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Don't Judge a Cook by His Brother

*The meeting of two personalities is like the contact
of two chemical substances: if there is any
reaction, both are transformed.*

Carl Jung

I have often been asked, “What is your elevator speech?”

An elevator speech or elevator pitch is a short, concise, powerful, and compelling summary that quickly and simply defines a person, profession, product, service, organization, or event and its value proposition. Phew, I had to take a breath after that. The point is that it should be short enough that you can memorize it and could say it in the space of a short elevator ride (hopefully without having to take a breath). Any good salesperson should have an elevator pitch. However, when asked for mine, I have to confess that I don't have one!

There's a good reason for that. I don't have one because I have several, and which one I use depends on who I am talking to.

Each person is different. People's personalities are unique and distinctive, and what works for one person might offend another. In the metaphorical sense, a brother who is a great cook does not a great cook his brother make. My brother was a great cook. Me? Not so much. He had his strengths and I have my own. In other words, one size does not fit all.

The good news, however, is that personalities do not come in infinite varieties. In fact, since the time of the ancient Greeks, philosophers and psychologists have been coming up with systems of personality types to help us categorize and better understand each other. Knowing some of these personality type patterns can be helpful when you meet strangers and are trying to anticipate how best to connect.

I'm not suggesting that you stereotype people or jump to conclusions based on superficial appearances. But if you study personality, you will find that some of these patterns are recognizable in the people you meet. Here is an example, see if you can find the clues:

A man named Alan owned an insurance agency for over twenty years. Having battled the effects of the recession for the last five of those years, his wife, Annette, told him that they should sell their business—which had afforded them a comfortable living, a roof over their heads, and private school for their kids—and get out while they still could.

Reluctantly, Alan got out his trusty calculator, the same one he had owned since college. He attacked the well-worn but robust keys and began massaging the numbers, a decimal here and another there, until finally he was done. He printed out his calculations, officially put their agency up for sale, and hoped for the best.

Soon thereafter, as Alan worked at his desk one day, a lady wearing a bright yellow sundress entered his office. "Hello," she said. "My name is Naomi. I would like to discuss buying your insurance agency."

"Sure, have a seat," he said, and they began to negotiate an agreement.

The negotiations progressed with Naomi throughout the afternoon, but they soon stalled, and without anything on paper, she left. Alan stared blankly from his desk as the door closed behind her.

Several days later, Alan and Naomi met again, only to find they had come to the same impasse. Days later, the same scenario happened yet again.

Frustrated and feeling hopeless, Alan related his experience to a friend who then suggested that Alan might benefit from learning more about personality types; perhaps that would provide some insight into where his negotiations with Naomi were getting stuck. Over the following days and weeks, Alan did just that and soon realized something remarkable.

Throughout his communications with Naomi, he had been telling her what he thought she would want to hear—zeros and ones, analytical data and statistics, and so on—because that's exactly the kind of information that he himself would have liked to hear. He had never paid attention to

the signals she was giving him about what mattered to her, which would have helped him to say the things *she* wanted to hear.

When he thought back over his conversations with Naomi, he remembered the feelings she expressed about wanting to help young families who are just starting out with their insurance needs. He recalled how she had told him of her trip to the ravaged South after Hurricane Katrina and how it gave her the inspiration to own her own insurance business. He remembered the questions she had asked about his kids and *their* feelings about his business. She'd even asked if he had a dog! It all became clear; Naomi had a "nurturing" personality, whereas Alan's personality was more analytical. As a result, he had been speaking the wrong language to her and stalling the sale!

Alan quickly retooled his communications with Naomi. He changed the "conversation" from an analytical data-driven discussion about the value of the business to a nurturing discussion about the *values* of the business. Not only did he make the sale, but he also got a higher price than he even asked in the first place!

There are many different personality-type systems out there, and I encourage you to do some research and find one that resonates with you. The Greek physician Hippocrates, who was born around 460 B.C. on the island of Cos, off the southwest coast of present-day Turkey, and is considered to be the founding father of medicine as a rational science, came up with the idea of the "Four Humors."

He stated that health is a harmonious balance of four humors and that disease results from their disharmony and imbalance. The etymology (that's a fancy word for the study of the origin of words) of the word *humor* came from this fact. Ironically, it is not clear how it ended up representing something funny. The theory holds that the human body is filled with four basic substances, called *humors*, which are in balance when a person is healthy. All diseases and disabilities resulted from an excess or deficit of one of these four humors. The four humors are black bile, yellow bile, phlegm, and blood.

The four humors were the precursor to Hippocrates' theory of the four temperaments, where he suggested that all people can be categorized into one of four different personality types: Sanguine (pleasure-seeking and sociable), Choleric (ambitious and leader-like), Melancholic (analytical and quiet), and Phlegmatic (relaxed and peaceful).

Hippocrates lived a very long life and died at a ripe old age in the town of Larissa in Thessaly. His work paved the way for a plethora of modern

systems of personality types. There is not one definitive system, but many of the more popular ones have some similarities. Here are a few you might be interested in checking out: the Myers-Briggs system, the Sixteen Personalities, the Interaction Styles model by Linda Berens, and the one I personally have used to great effect over the years, the B.A.N.K system, created by my friend Cheri Tree.

Some of these systems may at first seem like an over-simplification of the rich tapestry of human personality, but with a little study, the power of these perspectives will reveal itself. Einstein once said that any intelligent fool can make things bigger and more complex, but it takes a touch of genius and a lot of courage to move in the opposite direction.

Cheri Tree is one of those few who have moved in the opposite direction. Cheri has made millions in sales and has taken her vast experience and distilled the idea of the four personality types down to something so simple, easy, and applicable that it is brilliant. There are two key components that make B.A.N.K. so successful.

Tony Robbins has said, “Let your prospect determine your presentation.” Many people in sales approach their prospects with what they think their prospects wants to hear based on their *own* personality rather than that of the prospects. This is the first part of the equation and what planted the seed for Cheri to create B.A.N.K.

Imagine if you could deduce a person’s personality type while you were talking to them. What if you found out that they had a nurturing type of personality rather than an action-taker type? That, of course, would be very valuable information. Would you not, in turn, change your conversation or presentation to connect with that person on his or her level? Would that not also help with personal relationships too? I believe that teachers, pastors, police officers—anyone who deals with people—could benefit from this knowledge.

B.A.N.K. is an acronym for the four personality traits simplified in such a way as to make it much easier to remember and use them. For instance, my B.A.N.K. personality code is A.N.B.K. See if you can deduce your own code based on the information below.

B stands for the BLUEPRINT-driven personality types. These people like order and structure, timelines and lists—they like to have a blueprint. They are rarely late for appointments and expect others to be the same way.

A types are the ACTION takers. They like to move forward with wild abandon. They do not like to get too caught up in the details, nor do they like to read directions (this drives my wife crazy). They are usually good storytellers and performers. They tend to be flexible and spontaneous and like to have fun.

N types are the NURTURING types of people. They like to help everyone, regardless of personal cost. They are usually more empathetic and caring. They tend to want to give away their products or service.

K types are the KNOWLEDGE seekers. It has been said that data tells and stories sell. K types are the few people who you can actually do a “data dump” on and not drive them away. They tend to be more analytical and science driven and in many cases “sell themselves” on your product or service based on all of the data you give them.

Of course, none of us is just one of these types. But we are more inclined toward some and less toward others. That’s why we each have a four-letter code that reflects the order of priority these four types take in our particular personalities. Look at each person you meet and know that they too have their own code just like you. Their story is as important as yours, and it will most likely be different too!

The next time you are conversing with a stranger, try to guess their personality code beforehand. As you converse with them, you’ll be able to test whether your initial instinct was correct. Once you have established trust, you can even come right out and ask the person what they feel their own personality type is. Most people are curious when it comes to how their own personality comes across to others. The more you practice this kind of observation, the quicker you’ll be able to read the clues and the more accurate your guesses will be.

Observe and take note of clothing, jewelry, and body language when speaking to strangers. These can be telltale signs as to which personality type they may be. For instance, if someone has a tie-dyed shirt on, chances are they are NOT a K type personality in the B.A.N.K. system. First impressions aren’t always accurate, however. You need to assess a person by asking questions and listening in conjunction with visual observation, and then put all the pieces together. It’s not easy to master, but with a little work you will find that your communication with others will improve.