

## *The Sales and Marketing Personality*

By Bruce Dingman

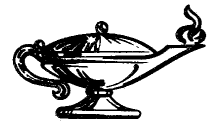
As long as we have been involved in executive search, each experience has reinforced our belief that “The best indicator of future performance is past performance.” However, as we seek to understand a person’s ability to perform in the position we are asked to fill, we also look at how a candidate’s personality affects their work.

It can be said that a great sales professional tends to be extroverted or more socially oriented, while an equally great marketing professional may be more introverted. This knowledge leads to an interesting dilemma when seeking a leader over sales and marketing. Not only does the leadership/management aspect of the role require effective relational skills but the dual functions of the position imply that one’s personality should include characteristics of an extrovert as well as an introvert.

A purely sales-oriented person who is extremely extroverted may be 90:10 in an extrovert/introvert ratio. He is energized when being around people, is gregarious and outgoing. On the other hand, a pure marketing professional, who often tends to be highly creative or analytical, may reverse the extrovert/introvert ratio to 10:90. In the first case, it would be wise to investigate whether the candidate is good at in-depth relationships and has the ability to focus on management of essential details. For the more introverted person, gaining insight into whether the person can relate to colleagues and subordinates is essential. Either person may be a great individual contributor, but may not have the ability to effectively lead others.

As we move towards a more equal ratio, we are likely to find a better balance of skills. Without this balance, the ability to build and lead teams is less likely to be present. Of course, these are general statements and each candidate should be evaluated individually, but we have often found these principles to be true.

Now for the tough combination, finding someone with strengths in sales and marketing. I find it helpful to determine what the person’s extroverted/introverted ratio was when they were around age 13 (before their social skills and self-confidence had necessarily matured) compared to where it is now. The person who was not naturally an extrovert may have learned to be good at sales, having developed the self-discipline to be successful in such a role. On the other hand, if no adjustment has been made, we want to be sure there is not a tendency to avoid socially oriented tasks such as making sales calls. Sometimes the highly extroverted person does not become a good manager of sales people because the relational skills never developed. We must discern whether the person is introspective enough to recognize his or her own weaknesses as well as how they are perceived by others. Those more introverted may excel at data analysis and/or idea creation, which are required in a true marketing role. The question is whether the person has developed the skills to lead others effectively (motivating staff for results, mentoring,



casting a vision, etc.) and developed enough of a comfort level and self-discipline to be able to “work a room,” make cold calls and be a good example as a salesman to the members of the sales team.

Taking all these variables into consideration, we make it a practice to evaluate each candidate’s personality and traits from the time they “came of age” until the time of our interview, and how that predisposition and skill-set fits the needs of the job. We not only ask the candidate for insights on these points, but also those who were their bosses, close working peers and direct reports. If the candidate has effectively integrated their personality into their management style, they will not only know their strengths and weaknesses, but they will accurately know how others see them. And that’s an important part of being successful as a leader.

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