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Good leaders understand the people they are leading well enough to know their “language,” which they then use to influence employees’ or followers’ decisions and actions. Learning the language that influences others is particularly important for managers and team leaders and is the focus of Shelle Rose Charvet’s book, *Words That Change Minds: The 14 Patterns for Mastering the Language of Influence*. Charvet is an international bestselling author and has taught the technique of profiling others and crafting a strategy to influence them at a subconscious level for 35 years.

THINK POINT #1: The LAB Profile

The language-and-behavior (LAB) profile is a tool for discerning a person’s inclination toward specific behavioral patterns that are revealed by the language they use when answering a set of questions. Charvet develops her model by incorporating the work of well-known American linguist, Noam Chomsky, who asserts that while perceiving the real world, individuals do not mentally inhabit the real world. We unconsciously use three mental processes he calls deletion, distortion, and generalization to model the world. His theory assumes that an individual’s perception is more important for gauging and influencing his behaviors than reality.

We have all experienced *deletion* when a phone number once remembered is now forgotten, because it is safely stored in our phone contacts. We no longer need to exercise the effort to remember it, so our brain deletes the information. Agents witness *distortion* every time they show a home. Distortion occurs when a person changes reality in their mind’s eye even though the real world has not changed at all (e.g. a buyer imagining their belongings in an empty space). Finally, *generalization* is when individuals take limited experiences and craft rules that they believe govern the way the world works. For example, if an individual has a bad experience with stairs, he may now generalize that all homes with stairs are dangerous. The LAB profile takes these neurological mechanisms into account when recommending language that is intended to help others reframe their perceptions. A successful use of the LAB profile identifies an individual’s motivations and uses that knowledge to offer words that will change minds.
THINK POINT #2: Motivation Patterns

Charvet theorizes that once you know what motivates a person, you can use trigger words to captivate interests. The course of action you want multiple people to take may be the same (e.g. you need both spouses to see how much potential a house has), but what you say to one spouse may be worded differently than what you say to the other. Charvet offers six categories of motivation patterns to help you discern what motivates the individual you are trying to influence. Most categories have a specific question that will help you uncover a person’s motivations, and there are a few patterns for each category that a person may exhibit. Identifying these patterns is the first step to help you successfully build rapport and trust with the customer.

A person is usually either proactive or reactive. If a person is proactive, she likes to get things done and likes to get straight to work. A reactive person likes to deliberate on a decision and responds well to language that communicates the time they have to consider something before choosing. A person’s criteria for making decisions are the things that are special to an individual and usually are connected to a memory or emotion. Clients will often provide you with a wish list of things they want in a home, and as an agent, it is important to remind clients how the home you selected for viewing meets their criteria by using the words they used when describing what they wanted. What they might call a “farmhouse style,” you might understand as modern industrial. When talking with the client, the important thing is what she calls it. Some people look for potential in a new home; others see only the problems that will cause them to reject a property. Some clients consult with others for information while some will rely on their own opinions, despite what the professionals say. The LAB profile provides a way to begin sorting through a person’s “language,” so you can have the greatest impact with every word.

THINK POINT #3: Productivity Patterns

Whether you manage a team of agents or you are an agent managing a team of industry partners, understanding the behavioral patterns of people at work is a boon. It can help you know how to craft office workspaces, who to recruit to be part of your team, and which tasks to assign to which people. Like the motivation patterns, there are specific questions that will help you discern what kind of pattern an individual exhibits in each of the eight categories Charvet identifies. By no means are individuals “locked in” to a specific behavioral pattern. Human behavior is fluid, not static. However, since people are creatures of habit, you can get a good sense of how a person will respond to certain tasks and words in the workplace.

Some people like to work on details, while others care more about the big picture. A detail-oriented person likely tells long stories because they believe every detail is important. Those who care for the big picture often make great managers. Some people manage their stress by mentally removing themselves from a situation and thinking critically about it, while others are overwhelmed emotionally by too much stress and need managers who understand their limits.
Some people like to work independently, some always with a team, and still others like to manage work on their own while still being surrounded by others.

Charvet recalls a call center that had a separate cubicle for every worker that had walls short enough that they could interact with coworkers when they looked up. This company was looking for people who manage a lot of work independently but like to be in proximity to others. The most important productivity pattern for those involved in sales transactions is what Charvet calls the “conviner” category. Asking the right questions can reveal whether a person needs to see, hear, read, or do something in order to be convinced. Some people need to see a certain number of examples before they are convinced; some only need to hear what you have to say. Others need to read reviews every day to reassure themselves, while still others must wait a certain amount of time before they are willing to incur risk. Every person works differently. Knowing the way in which people work and matching your approach to each of them will help you manage people and tasks more effectively.

**Conclusion**

If you are a manager, it is better to pair the right agents with the right tasks and environment to help them thrive rather than threaten punishment when they perform poorly. If you are an agent, it is better for a client to trust your expertise than to be skeptical of your intentions from preapproval to closing. The true advantages of Charvet’s work are the practical aids available in her book—the charts and fillable worksheets where you can record your findings about people among your client or work colleagues. To put Charvet’s suggestions to work for your business, ask probing questions, observe the verbal and nonverbal cues of your clients and coworkers, and speak their “language” as best you can.

**Recommended Reading**


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Brian LeCompte graduated with his Master of Divinity/Master of Business Administration from Baylor University in 2020. He earned his Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies and his Master of Arts in Theological studies from Criswell College. He has previously worked as a universal banker with BBVA Bank while simultaneously serving as a Baptist minister in Central Texas. Brian is currently a Customer Relationship Advocate at Fidelity Investments.