

Jon Sample
Sales Effectiveness
self feedback report

Saturday, January 26, 2002

Introduction

The following information is provided to help you to navigate the extensive information that is included in this Sales Effectiveness output report.

1. Overall summary chart

The summary results chart provides a quick visual representation of your scores in seven categories that make up the Sales Effectiveness profile. Scores upon which to most concentrate are above 3.5, which are considered to be strong and scores below 2.75, which may be in need of further development. Please note that these category scores are averages. Individual question scores can be viewed by clicking on the category label hyperlink.

2. Category description pages

This report contains three output pages for each of the seven categories. The first of these three pages explains the category, list average scores and then provides high and low score interpretation notes. The second page provides a graphical representation of individual question scores. The third page in the set provides broadly based improvement actions for those individuals wanting to develop their competencies in the overall category.

3. 10/10 Report

The 10/10 Report page provides the raw scores for the top 10 highest scoring questions and the bottom 10 lowest scoring questions out of the 84. It also identifies the categories to which these questions belong.

4. Course and Reading suggestions

This output report includes development suggestions for the two lowest scoring categories out of the seven. These suggestions include training courses that may prove helpful, as well as specific books that may provide some useful additional information.

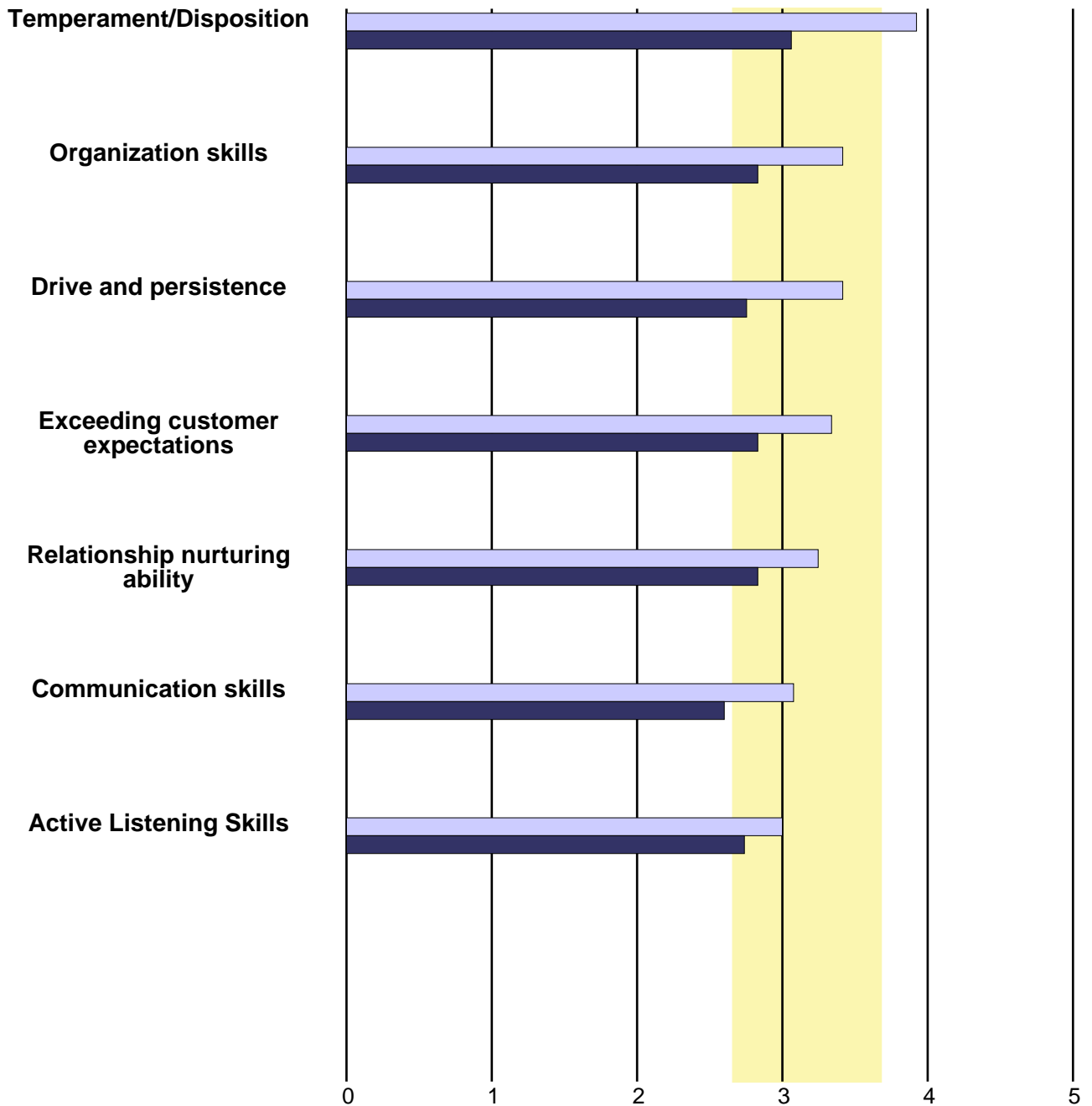
5. Development Plan

The development plan takes the five lowest scoring questions on aggregate and puts them into a single page template for individuals to record the specific actions that they plan to take as a result of their feedback during the forthcoming twelve month period. Individuals may draw upon any of the general guidance offered in their feedback report, or perhaps more usefully, draw upon the coaching tips ideas that are also included (see next section)

6. Coaching tips

The overall output report includes detailed coaching tips for the five lowest scoring questions on aggregate (consistent with the one page development plan). These coaching tips provide not only elaborative information about the particular questions but provide some specific advice on what individuals might do to improve their skills or learn new behaviors in the future.

OVERALL SUMMARY



Self Norm

The above chart is sorted in descending order of summary scores.

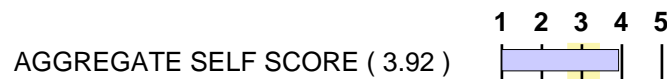
Norm bars shown on this chart are the progressive average aggregate scores of all individuals rating themselves on this questionnaire.

Sales Effectiveness Profile

TEMPERAMENT/DISPOSITION

Temperament/Disposition looks at your internal want or desire to find value and enjoyment through your relationships with other people in general and also looks at how 'comfortable' you are in being in a sales situation. This category asks the question "How well do you operate on an open, "information sharing" basis with old and new sales contacts around you?"

1 = almost never, 5 = almost always.



Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

"Scores predominantly in the ones and twos ('almost never' and 'occasionally') are likely mean that you may operate more like a 'loner' much of the time, doing much more by yourself than with and through other people. You are also likely to be selective about whom you talk, and usually only when you have a reason to initiate contact at all.

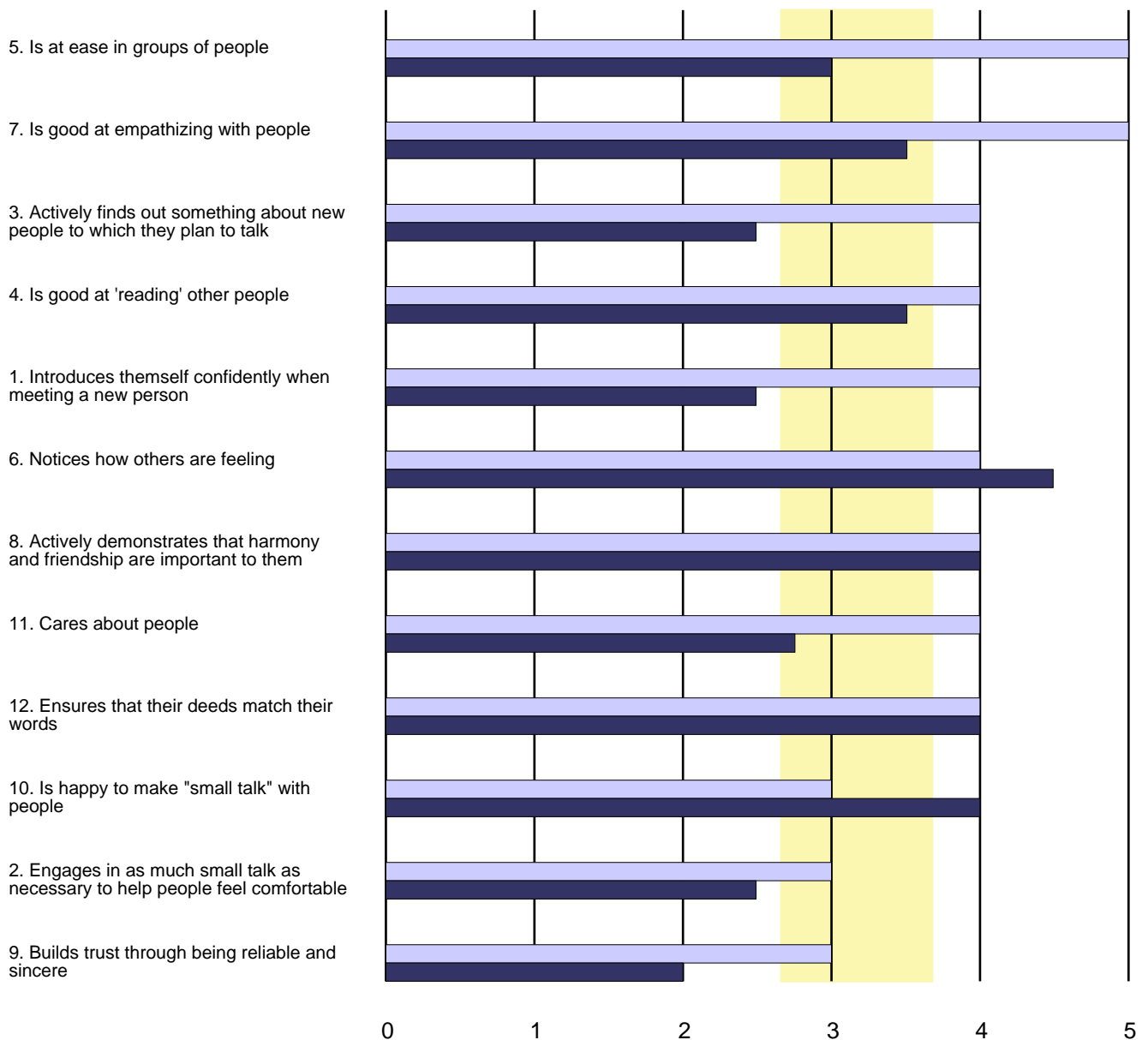
A low score person will be likely to lack general confidence about meeting new people and therefore only initiate contact when they feel that the effort is likely to be tangibly worthwhile. They also tend to see most of their relationships with people as being 'transactional' or operating only to make an exchange of some kind (on a like for like basis) rather than to offer benefits and solutions and help whenever needed."

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

"Scores predominantly in the fours and fives ('very frequently' and 'almost always') are likely to mean that you are an easy going and flexibly minded individual that likes to work with and through people on a regular basis. In doing this, you are likely to be happy to offer support and help as well as being skilled at pointing out the advantages and benefits of particular solutions over others to your existing clients and prospective customers.

A high score person will be likely to go out of their way to build relationships with a wide range of people, thus offering support to them and the opportunity for greater influence and therefore success in any selling situation. Many relationships will therefore be deep and long lasting friendships."

Sales Effectiveness Profile TEMPERAMENT/DISPOSITION



Self Norm

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Sales Effectiveness Profile TEMPERAMENT/DISPOSITION

Temperament/Disposition looks at your internal want or desire to find value and enjoyment through your relationships with other people in general and also looks at how 'comfortable' you are in being in a sales situation. This category asks the question "How well do you operate on an open, "information sharing" basis with old and new sales contacts around you?"

Improvement actions

Low scorers needs to find ways to become more at ease in talking to people in general and in being open to talking to people without any particular purpose and engaging in small talk more often. Although it is not easy to quickly change, low scorers can also try to put themselves more often in the shoes of others and look to increase their overall empathy with people that they meet.

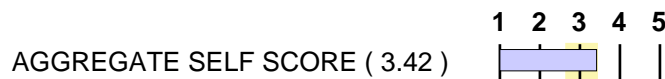
emperament/Disposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Make a commitment to network more widely as a means to meet more people and build your levels of comfort in dealing with people that you do not know well or at all.-Develop the ability to look at issues and situations you encounter from the point of view of those involved, and think about what actions you could take to be helpful or supportive.-Take the opportunity to talk to strangers or people that you do not know well more frequently.-Set yourself a target to engage in small talk conversation with at least one person that you do not know well every day (whether or not they are likely to be a good sales prospect).
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Sales Effectiveness Profile

ORGANIZATION SKILLS

Organizational skills looks at how well you use organizational and prioritization systems to efficiently and successfully sell to your sales contacts or prospects. This category asks the question "How effectively do you organize yourself and the information you gather about people to which you intend to sell in order to maximize your chances of success?"

1 = almost never, 5 = almost always.



Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

"Scores predominantly in the ones and twos ('almost never' and 'occasionally') are likely to mean that you may not worry about setting up much in the way of systems before you engage in the selling process or gather relevant information that you may need to be successful. As a result, you may frequently lose cards, paper, phone numbers etc, and have to expend more time than necessary in finding what you need (and sometimes the same information again and again).

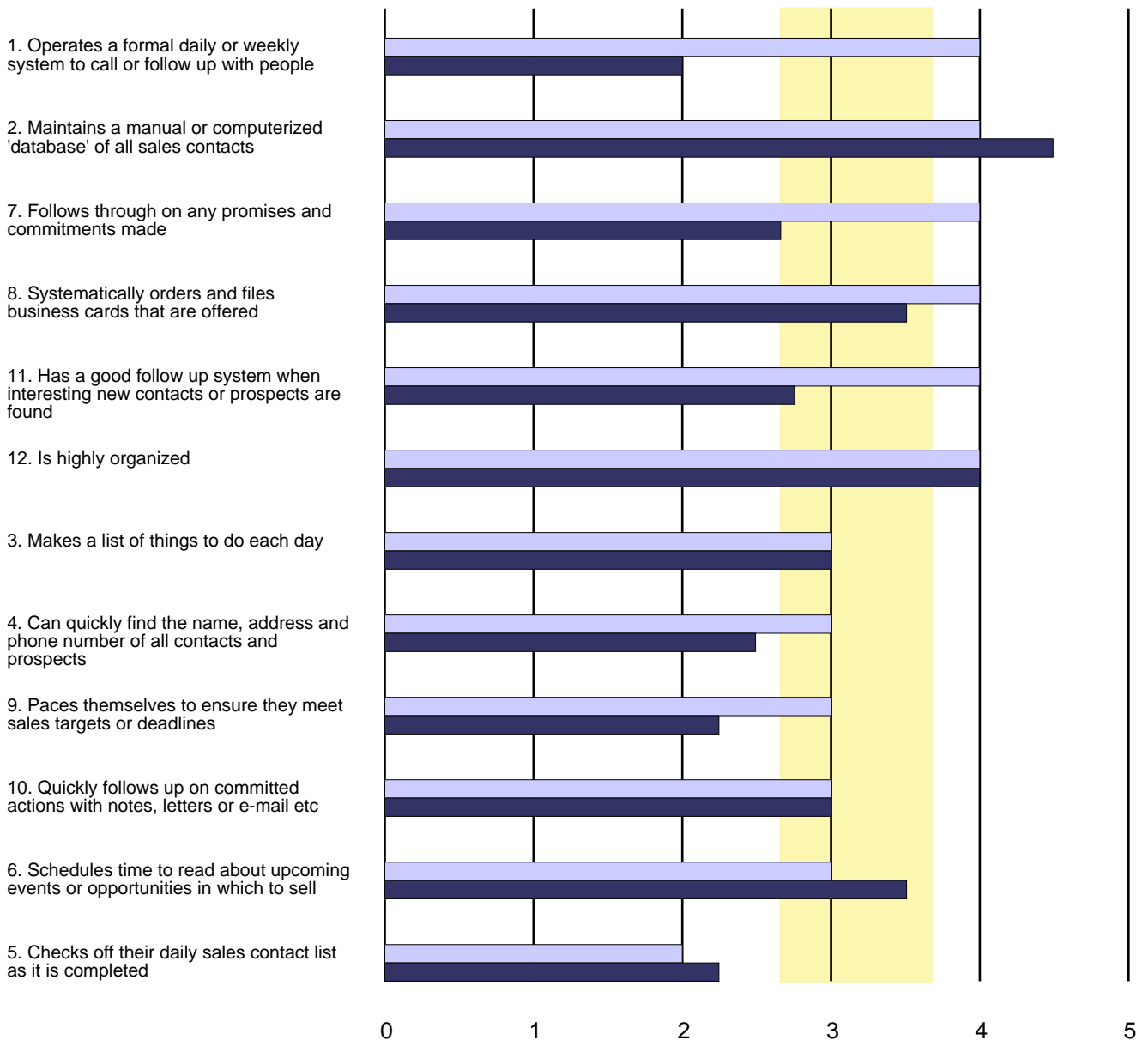
A low score person will be likely to approach the whole selling process in a 'disorderly' fashion and therefore find themselves repeating their efforts to find people or follow up with them. Low scorers will also keep 'loose' files or no organization system at all, so as to refer to information that they have collected when they need it."

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

"Scores predominantly in the fours and fives ('very frequently' and 'almost always') are likely to mean that you take your sales networking and prospecting efforts seriously and to have set up a well-prepared and comprehensive system to keep track of your meetings and interfaces. You are also likely to be able to quickly find information that you have researched or gathered, in order to present well or to follow up effectively.

A high score person will be likely to set up a well structured filing and data collection system before they initiate any serious sales effort, as well as to think about how they will organize, collate and categorize information. In addition, they will understand the importance of following up with people that they meet and keeping any promises or commitments that they make."

Sales Effectiveness Profile ORGANIZATION SKILLS



Self Norm

The above chart is sorted in descending order of summary scores.

Norm bars shown on this chart are the progressive average aggregate scores of all individuals rating themselves on this questionnaire.

Sales Effectiveness Profile

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Improvement actions

Low scorers need to establish a contact management system (either manual or computerized) and force themselves to log information from sales oriented meetings and conversations as soon as they occur. In addition, they should transfer key data from discussions with prospects and customers as well as from leaflets, brochures or business cards into their system frequently, sorting, categorizing and labeling it so that it is easy to find and search when they need it.

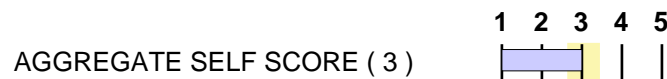
Organization skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Purchase, design or adapt a sales/contact organization system that is easy to use and easy to maintain for you and to accommodate all of your sales contact details.-Teach yourself how to use your personal organization system properly and on a constant basis. At least once a month, review all the data you have collected, and categorize and prioritize it carefully.-Develop the habit of making regular notes after all of your sales visits or meetings and transferring the most relevant data to your contact management system.-Regularly review the information that you collect on your sales prospects and your customers and follow up with a letter, phone call or e-mail etc (and also record any responses that you get).
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Sales Effectiveness Profile

ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

Active Listening skills looks at how well you listen to, and successfully process your sales prospect's or customer's messages (both verbal and non-verbal) before you respond. This category asks the question "How attentive or empathetic are your listening habits in ensuring that you've fully appreciated the customer's entire communication"?

1 = almost never, 5 = almost always.



Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

"Scores predominantly in the ones and twos ('almost never' and 'occasionally') are likely mean that you may not always fully appreciate what prospects or customers communicate or miss important components of the overall message. You are also prone to being easily distracted and to jump into conversations before the sender has finished speaking.

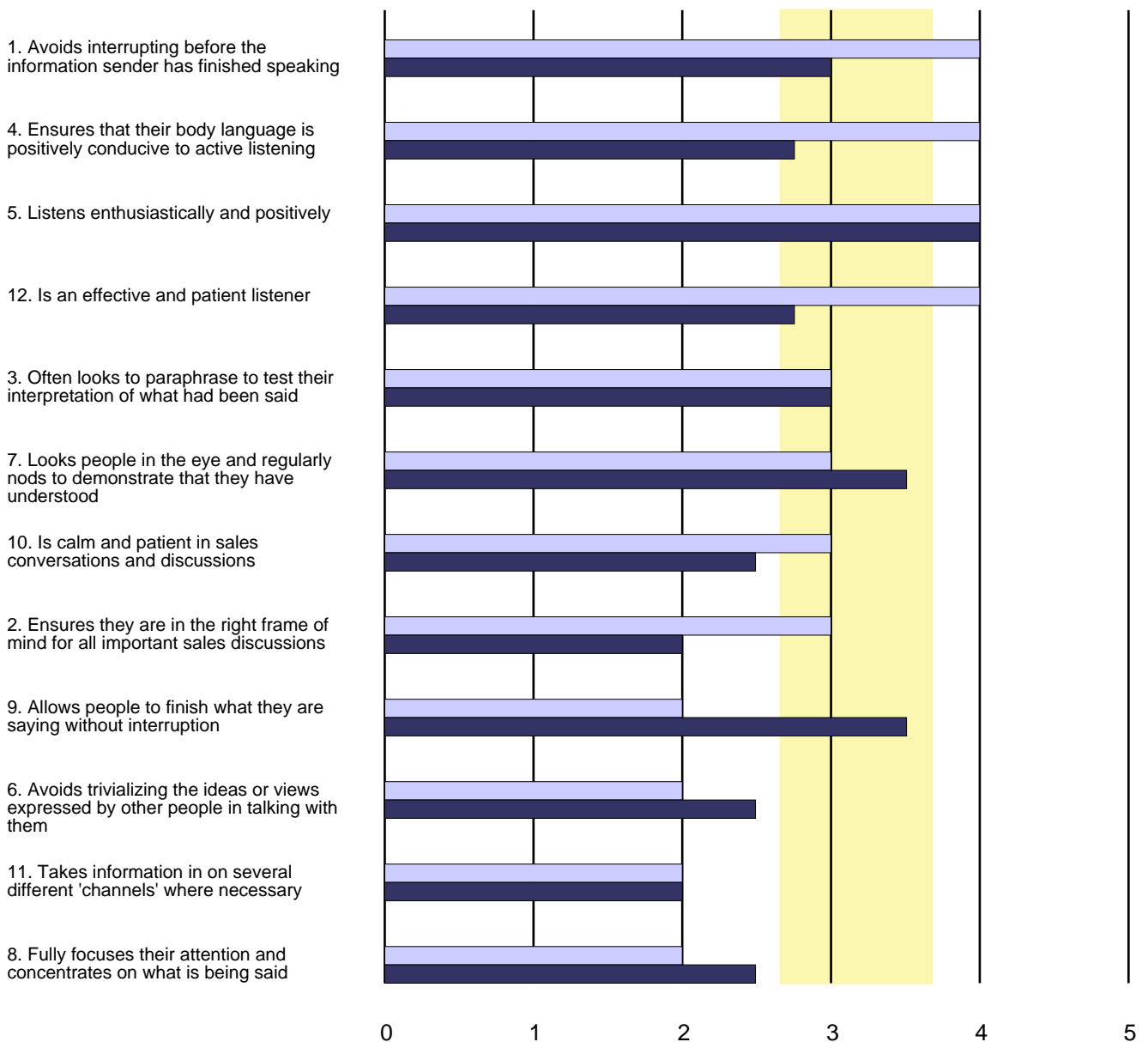
A low score person will be likely to find that communications can be frustrating or even confusing. Although blame may often be attributed to the sales prospect or customer, this is more likely to arise as a result of poor listening, giving insufficient time and focus to hearing the full message and letting the mind wander to other things (or supposedly greater priorities and tasks)."

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

"Scores predominantly in the fours and fives ('very frequently' and 'almost always') are likely to mean that you are an attentive listener and effective at appreciating the 'tenor' most communications in whatever form they may take. You will therefore concentrate genuinely and focus well on what customers or sales prospects say to you and maintain a calm and patient demeanor to let clients get their message across without interruption.

A high score person will be likely to be seen as a highly appreciative and attentive listener and one that freely gives of their time and energy to ensure that they have done as much as possible to hear and appreciate the sender's full message. High scorers will therefore tend to be much more valued when a customer or prospective client is looking to communicate important or complex information, and gain their insight or comment."

Sales Effectiveness Profile ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS



Self Norm

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Sales Effectiveness Profile

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Improvement actions

Low scorers need to speak less and listen more. To do this they need to become more concerned to find conducive listening environments where necessary, avoid interrupting and letting their mind wander. Most of all they need to try to quietly hear the whole message being communicated without 'jumping' in too soon.

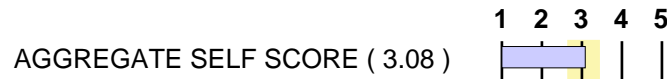
Active Listening Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Nod or show that you have understood in other ways at regular points in any conversation with a sales contact.-Maintain as much direct eye contact as you can and show genuine and focused interest in the communication (and avoid generally showing any distraction &#8211; physical or mental).-Try to smile at people more often and be a friendly and sincere as you can when they are talking to you.-Make a strong effort to put yourself in the other person's position and to imagine what they might be feeling or where they might be coming from in sending their message.
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Sales Effectiveness Profile

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Communication skills looks at the extent to which you listen and feed back to your contacts in order to build the quality and depth of all of your sales relationships. This category asks the question "How effectively do you give and receive from your sales contact network in order to establish efficient communication channels?"

1 = almost never, 5 = almost always.



Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

"Scores predominantly in the ones and twos ('almost never' and 'occasionally') are likely to mean that you may fail to either listen effectively to sales contacts you meet or to communicate with your network contacts sufficiently well enough to build 'deeper' relationships with them. You are also likely to keep yourself to yourself rather too much leaving you often 'missing the sales opportunity'.

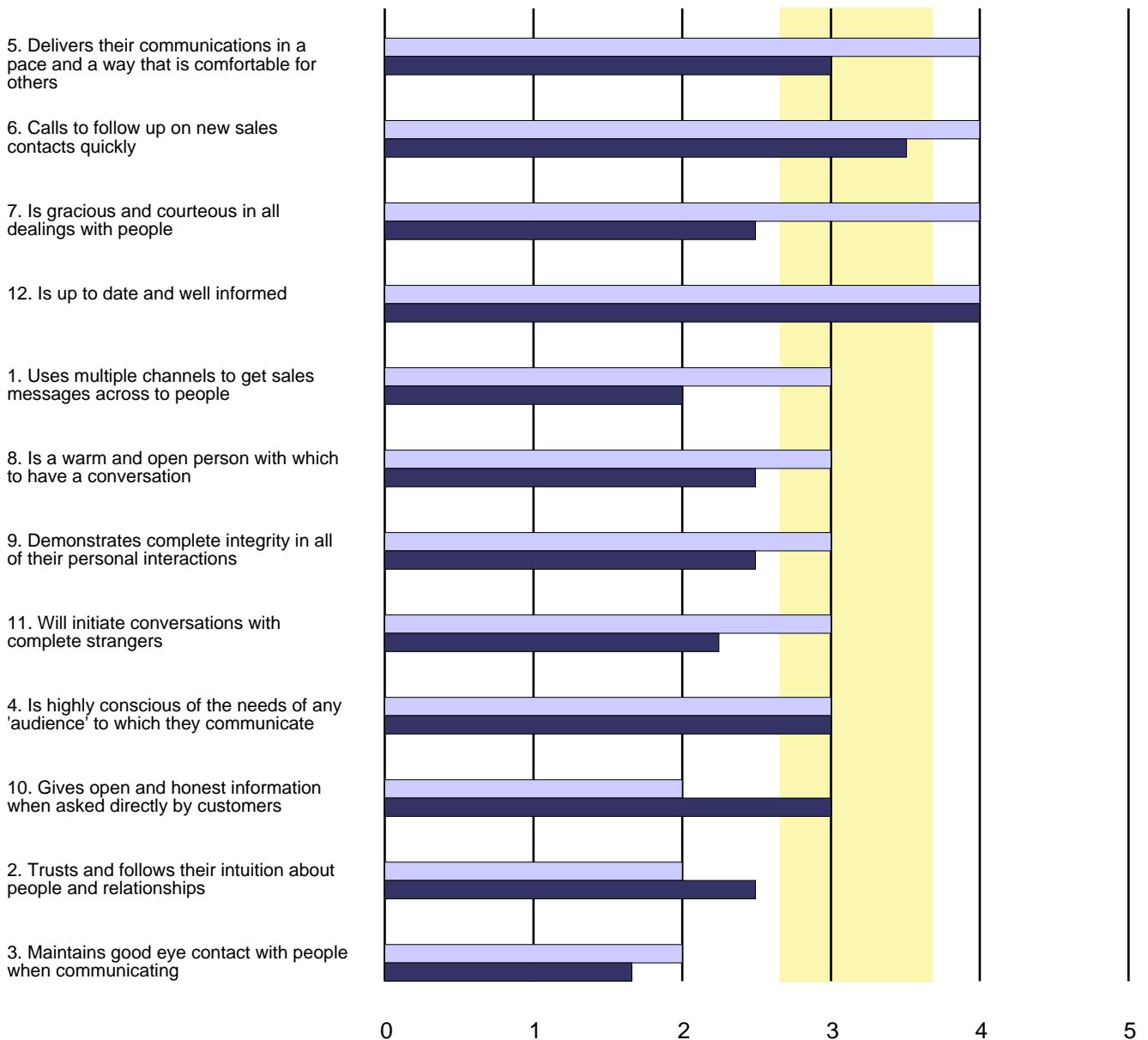
A low score person will be likely to be more of a "disconnected information island" in a sales network. This means they don't always build relationships with their contacts to a deep enough level, and may have to work much harder by "churning and burning" many more contacts that they meet than they could or should."

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

"Scores predominantly in the fours and fives ('very frequently' and 'almost always') are likely to mean that you appreciate the value of carefully listening to and 'reading' the needs of your contacts. You also well understand that regular and varied communication over time considerably helps to build strong and successful customer relationships.

A high score person will be likely to enjoy being a contact or potential customer communication 'hub', or be seen to be a well connected person. They are then therefore both a useful data resource as well as a good 'first port of call' for sales contacts to share their ideas or the challenges they face (and are often therefore seen to have potential solutions to their customer's problems)."

Sales Effectiveness Profile COMMUNICATION SKILLS



Self Norm

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Improvement actions

Low scorers should spend as much time as they can in collecting useful data, information and news and carefully assess to whom it might be useful or interesting. Such information should be offered regularly and graciously to sales contacts as a way of opening up general communication channels, and in order to help build relationships (including initiating relationships with completely new people and relative strangers).

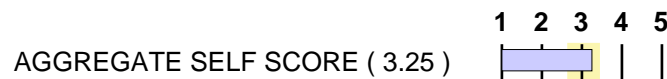
Communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Keep files and folders for useful articles, ideas, news stories, clippings or other data you read or see that you think may be interesting or worthy of follow up to help your sales effort.-Think about whom might benefit from your product, information, or services (or may find it interesting and make contact and listen to what you have to offer). Use the excuse to talk and discover more about your contact and to deepen your relationship.-Start to think about the different prospects or customer audiences to which you have to communicate or present and develop a list of variations in style and content that you may successfully adopt in the future.-Develop a series of sales presentation 'scripts' that you can deliver 'flawlessly' and with total confidence in a range of different situations that you may encounter in the future.
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Sales Effectiveness Profile

RELATIONSHIP NURTURING ABILITY

Relationship nurturing ability looks at the extent to which you sincerely and enthusiastically invest your time and effort into building and growing your relationships with your sales contacts. This category asks the question "How well do you nurture your relationships with your contacts and prospective customers so as to develop high levels of warmth, empathy and mutual trust?"

1 = almost never, 5 = almost always.



Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

"Scores predominantly in the ones and twos ('almost never' and 'occasionally') are likely mean that you are less concerned, or even 'blind' to the needs of specific sales prospects and customers that you meet. You may also be overly 'transactional' in your dealings with people, thinking more about your own needs rather than those of other people.

A low score person will be likely to keep their sales conversations or meetings too short, or are prone to focus only on what are perceived to be significant or important points of discussion (ignoring 'small' talk or minor social exchange). They will also often forget people's names and sometimes fail to recall details from past conversations."

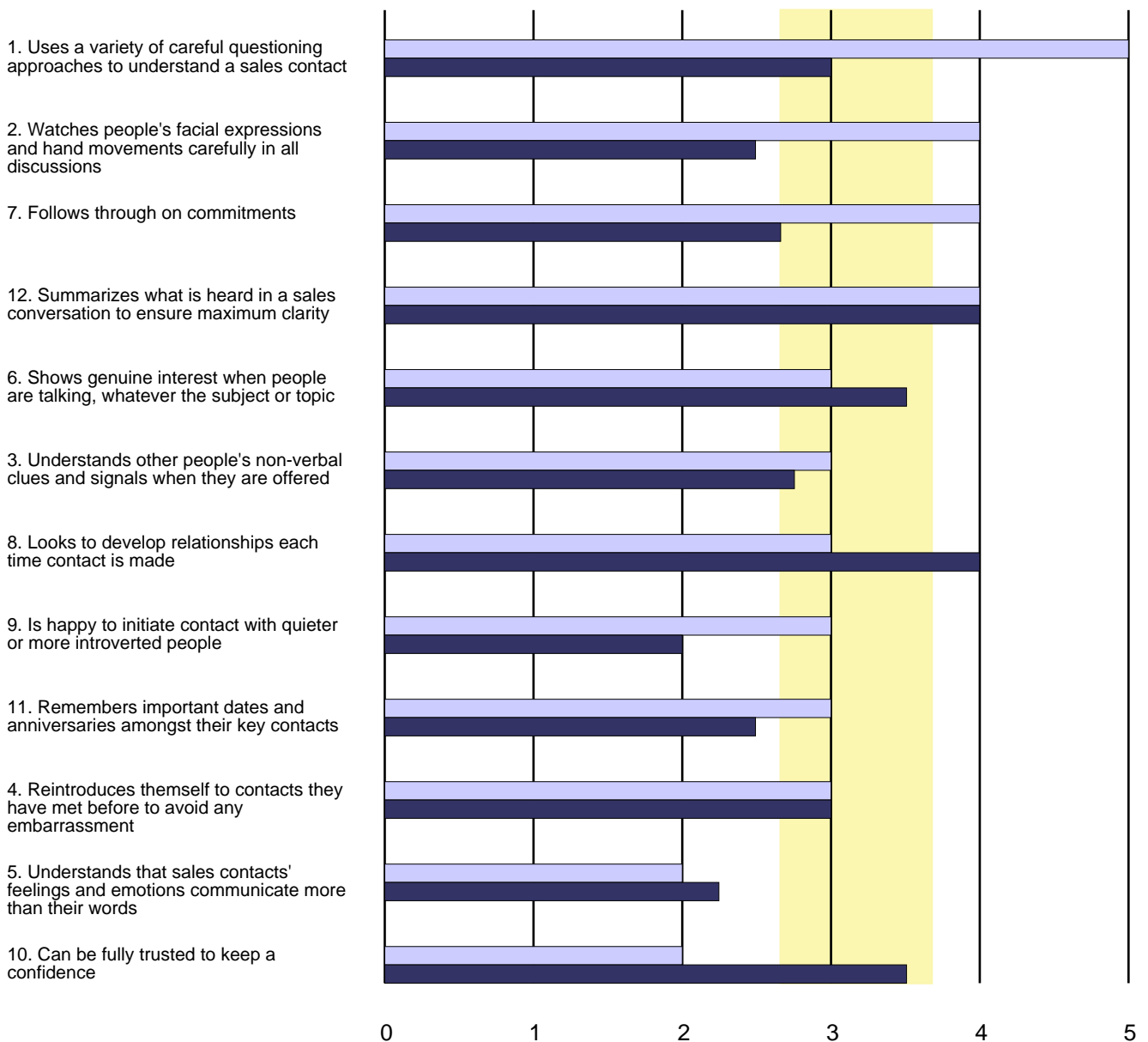
HIGH (greater than 3.5)

"Scores predominantly in the fours and fives ('very frequently' and 'almost always') are likely to mean that you are you are committed to creating a warm and enabling climate in which customers feel positive and valued when they come into contact with you. This means that you are likely to almost instinctively put yourself in the 'shoes' of other people, in order to better understand their needs and aspirations.

A high score person will be likely to quickly build empathy with most people that they meet, or at least find out a lot of minor details about the person, that they can then recall, and build upon in future conversations. They will also give much of themselves to others, without ever feeling that they have to 'balance' how much is 'given' versus how much is 'taken'."

Sales Effectiveness Profile

RELATIONSHIP NURTURING ABILITY



Self
 Norm

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Improvement actions

Low scorers need to try to regularly imagine what their sales contacts may be thinking or feeling, or imagine what they might value. Having done this, they can look to provide ideas, suggestions or general advice to be supportive. Such support should be genuinely and warmly offered with good eye contact, and trying hard to remember details and personal facts from prior conversations.

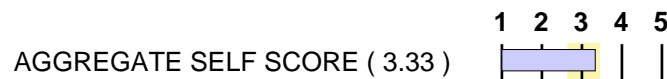
Relationship nurturing ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Aim to be as positive and sincere as possible in all your conversations with your sales contacts and be sensitive to people's feelings or emotions as well as their words.- Try to develop as much trust as you can and make sure that you meet any commitments that you make to customers.- Make sure that your deeds always match your words when you make statements about what you intend to do after a discussion or meeting with a sales contact.- Aim to look at every sales conversation that you plan to have with a prospect from their perspective as much as you can before holding the meeting and plan to handle any objections that you can imagine.
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Sales Effectiveness Profile

EXCEEDING CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

Exceeding customer expectations looks at the extent to which the individual has an 'environmental radar' tuned to the economy, competitors, the market and customers to guide their day to day actions. This category asks the question "How well do you listen to external sources of information, and work across functions, departments and teams to help offer sales service excellence to your customers?"

1 = almost never, 5 = almost always.



Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

"Scores predominantly in the ones and twos ('almost never' and 'occasionally') are likely mean that this person may spend little or no time in 'tuning in' to the external commercial environment or the changing needs or demands of customers. As such, access to external business information is likely to be limited or far slower than it needs to be to keep usefully up to date.

A low score person will be likely to face market surprises more frequently than they should because they do not have a well developed network of sources for information about changes to the economy, competitor or customer needs. Decision-making may therefore take place without a sound, up to date external market context or without reasonable regard to what is happening that may be relevant."

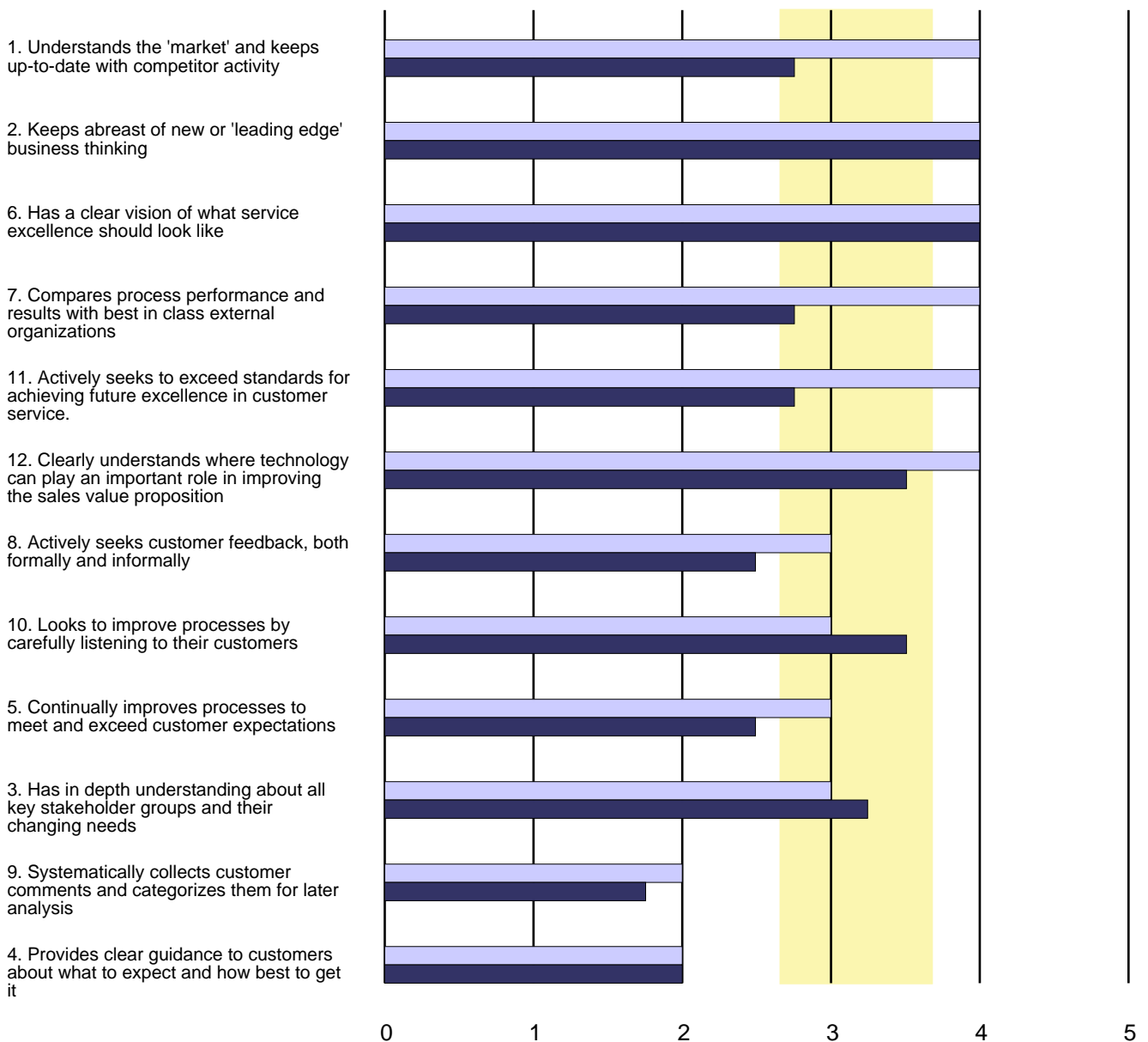
HIGH (greater than 3.5)

"Scores predominantly in the fours and fives ('very frequently' and 'almost always') are likely mean that this individual maintains an active interest in what is happening as far as their customers are concerned and in the external commercial world in general. This will include keeping up to date with what is happening in the economy, with competitor initiatives and on the shifting needs of different types of customers.

A high score person will be likely to invest a considerable amount of time and energy in developing effective sources of information (both inside and outside their organization) and with a wide variety of individuals and groups in different functions and businesses. This is done by nurturing a strong contact network and by maintaining a healthy inquisitive interest in the commercial world at large."

Sales Effectiveness Profile

EXCEEDING CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS



Self Norm

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Sales Effectiveness Profile

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Exceeding customer expectations looks at the extent to which the individual has an 'environmental radar' tuned to the economy, competitors, the market and customers to guide their day to day actions. This category asks the question "How well do you listen to external sources of information, and work across functions, departments and teams to help offer sales service excellence to your customers?"

Improvement actions

Low scorers need to spend more time in talking about general commercial issues to internal colleagues from other functions and departments and use this experience to start nurturing useful contacts inside and outside the business. This may include other similar or competitive service organizations, suppliers and other intermediary businesses. Learn to steer these conversations towards what people think about the trends in the economy, in competitor activity or in any shift in consumer attitudes or expectations.

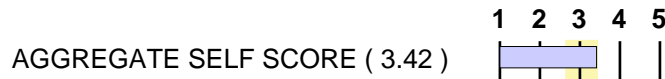
Exceeding customer expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Read more widely and regularly to keep up to date about trends in the market in best practice enterprises and in other innovative industries and sectors.-Take a greater interest in customer feedback and even actively communicate with customers to gain input on strengths and weaknesses about what they are being offered (and how it might be improved).-Identify one key process in your work area that could be improved by technology and develop a plan to describe how this might be brought about.-Engage in some external process benchmarking to test whether a targeted performance area is at a sufficiently competitive level for customer needs.
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Sales Effectiveness Profile

DRIVE AND PERSISTENCE

Drive and persistence looks at the extent to which your sales contact relationship-building efforts remain constant and relentless through obstacles and time. This category asks the question "With how much tenacity do you develop your personal sales network and drive hard towards better outcomes through people?"

1 = almost never, 5 = almost always.



Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

"Scores predominantly in the ones and twos ('almost never' and 'occasionally') are likely to mean that you often become distracted or overly affected by obstacles and difficulties that arise when you are trying to build your customer base. Selling and general prospecting effort is therefore likely to be conducted too much at random, or by accident, and followed through with inadequate passion or energy.

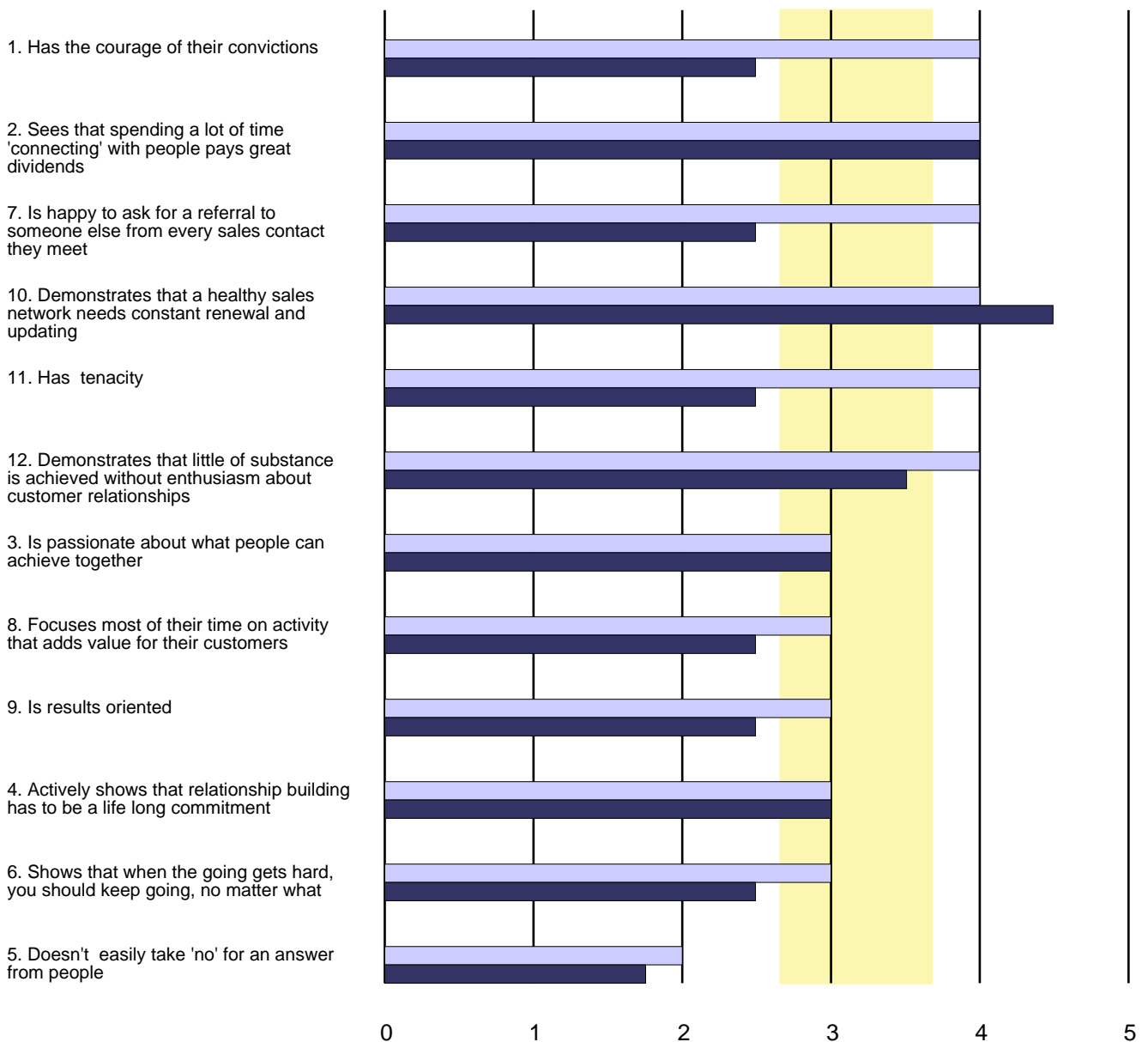
A low score person will be likely to have only a limited commitment to achieving better results through people, preferring to take on difficult tasks or projects too often by themselves. They will therefore, find that they may lose faith in their own ability to achieve some of their sales tasks or goals and occasionally therefore let their customers down or fail to deliver on a promise or commitment."

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

"Scores predominantly in the fours and fives ('very frequently' and 'almost always') are likely to mean that you push strongly towards your sales relationship building goals or aspirations and to try to 'jump over' or avoid any obstacles that you encounter. You are also likely to have high levels of self-motivation or internal drive and often act as a role model for others.

A high score person will be likely to be naturally enthusiastic about their customer relationships and often go out of their way to find opportunities to involve people in goals or challenges (other people's and their own). They are also likely to take their sales commitments seriously and work hard to achieve results in order to help their whole customer base grow to be successful and prosper over the longer term."

Sales Effectiveness Profile DRIVE AND PERSISTENCE



Self Norm

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DRIVE AND PERSISTENCE

Drive and persistence looks at the extent to which your sales contact relationship-building efforts remain constant and relentless through obstacles and time. This category asks the question "With how much tenacity do you develop your personal sales network and drive hard towards better outcomes through people?"

Improvement actions

Low scorers need to think carefully about the whole sales cycle with each customer and make sure that they organize as much effort and resources as are necessary in order to fully meet (and where possible exceed) their promises. This also entails becoming a personal role model for hard work, determination and tenacity.

Drive and persistence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Even in the face of obstacles, remain committed by sticking to your sales prospecting plans, and celebrate your successes rather than worry about your failures.-Make a careful note of commitments that you make, or priorities that are important to your customers and do everything you can to meet their expectations-When good sales opportunities arise, think about the resources that you will need and the people that could potentially help you. Take steps to organize these at the earliest possible opportunity or gain people's commitment to assist you when you need their help.-Even when you experience a 'no sale' or rejection, get used to asking your prospective customer what else you could have done or even whether they could recommend anyone else to which you could talk in the future.
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THE '10/10' REPORT

Top 10 development needs

		scores
Active Listening Skills	6. Avoids trivializing the ideas or views expressed by other people in talking with them	2.0
Active Listening Skills	8. Fully focuses their attention and concentrates on what is being said	2.0
Active Listening Skills	9. Allows people to finish what they are saying without interruption	2.0
Active Listening Skills	11. Takes information in on several different 'channels' where necessary	2.0
Communication skills	2. Trusts and follows their intuition about people and relationships	2.0
Communication skills	3. Maintains good eye contact with people when communicating	2.0
Communication skills	10. Gives open and honest information when asked directly by customers	2.0
Drive and persistence	5. Doesn't easily take 'no' for an answer from people	2.0
Exceeding customer expectations	4. Provides clear guidance to customers about what to expect and how best to get it	2.0
Exceeding customer expectations	9. Systematically collects customer comments and categorizes them for later analysis	2.0

Top 10 strengths

Relationship nurturing ability	1. Uses a variety of careful questioning approaches to understand a sales contact	5.0
Temperament/Disposition	5. Is at ease in groups of people	5.0
Temperament/Disposition	7. Is good at empathizing with people	5.0
Active Listening Skills	1. Avoids interrupting before the information sender has finished speaking	4.0
Active Listening Skills	4. Ensures that their body language is positively conducive to active listening	4.0
Active Listening Skills	5. Listens enthusiastically and positively	4.0
Active Listening Skills	12. Is an effective and patient listener	4.0
Communication skills	5. Delivers their communications in a pace and a way that is comfortable for others	4.0
Communication skills	6. Calls to follow up on new sales contacts quickly	4.0
Communication skills	7. Is gracious and courteous in all dealings with people	4.0

COURSE AND READING SUGGESTIONS

The following are general reading and course suggestions that may help you to better understand the two categories in which your scores were the lowest and to assist you in writing your development plan.

Active Listening Skills

Active Listening skills looks at how well you listen to, and successfully process your sales prospect's or customer's messages (both verbal and non-verbal) before you respond. This category asks the question "How attentive or empathetic are your listening habits in ensuring that you've fully appreciated the customer's entire communication"?

Course Suggestions

- Listening skills
- Attentive listening
- Effective body language
- Concentration skills

Reading Suggestions

- Listening: The forgotten skill, Madelaine Burley Allen, 1995
- Effective listening skills, Abby Robertson Kratz, 1995
- Strategies in listening tasks for listening development, Michael Rost, March 1998
- Quick skills: Listening, Career Solutions Training Group, March 2000
- Power listening, Rochelle Devereaux, June 1997

Other Suggestions

- If you feel comfortable to do so, talk to your direct supervisor/manager or a training and development specialist about personal training, coaching, and specific projects to improve your skills and other possible support they may be able to offer.

COURSE AND READING SUGGESTIONS

Communication skills

Communication skills looks at the extent to which you listen and feed back to your contacts in order to build the quality and depth of all of your sales relationships. This category asks the question "How effectively do you give and receive from your sales contact network in order to establish efficient communication channels?"

Course Suggestions

- Communication skills
- Presentation skills
- Speaking skills
- Writing skills
- Communication channels and vehicles

Reading Suggestions

- Buff and Polish: A practical guide to enhance your professional image and communication style, Kathryn Volin, 1999
- 101 Ways to Improve Your Communication Skills Instantly, Jo Condrill, et al. 1997
- Basic Presentation Skills, Gary Kroehnert, July 1999
- Artful persuasion: How to command attention, change minds and influence people, Harry Mills, 2000
- The Presentation Skills Workshop: Helping People Create and Deliver Great Presentations, Sherron Bienvenu. December 1999
- Friendly Persuasion : Dynamic Telephone Sales Training and Techniques for the 21st Century by Dan Coen, DCD Publishing, 1997

Other Suggestions

- If you feel comfortable to do so, talk to your direct supervisor/manager or a training and development specialist about personal training, coaching, and specific projects to improve your skills and other possible support they may be able to offer.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Use the space below to write out your personal development plan for the next 12 months based on your results. Draw upon the general improvement actions in relevant areas of the report and ideas that are suggested in the attached coaching tips.

Development Area: Avoids trivializing the ideas or views expressed by other people in talking with them		2.0	N/A	N/A
Action to Take:	Target Date:			
Development Area: Fully focuses their attention and concentrates on what is being said		2.0	N/A	N/A
Action to Take:	Target Date:			
Development Area: Allows people to finish what they are saying without interruption		2.0	N/A	N/A
Action to Take:	Target Date:			
Development Area: Takes information in on several different 'channels' where necessary		2.0	N/A	N/A
Action to Take:	Target Date:			
Development Area: Trusts and follows their intuition about people and relationships		2.0	N/A	N/A
Action to Take:	Target Date:			

Active Listening Skills

Avoids trivializing the ideas or views expressed by other people in talking with them

To get the maximum in quantity and quality when interacting with a sales contact, there needs to be a high level of mutual respect between both people. We show the opposite of respect to people when we trivialize their ideas or views, and we have to be vigilant to ensure that this doesn't happen. Here's how to ensure this:

1. Give all of your contacts (no matter what their views might be) the benefit of the doubt as to the seriousness of what they are saying, and the manner in which they are saying it. Suspend judgment on whether their concerns are warranted and substantial, or baseless and trivial. Wait till they have finished speaking, and try and put what they have said into the context that your experience and perceptions can give you.
2. Be careful about appearing patronizing to the other person. It's so difficult to know just how we come across to others, but it pays to be vigilant in monitoring our own words and body language. It also pays to (wherever possible) have a third person observe just what transpires between you and the person you have been listening to: sometimes that third person can give you invaluable feedback on your own communication style, and you need to take everything they have to say on board. If you want to ensure that you never get an honest response from another person again about your style, aggressively challenge any observations they make. You need to know in particular if you have the habit of talking down to people. It's very easy to do, and very damaging. Check it out.
3. Humor is a great way of building bridges between people, but it can also build walls. This can happen when the humor you use is heavy-handed, and in fact is a put-down. Be careful in your customer or prospect relationships that you do not joke about things, which are deadly serious or important to them.
4. Communication can often be enhanced when we listen to someone talk, and then attempt to summarize what they have just said. This is a way of confirming that the loop has been closed in communication, and both sides are of like minds. Always try to do this, but be careful that the summary you present is a fair one, and not a distorted one. Don't oversimplify what you have just heard merely for the sake of trying to speed up the communication process.
5. We can also help the communication process along by comparing ideas to other things, using metaphors and analogies, turns of phrase and colorful images. Sometimes this can give us insights into reality that a straight (and boring) summary cannot do. Be careful to ensure that any comparisons you use do not demean or oversimplify the original idea, however. Describing a nuclear reactor as being just like an electric kettle or describing a space station docking maneuver as being just like a plug and socket may be illuminating in some contexts, but may be seriously misleading in others.



3 Active Listening Skills

Fully focuses their attention and concentrates on what is being said

It's so easy to be distracted when someone else is talking. We all suffer from information overload in this future-shocked world, and with the best will in the world, it is not always easy to give total attention to someone speaking when that person tends to wander, be a bore, be completely off beam or simply tends to arrive at the most inconvenient moments when the pressure is on to be concentrating on other things. Nevertheless, we do need to focus our attention on others when they are speaking, and that's not easy. Here's how to make it a bit easier:

1. Stop what you are doing, and put that to one side. This only applies, of course, if what you are doing will not have a critical bearing upon someone's safety or an equally high-priority outcome. If urgent and important things do have to be attended to in the short term, then it is the would-be speaker, rather than you, who has to put in some waiting time.
2. Try and free your mind from what you are currently doing, and switch attention to the needs and preoccupations of your contact. This does not mean that your own work or preoccupations have to suffer – not at all. Merely because you have shown them the courtesy of listening does not mean that they should take this as a signal to abuse your good manners by talking on without a purpose.
3. Try and put preoccupations out of your mind so that you can focus all of your attention on what is being said. If necessary, note down your thoughts at this stage of your thinking, and ask the person to wait while you briefly note those thoughts. They shouldn't be offended: you are doing this so that you can give them your undivided attention, and your work should not suffer merely so that theirs can prosper.
4. Rethink the situation. Sometimes we can get too close to our work, and we can get blocked. Sometimes (not all the time, of course) a change in direction can give us new impetus when we return to our work. This simply means that if you put aside your own work for a short time (taking care to protect and record your train of thought) then when you return you may get a new perspective. Of course, you can have too much of a good thing: if you are known as a soft touch, then you may find that you have a procession of interrupters all day long, and none of your own work done.
5. Don't be a soft touch. Give your sales contacts your ear, but respond in an assertive way. Don't let them believe that merely because you have been courteous enough not to interrupt, you in fact agree with everything that they have been saying.



3 Active Listening Skills

Allows people to finish what they are saying without interruption

We sometimes find it frustrating when others are talking. We often think to ourselves such things as “why doesn’t she just cut to the chase and make her point?” or “the solution to his problem is obvious. I’ll just jump in here, so that neither of us wastes any more time”.

Sometimes such responses on our part are well and truly justified, but often they are not. Here’s why it’s important to let people finish what they are saying without interruption, and why:

1. We often pride ourselves on our abilities to solve problems and to give good advice, but we often feel annoyed when the good advice we give to others is not followed. Sometimes this is because people have to learn the hard way and make their own mistakes. Related to this is the idea that people are only committed to those ideas and actions that they feel as though they own, or have had a say in. That’s why it’s important to encourage as much participation in decision-making as possible: not because it’s a “feel-good” thing to do, but because it is a highly practical motivation strategy. Sometimes when we just shut up and let others talk, they in fact find their own way to their own solutions.
2. Reframe your thinking. Get out of the habit of thinking that silence betokens agreement and consent. Give others airtime, but if you disagree, make your disagreement known after they have completed saying their piece, not before. Become known as someone who will give anyone a hearing, but also someone who is not afraid to express disagreement when it becomes time for listener and speaker to swap roles.
3. Don’t feel that you have to jump in to express a thought because otherwise you will never have the chance again, and/or because the sales conversation may be about to change direction and you may then have difficulty remembering just what it was that you wanted to say. If necessary, take notes of what your contact is saying. Do this in an informal way, so as not to offend or disquiet the other person, but ensure that “informal” does not mean “disorganized.” Once the other person has reached a natural pause, use your notes to jump back and reconsider each of the points made.
4. Monitor your own body language. Don’t let your impatient feelings “leak out” by drumming fingers, tapping toes, gritted teeth, and so on.
5. There is a perhaps-less-than-honorable reason for not interrupting another person: you can simply allow them to babble on, giving them enough rope to hang themselves. Inexperienced negotiators sometimes make the mistake of falling into the “pause pit,” or the trap of silence laid for them by more experienced others. In this situation, the less experienced person is made uncomfortable by silence, and foolishly blurts out something, anything, just to fill up the silence. This often turns out to be something that they regret later.



Active Listening Skills

Takes in information in on several different 'channels' where necessary

There's more than one way to skin a cat, and there's more than one way to listen and problem-solve (especially in a sales or customer discussion). When you are receiving information, bear in mind that there are different "channels" of processing that information, and that the more channels you have, the more flexible will be your responses. If you only have a hammer in your toolkit, then every problem looks like a nail – and of course, every problem is different in reality, and not the same as others. Here's how to tune in to different "channels":

1. Listen to the words being said, but listen to the way in which the words are said as well. Note the patterns of inflection, emphasis, pausing. What emotions are being expressed?
2. Pay attention to the expressive preferences of the person talking. How do they describe the world? Do they describe things and situations in visual terms ("I can see that it's not going to work.")? Do they describe things and situations in auditory terms ("It doesn't sound right to me, somehow.")? Do they describe things and situations in tactile terms ("My gut feeling on this is that something's wrong.")? If they have a particular set of preferences, you may find that you can more quickly establish rapport with them by using the same set of preferences in response.
3. Don't take things at face value. Don't just passively accept thoughts and words as they are offered by others, but try to see beneath the surface. What's going on here? Is there a hidden agenda? Is this a warning signal about related, or apparently unrelated matters? Don't be a sponge, be a computer.
4. Recognize that your sales contacts will perceive the world in many different ways to help them to create meaning. Although words on paper and as sound are highly dominant, the writer Howard Gardner has suggested that people have seven distinct perception channels. These are: Linguistic, Logical mathematical, Spatial, Bodily Kinesthetic, Musical, Interpersonal, and Intrapersonal. Try to recognize which channel is strongest for the person to which you are communicating.
5. Consider the body language of the person talking. Does the body language confirm the words, or does it contradict the words? (And make adjustments in your own presenting style accordingly.)



4 Communication Skills

Trusts and follows their intuition about people and relationships

The Dictionary defined the word “intuition” as direct knowing or learning of something without conscious reasoning. So how do you define intuition as it relates to people or relationships? It’s that calm place deep inside you that is simultaneously turned into you, universal energy, and interchanging events in the environment and vibrates when connecting with truth. “I had a feeling...” is a phrase people often use when referring to their intuition.

Sigmund Freud noted that: “the unconscious of one human being can react upon that of another without passing through the consciousness”. Human beings, therefore, often gather and processes masses of information and can make decisions based on this information or unconscious learning throughout a persons life time.

All decisions (and particularly those about people) demand capacity to use logic and intuition together. Here’s a few ways in which you might do this:

- Trust your past experiences about people. You have inevitably already learned a lot from life. No one can take those experiences away from you, nor can they interpret them exactly as you do. You lived the experience so trust your own interpretation of it and put it to good effect when you meet new contacts.
- Listen to your initial “gut feeling” and take it on board when making decisions or judgment calls about the relationship that you form with others.
- Studies at Harvard recently showed that people can intuitively sense the quality of a relationship as much in the first thirty seconds as they might in 15 minutes of talking to someone. As a result, make sure that you pay attention carefully in these early seconds.
- Recognize that intuition relies heavily on three major personal factors:
 - **Emotional awareness:** The recognition of how our emotions affect our performance, and the ability to use our values to guide decision making.
 - **Accurate self-assessment:** A candid sense of our personal strengths and limits, a clear vision of where we need to improve and the ability to learn from experience.
 - **Self confidence:** The courage that comes from certainty about our capabilities, values and goals
- Always take careful account of your first impressions and if necessary take note when you meet new people to refresh your memory later. First impressions about people can be very powerful and should not be disregarded if you want to build sound long term customer relationships.

