

Something for everyone: when you understand temperament

by Carole Cameron

Have you ever, as a trainer or presenter, looked out at your classroom or audience and (gasp!) seen their eyes glazed over, arms crossed, doubtful looks, reluctant participants? It may be because you haven't made a connection with them, or worse, you have just plain turned them off.

Of course, what we as trainers, speakers, facilitators and presenters want to do is to engage the hearts and minds of our audience. We want to ensure that we are heard, understood and remembered. We want to enhance every participant's learning experience.

We know about, and incorporate the principles of adult learning styles into the design and delivery of our programs. But by also understanding and applying temperament theory, we can even further enhance the effectiveness of our presentations and workshops.

What is temperament?

Stephen Montgomery puts it nicely in his book *People Patterns: A Modern Guide to the Four Temperaments*. "Temperament is an inherent personal style, a predisposition that forms the basis of all our natural inclinations; what we think and feel, what we want and need, what we say and do. In other words, temperament is the inborn, ingrained, factory-installed, God-given, hard-wired base of our personality," he writes. Temperament is the concept of the many forefathers of personality and personality type, including Carl Jung, Isabel Myers and Kathryn Briggs, and David Keirse. Actually, the idea that human beings come in four basic models has been around for a very long time; we see "quadrant" theories in the works of Plato, Aristotle, and Hippocrates.

The most common terms for the four temperaments are "Artisan," "Guardian," "Idealist," and "Rational," or, from True Colors; "Orange," "Gold," "Blue" and "Green."

We can significantly improve the impact and effectiveness of our presentations and workshops by understanding these four temperaments.

Meet Bob, Carol, Ted, and Alice

Artisan

Bob loves a fast pace and lots of variety. He expects a presenter to be

knowledgeable and entertaining. Real life stories are a must. He needs to know how the subject matter can be applied and what kind of results to expect. Bob loves visuals, group activities, and opportunities to try things out. He might not read the pre-work you sent out, especially if it looks long, complicated, or tedious. Too many introspective, individual exercises will tire or bore Bob. Balance them with action and interactive activities. **Be fun!**

Guardian

Carol expects a presenter to be well prepared, well organized, and well dressed. Carol will be turned off immediately if you do not skillfully manage the classroom, the content, or the time. Sure-fire ways to lose Carol: do not provide (or follow) an agenda, un-tuck your shirt, start late, and waste time (on things like getting sidetracked, allowing debates, etc). Carol is comfortable with a lecture style of delivery, and prefers that you deliver one digestible chunk of information at a time. For Carol, your credibility is determined by your credentials, your experience, and your education as it relates to the topic. Be sure to have these visible in printed materials, and/or include them in your introduction. **Be professional!**

Idealist

Ted's ears perk up when he walks into a room and hears music. Refreshments provide him an opportunity to chat with others, and connect with those he'll be sitting with. Adding personal examples along with business examples will strengthen your connection with Ted. He loves small group discussions, hands-on activities, and opportunities to share experiences and feelings with others. You will lose Ted forever if he sees you as a phony, too reserved, judgmental, too slick or slimy. Ted will mentally and/or physically remove himself if you mishandle conflict or allow discord in the room. Say goodbye to Ted as an engaged audience member if you show disrespect for others' feelings, their children or their pets. **Be human!**

Rational

Alice needs to know your credentials and proven competency before she

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Going to a Meeting. These two video-based training programs explore how anyone can make the most of meetings and explain how positive meetings are not just the responsibility of the chairperson. *Messing Up a Meeting* shows how to avoid common mistakes and how not to look like a fool in front of the boss. *Meeting Menaces* demonstrates how easy it can be to handle meeting participants, such as The Interrupter, The Waffler, The Dominator, The Assassin and The Turf Warrior. Each video includes a Course Leader's Guide and a Self-Study Workbook. Cost: \$1095 per video or \$1975 for both videos. Order online: www.itf.ca.

Preventing Burnout in Your Organization. Christina Maslach, professor of psychology at the University of California at Berkley, quashes the myths surrounding burnout. For instance, it's not just the person, she says, it's the job, and that heavy workloads aren't always the cause of burnout. Dr. Maslach describes six contributing factors that increase the risk of burnout, as well as the toll burnout can take on individuals and job performance. She then suggests intervention strategies that can turn exhaustion, cynicism and ineffectiveness into energy, involvement and achievement. Cost: \$95. Order online: www.bettermanagement.com.

will give you her time and attention. She is naturally curious, so you'll want to provide vehicles for her questions to be heard or recorded. She will actually read the pre-work you sent her, and will find value in any other reference materials and resources you provide. Alice's eyes will glaze over if you appear incompetent or illogical, speak before you think, or if you include repetitive or redundant information or activities. Be sure to have proof available for any statistics or research you cite. **Be sharp!**

Enough about them, What about me?

It can be a natural inclination to address your audience or class as if it were a congregation of "you's". Wouldn't it be great to have an audience that would laugh at all your jokes, operate at the same speed as you do, value the same material you place emphasis on and be comfortable with the same level of formality or informality as you are?

Unfortunately, it just doesn't work that way in the real world. We need to anticipate and allow for our audience's different preferences and values. Anticipate that you will have representatives from each temperament group in your audience. Don't outsmart yourself by making assumptions about the temperament makeup of your audience based on their profession, gender, industry, etc. For example, if you are working with a group of sales people, you might be tempted to assume that the majority of them are Artisans, like Bob. This may well be true, but you really can't count on it. One time, I foolishly assumed that my audience of IT professionals was made up primarily of Rationals, like Alice. I discovered very quickly that all four temperaments were well represented, and had to do some fancy "tap-dancing" to adapt my approach.

As professional speakers, trainers, and presenters, we'll want to deliberately address the preferences of each temperament, in order to ensure each individual in our audience gets what they came for. As Forrest Gump observed, "Life is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you're gonna get." Best to assume you're gonna get some of each, and be sure you provide a little something for everyone.

Carole Cameron, an engaging speaker, facilitator and trainer, is a certified personality type specialist. Her company, CPC Consultants specializes in customized design of leadership and teambuilding programs. You can reach Carole through her website, www.cpcconsultants.ca