

The Art of Tech Support

John Abbott College

How to Handle Difficult Calls

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Handling Difficult Calls: Understanding People

- Social psychology
- Personality types
- Client support
- Make users part of the tech support team

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SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

- Attribution Theory
- Social Cognition
- Prejudice

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SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Attribution Theory

- How people explain their own and others' behaviour
- Weiner's classification:

	Stable	Unstable
Internal	Dispositions; traits; level of ability or intelligence	Effort; mood; physical state
External	Degree of task difficulty; env helps/hindrane	Good/bad luck; opportunity; transient situations

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SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Attribution Theory: How We Explain Our Behaviour

- Fundamental Attribution Error
 - Star Trek's Leonard Nimoy is really like the character he portrays (Mr Spock)
- Actor-Observer Effect
 - What *I* do is a reasonable response to the situation but what *you* do is in your nature
- Saliency
 - What stands out is perceived as most important even if isn't

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SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Attribution Theory (cont'd)

- Self-Serving Bias
 - If I succeed it's because of how good I am, but if I lose it's not my fault
- Self-Handicapping
 - If I expect to fail I'll make sure there's a good excuse
- Depressed People
 - If I lose it's because of how bad I am, but if I succeed it's not to my credit

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SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Social Cognition:
Forming Judgements About Issues

Schemas:

- Organized knowledge about the world
- Influence perceptions
- Affect memory
- More subtle and complex for in-groups than for out-groups
- May lead to self-fulfilling prophecies

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SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Social Cognition (cont'd)

- Decision-making usually includes only a small subset of available information
- Early, negative, information weighted heavily
- Judgements are often based on inadequate samples
- The availability heuristic can lead to errors in judgement
- Language influences perception

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SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

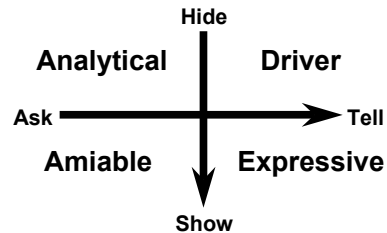
Prejudice

- Stereotypes are simple models of others
- Roots of prejudice are many
- The authoritarian personality includes prejudice
- Minimal-group research shows how easy it is to generate inter-group hostility and prejudice
- Group competition exacerbates prejudice
- Creating common goals and projects for hostile groups mitigates prejudice
- Favourable depictions improve inter-group relations

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PERSONALITY TYPES

- Wilson Learning's Social Styles Personality Types



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PERSONALITY TYPES



Driver

- High assertion, low affect
- "You can have 7 minutes."
- Time-sensitive, relatively unemotional, goal-directed
- "I enjoy the challenge."
- Not interested in how people feel
- Not interested in how a problem was solved
- Concerned about results above all
- Dislikes being told what to do

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PERSONALITY TYPES



Analytical

- Low assertion, low affect
- "There are ... 4 reasons why..."
- Averse to deadlines, focussed on fact-gathering
- "I learn so much here."
- Not interested in how people feel
- Can lose track of global context by focussing on details
- Dislikes being told to stop research

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PERSONALITY TYPES



Amiable

- Low assertion, high affect
- “How do you feel?”
- Focussed on interpersonal relations
- “I love the people here.”
- Needs to establish friendly basis for work
- Good conciliators
- Resents impersonality

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PERSONALITY TYPES



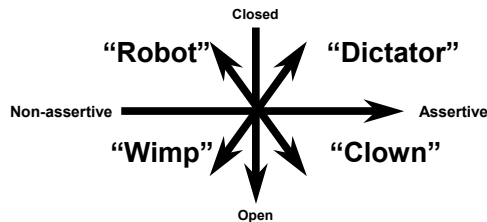
Expressive

- High assertion, high affect
- “Let’s get out there and win!”
- Focussed on group achievement and acclaim
- “I enjoy being part of a winning team!”
- Excellent motivators
- Weak on details and follow-through

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PERSONALITY TYPES

Incorrect and Dangerous Perceptions:
Misunderstanding others because we differ



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Client Support

- How to enrage clients
- Irate clients
- Role playing
- Follow-up
- Closure

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Client Support

How to Enrage Clients

- “No one has ever complained about this before.”
- “I don’t have time for this now.”
- “Why don’t you try calling . . . ?”
- “That’s not my problem.”
- “Just format your hard disk.”
- “Why don’t you reload the operating system and call me back if it happens again?”
- “Don’t get mad at me -- I just work here.”

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Client Support

Tech support must handle irate clients well:

- Support the client’s feelings
- Take responsibility for getting a solution under way
- Don’t take insults/abuse personally: stay cool
- Continued abuse should be reported to operator’s supervisor immediately
- Practise role-playing

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Client Support

Role Playing

- Research and practice show that experiencing a situation, even in role-playing, helps people handle the real thing more effectively
- Practise dealing with trouble
 - colleague takes role of client
 - slightly angry caller
 - work up to handling angry caller
 - finally practise calming down a furious, out-of-control, abusive caller

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Client Support

Details & Follow-Up: Keys to success

- Take responsibility for getting the problem solved
- Ask for details of problem
- Write down what client says
- Tell client when you will call back
- Call back on time

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Client Support

Closure: When problem is solved

- Call client back as soon as possible
- Explain problem and solution using *appropriate* level of detail
- *Thank the client for having notified you of the problem*

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Make Users Part of the Tech Support Team

Train tech support staff to think about users as *us* not *them*

- Consistent reference to *our customers*
- Correct abusive references
- The systems exist for the *users*
- *They pay our salaries*

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Make Users Part of the Tech Support Team

Train users to think about tech support as *us* not *them*

- Meetings with user departments
- Monthly visits available to tech support centre
- Unfailing politeness towards all clients
- Praise clients for quick reports when they notice problems

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Lab Exercises: Hostile callers

- Take turns being the caller and the tech support person.
 - Invent a problem for each set of calls; e.g., a printout has not been delivered on time; or the network server is down.
 - The first “caller” is friendly and cooperative.
 - The second is cold and disgusted but polite.
 - The third caller is angry but not abusive.
 - The fourth caller is furious and abusive.

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**Lab Exercises:
Hostile callers (cont'd)**

- Take turns handling each type of call.
 - Greet the caller warmly
 - Express support for their feelings
 - Ask for details
 - Tell them when you'll call back
 - Recognize when your limit of abuse has been reached and turn them over to a supervisor.

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**Homework: (for credit)
Fundamental attribution
error**

- Identify at least three cases in which you, personally, have committed the fundamental attribution error in judging people
- E.g., examine your feelings and opinions of teachers, friends, actors and classmates and identify where you have been misled by your impressions (not just first impressions)
- Write down your experiences and submit for credit at the start of Lecture 4.

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**Homework: (for credit)
Wilson Learning charts**

- Pick any six classmates
- Evaluate each as less or more than average in emotional expressivity.
 - Evaluate each as less or more than average in assertiveness.
 - Identify each person's personality type according to *Wilson Learning's analysis*.
- Write down where they *fit* the expected personality profiles and where they *differ*.

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**Homework: (for credit)
Readings in Wilson's text**

- Read Chapter 3, "Communication Skills"
- Thinking about what might come up in a job interview, prepare and *answer* 10 questions covering the most important points in the entire chapter.
- Submit all your homework after the quiz at the start of Lecture 4.
- Your questions will be evaluated on quality of both question and answer.

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