

How Do You identify Someone's Personality Style?

Stu Schlackman

Competitive Excellence

Author, Don't Just Stand There, Sell Something



Are they a Blue, Gold, Green or Orange? How do you narrow it down fast?

With experience, this will actually become as natural as remembering someone's name. But for beginners, this is the most difficult task in applying our color personality tool. That is to say, administering the 10 question test and then scoring it is not hard to learn and do, but that is rather impractical when shaking a prospect's hand during an introduction. So do we have a Catch-22? Do you need to sit a client down for the 10 question test; do you need to know their color? Well, no. While you cannot beat the test for accuracy, you can make a good guess if you know what to look for. I'd like to give some tips on how to immediately identify someone's personality style.

This is a lot like playing poker – homework is important. You need to learn the character of the game - the basics - before you can use it. You play the people to win – but you learn the odds to judge your strategy. Personality color styles are not evenly spread in the population. Gold is approximately 45% of the population, Orange 30%, Blue 15%, and Green 10%. So meeting someone on the street, the odds that they are an Orange is 3 times better than that they are a Green. But where you meet them will influence these odds. In the executive suite, it's likely they are Gold. In the development organization, it is likely they are a Green. Human resources lean towards Blue. At a sporting event, Orange's can dominate the crowd.

Having established this background, the best way to initially identify someone's personality is to consistently keep in the forefront of your mind, "who am I dealing with in regards to their personality." The more we keep this in mind, the more accurate we become in understanding who they are. Our best bet is to *extend the conversation and listen to what they have to say*. Listen for not only 'what' is said but 'how' it is said. The 'what' is the facts and information of the conversation and the 'how' is the feelings and emotions behind what is being said.

One of the best approaches is to ask questions that will help us determine: "what is most important to you?" While you cannot casually ask this right out, you can ask leading questions: "What did you think of the game last night?" "Do you think Coach X had the right strategy?" "Where do your kids go to school?" "How good is their science program?" This is not to say, you should use these exact questions, rather, following the natural flow of the conversation; ask leading questions which will shed light on 'what' they value.

- Is it keeping the company's processes and procedures running efficiently = Gold personality.
- Is it being in the lead and increasing their competitive edge = Orange personality.
- Are people and their relationships most important = Blue personality.

- Is it expertise and technology = Green personality.

Understanding ‘what’ is most important to them will help to understand their priorities, motives and personality. Remember, for this exercise, “their perspective” is more important than ours.

While listening to the ‘how’ in these first conversations, you can determine if they are left or right-brained people. Left-brained are Gold or Green. Right-brained people are Orange or Blue. ‘How’ they behave and react to you gives further indications:

- Gold’s are structured and schedule oriented - typically formal and serious.
- Orange is action oriented, likes small talk and positions to be the center of attention.
- Blue are warm and friendly and also like small talk.
- Greens are succinct in conversation, liking debate and stressing logic.

How they set and hold the meeting is a strong indicator of personality type. Gold is formal and aware of time and will express displeasure if promptness is not observed. An Orange might be multi-tasking during the meeting. Blue’s are not so controlled by time restrictions and can accept approximate start times and extend past stop times. A Green will almost always ask tough questions – often with follow ups based on your answers.

In this first meeting or before, you should discover their title or role in the company. This provides an important clue to their personality, because personality types gravitate to certain types of jobs. It’s not a perfect indicator, but a strong clue.

- CEO, CFO and COO are usually Gold
- Sales VP is usually Orange.
- HR is usually Blue.
- CIO and Engineering VP are usually Green.

How they are dressed will provide additional clues. Gold is traditional and formal; often wearing suits. Orange is trendy casual, polo and golf attire. Blue dresses fairly casual and fashionable but paying attention to color coordination and artistic style. Green will be casual and comfortable as if fashion doesn’t matter.

As I said, you also can learn personality information from where the conversation takes place. Meeting inside their office will provide a wealth of clues, in the office decoration and contents, as to ‘what’ they value.

- The Gold personality will be very organized and fairly neat. Pictures could include symbols of “Leadership”, “Perseverance”, & “Teamwork”. Books will include popular business best sellers, strategy books, and organizational guides. You will most likely see organization charts, mission and vision statements, and credentials like degrees.
- The Orange personality will have family pictures on a vacation, team pictures at company events or memorabilia from their favorite teams, personal trophies from sports and performance plaques.
- A Blue office should tend to have an artistic look with artwork, music, family pictures, pet pictures and plants.
- The Green will have more of a technology look including inventions, scientific themes and technical “how to” books.

Of course everyone can have a blend in decorating their office, but the central theme can lean towards one of the four personality types.

The next time you meet a client, see if you can identify who they might be. It can make the difference in moving the sale forward!