

Are you a square peg in a round hole?

 By [John French](#)

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My first training assignment for 2014 was to train a new marketing manager in sales skills and strategy. The directors he was working for were less than happy with his sales performance and they were especially worried about his communication skills and Emotional Intelligence when it came to dealing with their valued customers.

Having been deeply involved in sales strategy and sales skills training for the last 20 years, I have heard these tales of woe countless times. But I always delight in taking on these training assignments because both the sales professionals as well as their respective employees usually have so much to learn about the psychology of what makes a great sales profile and how sales skills can be developed.

Building customer relationships

The sales manager in this particular case was a young man who had a great passion and an amazing commitment to his new company, but sadly something intangible was 'just missing'. This young sales manager was battling to build customer relationships, he was not making an impact with customers and he certainly was not selling very easily.

An important starting point in all the sales training I conduct is that I assess and analyse the personality profile of the particular sales person. This 'personal style' knowledge is critical for me to build a sales programme around the unique personality involved. Certain personality types just make better sales people, whilst other personality types are not your traditional sales personalities. Depending on their profiling scores some clients do not have enough critical drive or expressive communication skills to get attention, make an impact and close a sale.

This particular sales manager turned out to be a highly Analytical (thinking/processing) personality with some Amiable (relationship) traits. He scored very low on the Drive (action and results-orientation) and Expressive (verbal communication) side of things. Are you getting the picture?

Be target-driven!

The every nature of sales is to be target-driven and to be expressive, enthusiastic and convincing enough in order to achieve the vital buy-in. These vital skills were the very skills where this particular sales manager scored the lowest.

Over 20 years of strategic communication and sales training I have witnessed thousands of square pegs struggling to fit into their round holes. Every career and industry calls for specific strengths and skills to perform and excel in that arena and it is not just progressive but essential that the right personalities are hired for a job.

Personality profile matching does not only apply to sales. Client Service professionals need high Amiable (relationship) qualities and Expressive (communication) orientation in order to establish and build client relationships. Process and information-based professions require strong Analytical skills while leadership roles require a high degree of Drive in order to lead and succeed.

Does this mean you can't succeed in a profession or position where your natural talents do not lie? Certainly not, but skills development and training is essential. Your weak areas are where your greatest potential to grow and develop lie, and life has an uncanny way of leading us to where our unique growth portals are.

What is important for management and HR to realise, however, is that a person's personal drive is intrinsically linked to what their personality strengths are. Our talents and strengths build self-esteem and appease the human ego. We simply tend to excel more easily and enjoy doing what we are good at. Things work more easily when they resonate with who we are, and we find ourselves more in 'flow'.

That having been said, if a fairly intelligent person has an open mind and has the right training support, miraculous developments and skills transference can take place. This is where I find my career as a communication skills facilitator so rewarding. Nothing gives me more incentive and reward than opening up a client's awareness, exploring their full potential with them and growing their skills to create spectacular results that match the training objective.

ABOUT JOHN FRENCH

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