

Improve teamwork, customer loyalty

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TAKE a minute to ask yourself if the following feedback from customers or colleagues could apply to your employees, staff or team:

- “I love doing business with them.”
- “What a team of problem solvers.”
- “Wow, she’s so great at her job.”
- “Your team makes everything so easy.”

If you have not had great feedback like this, perhaps it’s time to look under the hood and explore whether your people are as customer-centered as they should be. Here’s why: Customer-centered organizations enjoy high levels of customer loyalty.

A common denominator of customer-focused organizations is employee engagement — the passion, commitment and discretionary effort the employees bring to the job. Employee engagement is what drives great teams.

Think of how often you need to pull off great customer service in the feed industry. Many customers order multiple times per month, which means the sales cycle and service requirements never end. It’s vitally important that departments work well together, including technical service with sales, sales with marketing, the plant with sales, the warehouse with the plant, drivers with customers, rank-and-file with management, purchasing with the plant and intra-office.

Deeply engaged employees bring more of themselves to their work; they expend more discretionary effort and just plain show up better. They’re proactive problem solvers who go out of their way to serve customers and collaborate with co-workers.

What’s more, deeply engaged employees usually are great at collaboration, which, at its core, is all about how we connect with each other for strong results.

Here’s a truism for most of us: We connect with co-workers better when we work at understanding them. For most people, work and life experiences help them get better at understanding people, but the conscious study of behavior styles will accelerate this for nearly everyone.

Let’s look at the four core behavior styles in the workplace today — drawn from a framework developed by Integrity Solutions — and how to best communicate with each:



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1. Talkers. Characteristics of talkers include:

- Talkers are people oriented and have a need for recognition.
- They’re outgoing, friendly and affable.
- They like people and love visiting with folks.
- They’re easy to approach and love to talk.
- They often find decision-making difficult because they don’t want to offend anyone.

Here’s how to best communicate with talkers:

- Connect on a personal basis.
- Listen intently.
- Use friendly, open gestures and body language.
- It’s all about people.

2. Doers. Characteristics of doers include:

- Doers are outcome-driven.
- They are direct in their communications.
- They are always pressed for time, action oriented and decisive.
- They make decisions quickly once they think they have all of the facts.

Here’s how to best communicate with doers:

- Get to the point quickly.
- Listen without interrupting.
- Show proof of results.
- Don’t overload them with details.

3. Controllers. Characteristics of controllers include:

- Controllers rely on logic and facts with guarded emotions.
- They have a high need for security.
- They’re reserved people who may seem hard to approach.
- They’re logical and unemotional.
- They’re not swayed by your enthusiasm and personality.
- They want the facts and rational in-

formation before making decisions.

Here’s how to best communicate with controllers:

- Provide data and factual information.
- Match their low, reserved emotional tone.
- Don’t try to impress them.
- Present information in an organized and logical way.

4. Supporters. Characteristics of supporters include:

- Supporters are safety oriented, communicate openly and prefer to follow a process.
- They’re easy going, steady, dependable and loyal.
- They want to go slowly and get a lot of information.
- They’re detail oriented and don’t like to make quick decisions.
- They tend to seek security and avoid risks.
- They’re team players.

Here’s how to best communicate with supporters:

- Be patient and reassuring.
- Be sensitive to their feelings and emotions.
- Listen carefully for concerns.
- Don’t pressure them for quick decisions.

Everyone has a primary style, and most people are a combination of styles. No style is better than another. Organizations need all of these styles to operate most effectively.

Bottom line: People are who they are; that includes all of us. Teamwork is elevated when we understand and acknowledge different behavior styles and adapt to their uniqueness and strength for maxim results. It’s then that customers are better served and the foundations of true customer loyalty are strengthened. ■