
diversity matters

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument identifies five types of bargaining styles—competing, collaborative, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating*—based on different personality types. Likewise, stakeholders could have different buying styles too; customize your communication strategy while negotiating with them.

The world of work is becoming more diverse. Each country sees increasing diversity in different ways. For example, as the baby boomers retire there are more Gen X managers with different attitudes and different approaches. Add to this an ever more global world, where you must deal with many different nationalities. So, for an effective negotiation, how should you communicate?

Two foundations will help you be more effective. The first is easy to say and not always easy to do. Just listen. The diverse parties across the negotiating table will always tell you what they want and what is important to them. But this will only help you execute an effective negotiation if you listen.

The second foundation to effective negotiation in a world of diversity is to simplify by diagnosing their buying style. In a diverse world, when influencing organizations to buy something—a product, a service or an idea—negotiations can look complex and overwhelming. There are many different titles in organizations and despite the organizations' official processes, many influence the process of buying a product or service—or simply buying an idea. Yet, you can greatly simplify diversity when you use buying styles.



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use buying styles to influence people differently

For every B2B negotiation, identify all stakeholders and list them, create a stakeholder map. After you list them, identify their buying style, not the title on their card. For example, many considered a leading female cardiologist from a major teaching hospital in Malaysia, an end user. Yet, she made the final decision on medical devices worth many millions of dollars, so she was not an end user, she was a decision-maker.

Forget titles, do your stakeholder map of the different buying styles in your negotiation.

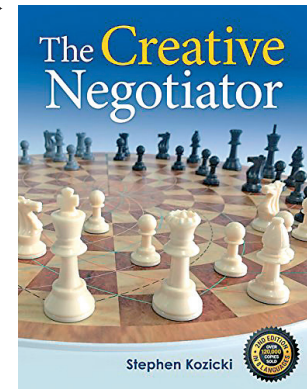
Despite the many different titles, there are five buying styles:

- decision-makers
- influencers
- recommenders
- gatekeepers
- end-users

buying styles and communication strategy

The table below summarizes how to identify each buying style. Your communication strategy in the negotiation should deal with this diversity to influence each style.

buying style	characteristics	how to influence them
decision-makers	Authority to give final approval on the decision (or project, or idea); focuses on strategic issues (for example, customers and competitors) and the impact on the whole of the business; focuses on results, ROI, cash, profits.	Focus on results, ROI, cash, profits; show them how to increase performance beyond this financial year; you must be credible: mention people in their organization or industry; mention well-known companies you have worked with.
influencers	Often influences the final decision; usually in close relationship with the decision-maker; have personal position/power within the organization.	Understand their network of stakeholders—try to get referrals from a stakeholder in their network; focus on ideas and people; ask many questions and listen.
recommenders	Able to recommend the purchase to the decision-maker; uses specifications and standards to judge; persuasive ability with decision-makers due to their technical expertise.	Build the importance of issues; prepare detailed research on all aspects of the project; understand the KPIs within their department and the organization.
gatekeepers	Skeptical of any project, information, idea/concept, new process or product that challenges the way they presently do business; every item, data, dollar, is scrutinized; can be disruptive.	Every item, data, dollar, is scrutinized, so ensure proposals and documents are accurate; show how your proposals connect with the decision-maker's priorities; show them that your idea is better than the status quo.





Everyone is different. Every negotiation is different. So you should vary your negotiation and communication style according to the person with whom you are dealing.

buying style	characteristics	how to influence them
end users	Uses product or service; may have input on buying process based on performance; key end-users should be a critical part of your persuasion strategy.	Needs certainty before the decision; looking for reliability, so show proven methods or products; prove it is easier to use.

To show how to identify a buying style, consider influencing a hospital to buy a new drug.

Once you identify the five buying styles, then you can communicate and negotiate with them in a way that is more likely to influence them. So, despite the diversity of titles, you can quickly adapt your negotiation and communication to their less diverse buying styles.

the decision-maker fallacy

Even if occasionally, you can be successful by just dealing with the decision-maker, this short-term success is likely to be temporary; in the long term, your success will be undermined by the other buying styles. In contrast, if you engage with each of the buying styles in the way required to influence each style, then your negotiation is more likely to get a 'yes'.

Many of the styles can say no, but cannot say yes to the final decision because they can only recommend yes. Only the decision-makers can give the final 'yes'. However, rarely can you ignore the four buying styles that influence the decision-makers;

you must engage and influence these buying styles to ensure long-term and sustained success.

summary

Out of habit, most people enter into every negotiation in the same way—this is counterproductive. After all, you do not treat each of your friends and acquaintances the same way, do you? Diversity is the key.

Is not there someone you know who is a bit more sensitive than most, so you have to be extra careful not to hurt their feelings. Or what about those members of the family with such a thick hide that you need to be uncommonly blunt? Everyone is different. Every negotiation is different. So you should vary your negotiation and communication style according to the person with whom you are dealing.

Find out who the stakeholders are before you begin negotiating, and identify their buying styles. Listen carefully while trying to establish their interests and amend your communication style to ensure you have the greatest influence when negotiating in a world of diversity. ■

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case study – healthcare sector

influencing a hospital to buy a new drug to prevent blood clotting

Changing a drug is a big decision for a hospital with health and economic consequences.

decision-maker: The decision-maker is the hospital manager. However, she would not decide without consulting many other people.

influencers: In the hospital, this is the most complex group. People's buying style depends on the drug and their roles on committees. Typically, hospitals will have a drug evaluation committee or a drug and therapeutics committee.

recommenders: In the hospital, the recommender is the chief pharmacist. However, the chief pharmacist is not the only expert who will influence the hospital manager.

gatekeepers: Two gatekeepers are the procurement manager and a lawyer in the legal department. Their main influence is on contract terms. The procurement manager will also try to influence pricing and other commercial terms.

end users: The end users are nurses. Some people may be tempted to assume the end users will use the drugs. End users can have a major influence on this decision.

So, the common advice to only speak to the decision-maker is simply wrong. To influence for action, you must influence all the buying styles not just the decision-makers.

tip: Continue to update your stakeholder map and communication plan.

Reference

* <https://www.fastcompany.com/40517064/how-your-personality-type-affects-your-negotiation-style>