

Takes all Types – how we approach action

We've all heard that it 'takes all types'. One major difference in personal styles is our take on 'action'. I invite you to take this simple 'test', and see how it works for you or your workplace.

You are a senior account manager, and a major client is extremely unhappy with your products or services. Do you:

- Undertake a thorough analysis, and call together a crisis meeting for the following Friday, at which you agree to form an Investigation Committee.
- Leap immediately into action, pulling out all stops to solve the problem.
- Leave them to sort it out for themselves and get involved only if forced.
- This really doesn't happen with our clients, we have a constant focus on strategy and communication about our service delivery.

You are a Senior Manager with responsibility for IT systems; it's June 21, and your \$100, 000 IT Hardware budget for the year is underspent by 90%.

- Send out an email calling together the purchasing team so a discussion paper can be put together. Resolve to make a recommendation to the CEO for a full review.
- Jump onto a supplier's website, or contact them directly, and place an order for whatever they can invoice to the value of \$90k before June 30.
- Rationalise it away, saying that if it wasn't spent then it most likely wasn't needed (not noticing your staff leaving for a competitor with up-to-date IT).
- This can't happen; our budget involves a regular monthly spend we monitor constantly. We've a 5-year IT strategy, and started work on next year's plan six months ago.



If your answers are A, your approach is "Proactive", B is "Reactive", C is "Inactive" and D is "Proactive".

PROACTIVE

The "READY, AIM, FIRE" approach, that of the person who typically makes the first move. They believe "the early bird gets the worm". Putting energy into forming a strategy means that actions are always planned and timely.

If there's a downside, it is if the strategising is not well done. This can be when "fools rush in".

PREACTIVE

The preactive person is "...READY, READY, READY..." but doesn't move into action, or not till it's too late.

They may accept in theory that the early bird that gets the worm, but think that the later bird gets the fat, meaty

worm. (They sometimes say that the early bird might get the worm, but it's the second mouse that gets the cheese).

They want to check out everything before they make a move, ensuring that nothing can go wrong. Often while they are covering all the angles, they are run over by competition.

REACTIVE

This is the "FIRE, READY, AIM" approach, a firefighting style. The reactive person says "Worm....where, what worm...?" and goes straight after it. At least this is taking action.

The danger for the reactive types is that their reaction may be not well thought out, perhaps totally missing the mark. The same problems can keep occurring because they tend not to learn. In business, clients might eventually wonder why there are so many problems.

INACTIVE

The inactive person tends to not notice that action is required, and if they do, it's "DAMN, WHERE'S MY RIFLE?"

In work and in life they are always looking for the next rest break. Though they may appear to be present with eyes open, they are actually asleep. As an employee they tend to be low contributors, and as a business partner or manager, dangerous.

In workplaces and business, you might think that it's always going to be better to be proactive. But it can depend on the situation.

Sometimes you may find yourself dealing with an organisation or individual that is, say, Preactive. In decision-making they always want to cover themselves before committing. You may need to show them how being proactive is the

lowest risk approach.

Or they may be Reactive, with no long-term strategy, simply 'reacting' to current immediate circumstances. Help extend their horizons before they will really take on your proactive plans.

In this way you will 'bridge' the proactive and other approaches.

Just make sure you are proactive too, or you may be run over in the rush!

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