to one kind of behavior.

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Completed Communications-Style Model

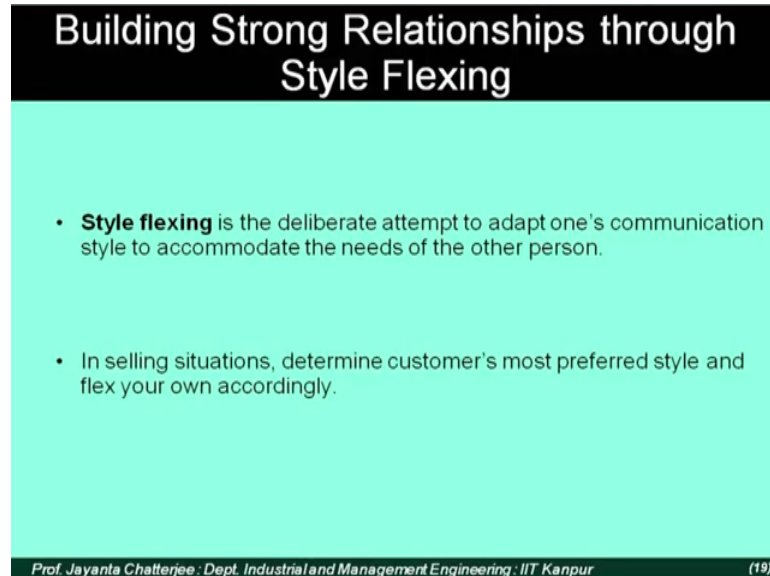
- In each style, the strength of the style can become a weakness if the characteristic is exaggerated.
- The zones within each style are intensity zones.

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You go from different you respond to the situation as needed. So, as we will show on this diagram which is the you know the flexible style diagram that you have to pay attention to those circles that you see there that there is this dominance oriented issues as well as sociability oriented issues. And therefore, you have to understand in which zone the customers behavior pattern is located in the context of the type of product or system you

are trying to sell and then understand that how you will position yourself, how you will adapt your communication style to be more effective.

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Building Strong Relationships through Style Flexing

- **Style flexing** is the deliberate attempt to adapt one's communication style to accommodate the needs of the other person.
- In selling situations, determine customer's most preferred style and flex your own accordingly.

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So, building strong relationship depends on style flexibility. Style flexibility means that on those two access of dominance and sociability your ability to mix and match different elements to create a better responsive situation through your own empathetic behavior; that means, managing your behavior in response to your buyers behavior. This is a very core expertise that one needs to develop to become a successful field salesperson.

Thank you.