



The Value of Understanding Temperaments in the Retail Environment

Retail sales requires a selling knowledge and skill set that is quite different than that of a salesperson selling a product that requires long-term relationship building, as in financial planning or insurance.

At Starbucks Coffee Shops, for example, I have noticed that the behavior of people at the counter can reveal their fundamental purchasing needs. The following is a breakdown of the primary differences in people:

Recognizing and relating to the basic temperaments of customers

In the sale of a commodity, especially where service is a part of the exchange or interaction, the salesperson who is able to recognize the basic differences in customers can increase his or her odds in improving his “serve” if he fine tunes his people skills with a better understanding of the basic temperaments.

The High D will walk straight to the counter with purpose. They often have a serious and concentrated focus and sometimes, even without greeting you, will place their order. Do not take this personally. It is not meant personally. It is one more task they are taking care of.

Serving the High D

The High D knows what he wants, asks for it, makes the purchase, and leaves. His or her need is to get the product as quickly as possible. He wants to get in and get out. Saving time and getting the product prepared and delivered as efficiently as possible is what the High D is about. Serving the High D requires speaking their language. Use words such as “quick,” “take time,” “efficient,” and “bottom-line.”

The High I can be identified by looking at their eyes, which often sparkle as if to say “I like you and I want you to like me.” They often dress in fashionable clothing, whether sports, casual or dress. Note: Be prepared for them to be on their cell phone while they interact with you!

Serving the High I

The High I engages the barista and makes light conversation before ordering, sometimes changing his or her order before settling on the cafe du jour. If he or she is with someone, they make full use of the interactive seating and ambiance for which Starbucks is so famous. Their need is for social interaction, and they are the poster child of the “Starbucks’ experience.” They will look around to see who is there; it may be someone they know. The High I identifies with words like “fun,” “funny,” “exciting,” and “unbelievable

The High S is a warm introvert. They often dress in warm colors such as brown, crème colors and other soft tones. Their demeanor is usually more reserved yet friendly.

Serving the High S

The High S is driven by the need to accommodate and maintain harmony. They need consistency and status quo, so their drink order will be the same with each visit, and they prefer to have the same person wait on them to have that familiarity. If the order is wrong, they may not say anything because of their need for harmony. However, since they sit in the same place each day, they may be quietly annoyed if someone is in “their” seat or at “their” table. You may ask the High S “Would you like the same?” Or when serving him, say, “Make yourself comfortable.”

The High C. It is not unusual to see a **High C** with tight or sharp bone structure. Dark rim glasses are typical; and if they look like an accountant, technician or computer programmer, chances are very high that you have a High C.

Serving the High C

The High C is driven by the need to do things right. They need their world in order, so they will expect the portion of Espresso or Cappuccino to be exact and measured. The milk will need to be steamed the same amount of time, and the amount of liquid in the cup will need to be according to his or her specifications. For the High C, accuracy is next to godliness, so the server will do well to be aware of this challenging customer and use words like “exactly” and “precisely” as they serve them.

All the barista has to do to increase his or her odds of a successful encounter and satisfied client is watch the body language and facial expressions of the customer as he or she walks through the door (if this is possible). Whether your customers are aware of it or not, you may have as much insight into them as they do. And if you know a person's temperament, it increases the possibility of a favorable response and will make your job more enjoyable and profitable.