

The Platinum Rule

by Dr. Tony Alessandra, PhD.

An indisputable business fact is that people do business with people they like. It makes sense, therefore, to like and be liked by as many people as possible. The ability to create rapport with a large number of people is a fundamental skill in sales, management, personal relationships, and everyday life.

We have all heard of the Golden Rule-and many people aspire to live by it. The Golden Rule is not a panacea. Think about it: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The Golden Rule implies the basic assumption that other people would like to be treated the way that you would like to be treated.

The alternative to the Golden Rule is much more productive. I call it the Platinum Rule: "Treat others the way they want to be treated." Ah hah! What a difference. The Platinum Rule accommodates the feelings of others. The focus of relationships shifts from "this is what I want, so I'll give everyone the same thing" to "let me first understand what they want and then I'll give it to them."

Building rapport with people based on the Platinum Rule is smart-People Smart. People Smarts-my system for applying the Platinum Rule-requires some thought and effort, but it is the most insightful, rewarding, and productive way to interact with people. And it is easy to learn.

A Modern Model For Chemistry

The goal of People Smarts is personal chemistry and productive relationships. You do not have to change your personality. You do not have to roll over and submit to others. You simply have to understand what drives people and recognize your options for dealing with them.

People Smarts divides behavioral preferences into four basic styles: The Director, The Socializer, The Relater, and The Thinker. Everyone possesses the qualities of each style to various degrees and everyone has a dominant style.

For the sake of simplicity, this article will focus only on dominant styles.

As you read the descriptions of Directors, Socializers, Relaters, and Thinkers, see which style fits you best. Then think about people around you-at home, in the office-and determine their styles.

Directors

Directors are driven by two governing needs: to control and to achieve. Directors are goal-oriented go-getters who are most comfortable when they are in charge of people and situations. They want to accomplish many things-now-so they focus on no-nonsense approaches to bottom-line results.

Directors seek expedience and are not afraid to bend the rules. They figure it is easier to beg forgiveness than to ask permission. Directors accept challenges, take authority, and plunge head first into solving problems. They are fast-paced, task-oriented, and work quickly and impressively by themselves, which means they become annoyed with delays.

Directors are driven and dominating, which can make them stubborn, impatient, and insensitive to others. Directors are so focused that they forget to take the time to smell the roses.

Directors tend to gravitate toward the following positions: the hard driving journalist, the stock-broker, the CEO, the independent consultant, and the drill sergeant!

Socializers

Socializers are friendly, enthusiastic "party-animals" who like to be where the action is. They thrive on the admiration, acknowledgment, and compliments that come with being in the lime-light. Socializers just want to have fun. They are more relationship-oriented than task-oriented. Socializers would rather "shmooze" with clients over lunch than work in the office.

The Socializer's primary strengths are enthusiasm, charm, persuasiveness, and warmth. They are idea-people and dreamers who excel at getting others excited about their vision. They are eternal optimists with an abundance of charisma. These qualities help them influence people and build alliances to accomplish their goals.

As wonderful as Socializers may sound, they do have their weaknesses: impatience, an aversion to being alone, and a short attention span. Socializers are risk-takers who base many of their decisions on intuition, which is not inherently bad.

When given only a little data, however, Socializers often exaggerate or make sweeping generalizations. Socializers are not inclined to verify information; they are more likely to assume someone else will do it.

Socializers tend to gravitate toward the following positions: sales (especially non technical products/services), public relations, advertising, show business, cruise ship social directors, hotel and restaurant personnel and glamorous, high-profile careers.

Thinkers

Thinkers are analytical, persistent, systematic people who enjoy problem-solving. Thinkers are detail-oriented, which makes them more concerned with content than style. Thinkers are task-oriented people who enjoy perfecting processes and working toward tangible results.

They focus on the trees, whereas Directors and Socializers focus on the forest. Thinkers are always in control of their emotions (note the poker-faces of many Jeopardy! contestants) and may become uncomfortable around people who very out-going, e.g., Socializers.

In the office, Thinkers work at a slow pace, allowing them to double-check their work. They tend to see the serious, complex side of situations, but their intelligence and ability to see different points of view endow them with quick and unique senses of humor.

Thinkers have high expectations of themselves and others, which can make them over-critical. Their tendency toward perfectionism-taken to an extreme-can cause "paralysis by over-analysis." Thinkers are slow and deliberate decision-makers.

They do research, make comparisons, determine risks, calculate margins of error, and then take action. Thinkers become irritated by surprises and glitches, hence their cautious decision-making. Thinkers are also skeptical, so they like to see promises in writing.

Thinkers' strengths include an eye for detail and accuracy, dependability, independence, persistence, follow-through, and organization. They are good listeners and ask a lot of questions, however, they run the risk of missing the forest for the trees.

Thinkers tend to gravitate toward the following positions: engineers, statisticians, scientists, doctors, accountants, computer programmers, airline pilots, and tax attorneys.

Relaters

Relaters are warm, supportive, and nurturing individuals. They are the most people-oriented of the four styles. Relaters are excellent listeners, devoted friends, and loyal employees. Their relaxed disposition makes them approachable and warm. They develop strong networks of people who are willing to be mutually supportive and reliable. Relaters are excellent team players.

Relaters are risk-averse. In fact, Relaters may tolerate unpleasant environments rather than risk change. They like the status quo and become distressed when disruptions are severe.

When Relaters are faced with change, they need to think it through, plan, and accept it into their world. Relaters-more than the other behavioral types-strive to maintain personal composure, stability, and balance.

In the office, Relaters are courteous, friendly, and willing to share responsibilities. They are good planners, persistent workers, and good with follow-through. Relaters go along with other seven when they do not agree because they do not want to rock the boat.

Relaters are slow decision-makers because of: 1) their need for security; 2) their need to avoid risk; 3) their desire to include others in the decision-making process.

Relater's tend to gravitate toward the following positions: nurse, counselor, psychologist, social worker, teacher, minister, and human resource development. Relaters make exceptionally patient and supportive parents.

Adapting to Others

What should you do with this knowledge? First, determine your behavioral style. That known, you now have new insights into your preferences: you might prefer relationships to tasks; perhaps you act slowly rather than quickly; or you may like to tell people what you think or feel rather than keep it to yourself.

The following guidelines will help you get on the same wavelength with the four behavioral styles.

Recognizing And Adapting To Directors

At work, Directors often have large power-desks that look busy with lots of projects separated into separate piles. Their walls are adorned with diplomas, awards, and perhaps a large planning calendar.

The seating arrangement implies a lack of contact guests' chairs are opposite a big desk and huge leather executive chair. Conversationally, Directors are fast-paced and allow little or no time for small talk.

How should you treat Directors? They're very time-sensitive, so never waste their time. Be organized and get to the point. Give them bottom-line information and

options, with probabilities of success, if relevant. Give them written details to read at their leisure.

Directors are goal-oriented, so appeal to their sense of accomplishment. Stroke their egos by supporting their ideas, and acknowledge their power and prestige. Let Directors call the shots. If you disagree, argue with facts, not feelings. In groups, allow them to have their say because they are not the type who will take a back-seat to others.

With Directors, in general, be efficient and competent.

Recognizing And Adapting To Socializers

At work, Socializers' offices are inviting to visitors. Their walls are covered with symbols of recognition, including photographs with celebrities or high profile executives. Their choice of art is upbeat and stimulating.

They are outgoing, friendly, and will often come from behind their desks to sit and talk. Conversationally, Socializers focus on themselves. They are enthusiastic and have a penchant for story-telling. It is always obvious that Socializers would rather chat than get down to business.

How should you treat Socializers? Socializers thrive on personal recognition, so pour it on sincerely. Support their ideas, goals, opinions, and dreams. Try not to argue with their pie-in-the-sky visions; get excited about them.

Socializers are social-butterflies, so be ready to flutter around with them. A strong presence, stimulating and entertaining conversation, jokes, and liveliness will win them over. They are people-oriented, so give them time to socialize. Avoid rushing into tasks.

With Socializers, in general, be interested in them.

Recognizing And Adapting To Thinkers

Thinkers' desks are structured, organized and neat. Their offices are decorated functionally rather than artistically. Their walls may contain charts, computer print-outs, or other exhibits related to their projects. Thinkers keep their desks between themselves and their guests and their office seating implies formality and non contact. Conversationally, Thinkers want to know and want to tell virtually every facet of a story.

They speak relatively slowly and deliberately, pausing-without self-consciousness-to search for the right word. Thinkers derive joy from speaking precisely and accurately. Ask a Thinker for the time and you will be told exactly. Ask a Director for the time and you will be told the day of the week. Ask a Socializer for the time and you will be told, "Three days until the weekend."

How should you adapt to Thinkers? They are time-disciplined, so be sensitive to their time. They need details, so give them data. They are task-oriented, so don't expect to become their friend before working with them. Friendship may develop later, but-unlike Socializers-it is not a prerequisite.

Support Thinkers in their organized, thoughtful approach to problem-solving. Be systematic, logical, well-prepared, and exact with them. Give them time to make decisions and work independently.

Allow them to talk in detail. In work groups, do not expect Thinkers to be leaders or outspoken contributors, but do rely on them to conduct research, crunch numbers, and perform detailed foot-work for the group. If appropriate, set guidelines and exact deadlines. Thinkers like to be complimented on their brain-power, so recognize their contributions accordingly.

With Thinkers, in general, be thorough, well-prepared, detail-oriented, business-like, and patient.

Recognizing And Adapting To Relaters

At work, Relaters' desks often hold family pictures and sentimental items. Their walls are decorated with conservative art, serene pictures, family or group photos, and supportive slogans. Their offices are warm and inviting and they prefer to not have a desk between them and their visitors. Conversationally, Relaters are relaxed, slow-paced, and supportive. As listeners, they are attentive and have good eye contact.

How should you treat Relaters? They are relationship-oriented, want warm and fuzzy relationships, so take things slow, earn their trust, support their feelings, and show sincere interest. Talk in terms of feelings, not facts, which is the opposite of the strategy for Thinkers. Relaters don't want to ruffle feathers.

They want to be assured that everyone will approve of them and their decisions. Give them time to solicit co-workers' opinions. Never back a Relater into a corner. It is far more effective to apply warmth to get this chicken out of its egg than to crack the shell with a hammer.

With Relaters, in general, be non threatening and sincere.

People Smarts and The Platinum Rule are powerful life-skills that will serve you well in all your relationships: business, friends, family, spouse, and children. Improved relationships create infinite possibilities. Sometimes I think of John Lennon's song, "Imagine." One of the verses could be, "Imagine there's no conflict, it's easy if you try."

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