

# Spot the sales type

## Are you Type R or Type P?

**A**s I work with many different sales organisations in the IT and telecoms sector, it is increasingly apparent that there are two types of salespeople and two types of sales team. I call them Type R and Type P.

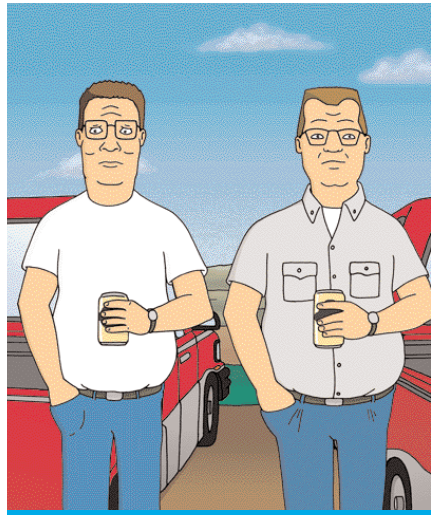
Type R sales teams are great, fun people to work with. Everyone is rushing around and there is a great sense of excitement, brought about mostly by life being full of surprises, such as customers suddenly saying they have changed their minds or management pushing certain products or services this quarter.

Type R salespeople are close to their customers, and will react to their every whim. These sales teams also react quickly to any changes from competitors, and can change strategy very quickly if there are any slight price movements or new features announced. There is lots of excitement when new products are announced, with everyone eager to understand the unique benefits so that they can go out and confidently tell everyone about them.

Senior managers enjoy life in a Type R sales team, because they are kept very busy and made to feel very important. They will be flown into accounts to either close big deals or put out raging fires of dissatisfaction. Of course account managers like Type R sales teams. Things change so quickly that they are never really held accountable, and because they are the main point of contact with the customer, their position is relatively secure, as business would be at risk if they were to disappear.

Business levels are a bit of a rollercoaster ride in a Type R team, as salespeople are either closing business or developing new prospects, but rarely doing both at the same time. In addition, for some reason Type R salespeople are often “blind-sided” by competition, who choose to pick on them to “buy the business” or “play their trump card”. Type R salespeople are also more susceptible to being exposed by any weaknesses in their product portfolio.

For some reason, Type R teams exhibit poor time management, their forecasting is not very accurate, resources are often wasted (particularly pre-sales and technical resources), and the lone-wolf



***‘Of course the two can both be successful in their own way’ –***

**– STEVE HOYLE**

salesperson is the norm, with very little teamwork. Of course, Type R teams and salespeople are ‘reactive’.

### **P for proactive**

Type P sales teams and salespeople can initially appear relatively boring in comparison. Type P salespeople have a very clear view of where they want to take an account and what they want to achieve. They are also clear on the broad approaches or strategies that they need to adopt. While they will be responsive to changes in the customer or competitive situation, theirs is not a knee-jerk but considered judgement of best approach in the new circumstances.

There is a lot of discussion in Type P teams, mostly focused on customers and prospects, and how they can help them. Sometimes these discussions will be very heated, with informed debate about the merits of different strategies to be adopted with the customer.

Excitement in Type P sales teams is on how to generate new possibilities, rather than hoping to trip over ready-made (by someone else) opportunities. Senior management can enjoy themselves in a Type P organisation, although here their

role is to nurture long-term relationships with customers, and to coach salespeople.

Type P salespeople will lose deals and accounts. Their attitude is that there is no shame in losing a deal; in fact, if you don’t lose a few then you are not ‘playing in the right league’. The very big shame is in losing and not knowing why you lost.

Type P is of course “proactive”, and in these teams there always appears to be better teamwork, better use of resources and certainly more accurate forecasting.

The differences in the two were brought home to me very recently when I met two salespeople from the same organisation but different sales teams. I met both of them at the end of the morning but on separate days. The first salesperson – let’s call her Jane to spare her blushes – told me how she loved her job. She had got into the office that morning and time had “just flown by”, as she answered emails and voicemails, produced pricing queries and made some appointments with “key customers”.

Joe also told me that he enjoyed his job, because he was “really achieving major things” and earning a lot of money. Joe told me of the three activities that he had prioritised that morning, and how he had either delegated some tasks to colleagues, or told people that he wouldn’t be able to respond. He had relatively few calls and emails to answer, mostly because he had educated his customers as to who was best able to answer their queries.

Of course these two salespeople can both be successful in their own way, but for Jane, her business was managing her, while Joe was managing his business.

While Type R and Type P are handy labels, in reality few sales teams are totally Type R, as apart from some commodity type operations, they would soon be out of business as a result of either low revenue or high overheads. Likewise there are very few totally Type P teams, as life in this industry is simply too complex and fast moving. But it is clear that there is a correlation between medium/long term success and how far individuals and teams are along the spectrum to Type P.

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