

Get Better Results by Networking in Other Person's Style

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Want to make the most effective use of your networking time and dollars? Then hone your people-reading skills so you can network in the other person's comfort zone.

Each of you is as unique as a snowflake, yet you also share similarities - enough so that behavioral characteristics can be grouped into four major categories. You might be thinking, "Oh, I took that DISC tool at work to help me communicate, manage or sell better. What's the importance in networking?"

Glad you asked!

People-reading skills are pervasive throughout your interpersonal relationship-building activities: when speaking with people at events, making referrals and communicating with them via email or the phone. Knowing how to adapt and flex to increase the other's comfort level is sure to increase your success.

If you are a Dauntless (Dominance) and Indefatigable (Influence) style, you are naturally more assertive, fast-paced, outgoing and take-charge. It is relatively easy for you to meet and talk with others. As Supportive (Steadiness) and Careful (Conscientiousness) people, you tend to be introspective, pensive, quiet and slower-paced. You usually find business and social events more difficult, even a necessary burden at times.

You may be a combination of several styles and find yourself exhibiting different behaviors at different networking events. If you are nearly equal Indefatigable and Careful styles, you may be at ease and really enjoy certain events; other times you would rather be alone or may become irritated if the meeting is not organized and orchestrated to your high standards. You need to recognize and adjust to differences within you just as you recognize and adjust to differences among people. Each style has strengths and limitations.

Your behavior in networking situations may vary from that you exhibit in the office, e.g., that of a manager. Networking and interacting with strangers can be much more stress producing! That's why I specifically created relationship-building applications.

Dauntless Networker

If you are a Dauntless Networker, you rush in where mere mortals fear to tread! No matter that you are a low-level supervisor and the other attendees are top-level managers. You dislike corporate hierarchies and try to ignore or work around them. You relish being number one even if your company has only one employee. If you are an entrepreneur, no one will ever know your two-year-old business has yet to make a profit!

At networking events, people feel your presence when you walk into a room. At meetings, you let people know your opinions. Others know you are someone to reckon with. You may overwhelm people with your confident, powerful style when they first meet you or try to rekindle relationships. Your high sense of self-worth, your powerful aura and your impression of “knowing it all” need to be kept within limits.

You are good at getting results. What others may question is how you accomplish them. Be more considerate of other people’s feelings, and the sky is the limit for you in relationship building ... and your career.

Supportive Networker

A quiet, even-handed, steady approach pervades throughout your activities if you are a Supportive Networker. You are known for the calming effect you have on others. Your sincerity is evident through your handshake, your smile and your demeanor.

You are by far the best listener. Your “Tell me more,” “Go on,” and “What do you think?” prompts encourage others to open up to you and make them feel important; however, more outgoing styles may unabashedly take advantage of you!

You don’t want to knowingly hurt anyone’s feelings. You tend to be uncomfortable when the conversation heats up and would rather withdraw into your shell until any conflict blows over. If, however, you think you may be the cause of any ill feelings, you will approach the person to smooth things over.

Preferring the security of warm, friendly relationships, you like to avoid the unknown. Yet, as a Supportive-style business owner or employee, you know the benefits of networking and that occasionally you have “to take the plunge.” Your compromise is to seek a safe environment, which may mean talking to the same person for most of the event. It’s okay to talk with only two people; however, it’s also good for you to set a goal to slowly work that number up to three or four people.

How the Two Adapt and Flex

It is readily apparent that we could have oil and water mixing when these two styles interact. Here are steps the Dauntless person can take to make the Supportive style feel more comfortable. At all costs, avoid the “I am who I am. Tough.” approach that some Dauntless styles assume.

- Avoid your impulse to interrupt their slower, deliberate responses or finish their sentences.
- Draw them out by asking opened-ended questions.
- Introduce them to your acquaintances.
- Steer clear of confrontation.

Supportive people, take a deep breath, and:

- Be prepared for quick topic changes or incomplete sentences.
- Don't take the brusque, blunt style personally.
- Use your naturally good listening techniques; you may learn from their creative, visionary outlook.
- Look them in the eye while they and you are speaking.

Lillian Bjorseth has worked with tens of thousands of people nationwide through her often life-changing programs based on adapting and flexing to improve personal and business communication. She can be reached at www.duoforce.com or www.greaterchicagonetworking.com