

We all experience challenging dynamics and people behaviours in meetings. If you are Conducting a meeting, there is great value having some strategies in your "tool kit". Below are some suggested ways of handling the following "Character Types" and on page 8 'Communication Styles'

1.Silent Type	6.Broken Record	11.Interpreter	16.Busybody
2.Private Chatter	7.Absentee	12.Gossiper	17.Interrupter
3.Latecomer	8.Head Shaker	13.Attacker	18.Teacher's Pet
4.Doubting Thomas	9.Drop-Out	14.Know-it-all	19.Control Freak
5.Early Leaver	10.Loudmouth	15.Backseat Driver	20.Toxic Backstabber

1. The Silent Type

Impact:

Unresponsive, no verbal contribution
May appear disinterested or avoid interaction

How to handle:

- Ask open ended questions.
- Allow time to gain rapport.
- When asking a question, be silent and give time for a response.
- If silent, clarify if silence is a sign of agreement or disagreement.

2. The Private Chatter (Whisperer)

Impact:

One of the most difficult people in a meeting
Very disruptive making it difficult to concentrate
Reduces focus and shifts control

How to handle:

- Try chatting privately - this works most of the time.
- If there are several Whisperers reminding them to keep focused and that chat must be to all/everyone.
- If you get a persistent pair using chat privately i.e. they are always slow to respond to questions, then suggest that they share their chat with the rest of the group.
- If all else fails, then continually ask them questions so they do not have time to chat.

3. The Latecomer

Impact:

Always comes late, makes a commotion
Makes the current presenter feel they should recap the story so far
Highly disruptive

How to handle:

- Do not confront the chronic Latecomer in front of the group. After the meeting ask them why they are always so late. They may not think the session important, didn't believe it would start on time, or simply may be trying to schedule too much.
- The only way to start on time is to start on time. If not, soon everyone will time their arrival to their personal estimate of when the meeting will begin.
- When people come late, do not stop to recap. If they are a key person then stop briefly and review progress but waste as little of everyone's time as possible.

4. The Doubting Thomas

Impact:

Constantly puts everything down. "It will never work", "It won't really happen", "It can't be proven"
Creates doubt

How to handle:

- While it is healthy to have a sceptic in any group, aggressive negativity is a damper on creative effort.
- Get the whole group to agree to a process of not evaluating ideas for a set period of time then use this rule to correct anyone who violates it.
- Acknowledge, don't ignore.
- Discuss benefits to creativity of 'blue sky thinking'.

5. The Early Leaver

Impact:

Drains the energy of the group by leaving before the end of the session
Not part of consensus
Disruptive
Subsequently disagrees and misses feedback

How to handle:

- Do not confront in public. Find out later why this behaviour is happening. Maybe your meetings are too long or too loose. Perhaps there is something you can learn from the Early Leaver.
- At the beginning of the session check everyone can stay until the scheduled finish time. If the commitment is there, a potential Early Leaver is less likely to sneak out.
- It is always important to have a published start and finish time for every meeting. It is the facilitator's responsibility to make sure this 'time contract' is met.

6. The Broken Record

Impact:

Keeps bringing up the same point over and over
Closed mind
Not creative
Difficult to include and causes delays

How to handle:

- Demonstrate that the point has been heard and noted several times - write it in chat and direct everyone to chat.
- Try asking if there is anything else they want to add.
- If the person is still persistent then impose the '3 minute' rule to allow the person to have their say and then move on to other topics on the agenda.

7. The Absentee

Impact:

Fails to respond to calls and messages
Fails to join meetings they have arranged
Wastes management time and resources trying to make contact

How to handle:

- Important to discover if cause is domestic – children, partner, sickness, grieving or stress related.
- Once rapport established with Absentee arrange a meeting to explain impact of radio silence.
- Ensure Absentee aware that routine contact is required in addition to agreed output for team.
- Agree with Absentee timetable for contact and inform of consequences of further radio silence.

8. The Head Shaker

Impact:

Disagrees in a dramatic and disruptive manner
Shake heads, roll eyes, slam books shut
Very disruptive in a meeting
Creates doubt

How to handle:

- Try to ignore them and to focus your attention on the person talking.
- Recognise that they are doing it (often they do it habitually and are unaware they do it) by saying, "I see you are shaking your head, perhaps you disagree, would you like to tell us why?"
- Wait until a break in the meeting and let the person know that they are being disruptive and that their actions are just like shouting out loud.
- Eventually you may have to confront them in the meeting and ask them to stop the behaviour as it is unfair on the others.

9. The Drop-out

Impact:

Doesn't engage on video, reading a book or doodling
You are trying to engage everyone, and they are sitting yawning
Reduces buy-in
Lose benefit of input

How to handle:

- Some people think better while doodling, so be cautious. They may even be structuring their thoughts for a useful contribution.
- There may be no reason for them to be at the meeting and they are irritated by being included.
- When they do look at the camera ask them an open question.
- During a break, ask why they are not participating. It may be because the meeting is not effective, that the topic is irrelevant to them or that they are preoccupied with something else.

10. The Loudmouth

Impact:

Dominates the conversation
Encountered quite often in meetings
Can be senior people or key decision makers
Time waster
Can remove others from process

How to handle:

- Remain silent, do not try to interrupt them, look at them without expression until they are aware that they are getting no response and they stop talking. Record in Chat the point they have made, then immediately call on someone else to speak.
- Some people just have to voice an idea as soon as they think of it.
- Deal with the problem outside the meeting. Point out that they are dominating the conversation and preventing others from participating.
- Reinforce the ground rules.

11. The Interpreter

Impact:

Speaks for other people, e.g. "What Susan is trying to say is ... "
Timewaster

How to handle:

- Intervene immediately and note that 'Susan' can speak for herself
- Or at the end of the interruption ask 'Susan' if it was an accurate representation of what she said. This sends a message to the Interpreter that they are not required by the group as a spokes person.

12. The Gossiper

Impact:

Introduces unsubstantiated hearsay to the meeting
Wastes a lot of time creating arguments over whether something is true or not.

How to handle:

- When you hear information being introduced with vague qualifiers, stop the discussion and ask if someone has hard information to verify the story.
- If the response is weak then record the information in Chat to defer the information to be checked at a later date.
- If the information is key, then stop the meeting (have a break) until someone verifies the information.

13. The Attacker

Impact:

Launches personal attacks on others present
Time wasting
Divisive

How to handle:

- Mute both parties. Ask them to sort out their differences outside during the break.
- If it is you, the facilitator, who is being attacked then try to resist denying the charges or defending yourself, record the charges in chat to resolve later.
- If it is your leadership or choice of facilitation tool that is under attack then thank the Attacker for their comments. Ask if you are not giving them enough opportunity to state their case and how the imbalance could be corrected.
- Change the environment.

14. The Know-it-all

Impact:

This person uses credentials, age, length of service or professional status to make a point – “I've worked here for 20 years, and I can tell you that idea will never work”
Can dominate meeting
Discourages others

How to handle:

- Acknowledge their experience.
- Explain why the group is considering the matter.
- Remind them that the discussion may identify some alternatives that may be valid in the current environment.
- Ask for their indulgence even although the some of it may not make sense to them.
- Invite them to do an introduction (time limit) then get others to comment.

15. The Backseat Driver

Impact:

This person keeps telling you, the facilitator, what to do
Disruptive
Can damage respect of facilitator

How to handle:

- You may want to ask them to suggest a tool or technique which you can put to the rest of the group. If the rest of the group concur then act on the suggestion. If they disagree then the argument is between the Backseat Driver and the rest of the group.
- If the Backseat Driver is particularly critical then politely point out that there are different styles of facilitation, there is no one 'right way', and that you would like their co-operation while you adopt your own approach.

16. The Busybody

Impact:

Always taking phone calls, going in and out of the meeting, receiving messages or dealing with a 'crisis'
Often senior and feel they have a license to come and go as they please

How to handle:

- Recommend an adjournment of the meeting until the Busybody can attend without interruption. Deal with them outside of the meeting. Point out how inefficient this behaviour is to the team
- It is always good practice to agree among the whole group at the beginning of the meeting that phones are switched off and that messages should only be picked up at break times. Exceptions can always be made.

17. The Interrupter

Impact:

Starts talking before others have finished
Is often excited or impatient
Frightened that an idea will be lost if it is not voiced immediately
Prevents others from talking
Engenders conflict

How to handle:

- If necessary, be a referee - but always remain neutral.
- Between sessions you can point out to this person how their behaviour is disruptive. Suggest that they record their ideas in chat until it is appropriate for them to be voiced.
- Remind them of the ground rules.

18. The Teacher's Pet

Impact:

Spends more energy looking for approval from the facilitator than in focusing on the meeting
Supporting 'customer' and disagreeing with everything else
Reduces breadth and creativity of discussion
Impact on impartiality

How to handle:

- If they keep addressing only you, ask another participant for their response rather than replying.
- They often ask you how the meeting is going. Reverse the situation by asking them how they think it is going.
- The success or failure of the meeting must be shared by all the participants.

19. The Control Freak

Impact:

Needs to dictate and tell everyone how to do things
Has difficulty trusting others
Tends to render subordinates ineffective
Undermines and insults other abilities but supplies no solutions.

How to handle:

- Keep focused on the action/solution.
- Communicate from your own viewpoint.
- Take small steps to gaining authority.
- Steps best sanctioned by seeking input from the Control Freak.
- Discuss openly the benefits of good delegation.
- Highlight the dangers of micromanagement.

20. The Toxic Backstabber

Impact:

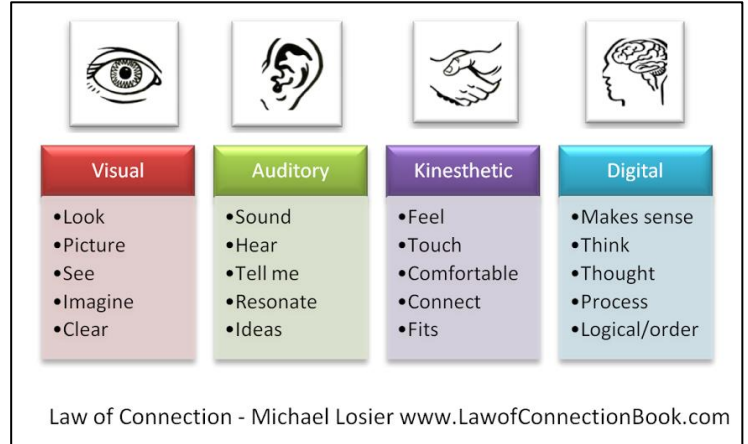
Excludes people in line of command
Goes over heads
Lobbies
Talks others down while guiding others towards their own needs
Tends to withhold information because information is power

How to handle:

- Bring known topics out in the open and force open debate.
- Bring back ideas which have been pushed to one side and confront, asking for explicit reasons.
- Seek group commitment and each decision before proceeding.

Recognise People’s Different Communication Styles

- We experience the world through our senses
- Do you recognise these Styles?



Visual Communication Style

- Visual people look at the world through images and understand by **making ‘pictures’** of the meaning
- Visual Learning Style often uses:
 - **Words** like “see”, “picture”, “sight”, “looks”, “view”
 - **Phrases** like “an eyeful”, “it appears to me”, “take a look at”, “beyond a shadow of a doubt”, “big picture thinking”
- Often ‘gazing at pictures’ they create while you speak
- Looks are very important to visual people:
 - “A picture’s worth a thousand words”
 - Form & change impressions quickly

Auditory Communication Style

- Auditory people listen carefully to what is said and accept it if it **sounds right**
- Auditory Learning Style uses:
 - **Words** like “sound”, “hear”, “discuss”, “interview”, “listen”, “loud”, “remark”
 - **Phrases** like “clear as a bell”, “sounds like”, “tune into”, “rings a bell”, “keynote speaker”, “the power of speech”
- **Remember events**
 - by current songs at the time
 - the tone of voice used
- Often **tilt head** to line their ear up to receive the sound

Kinesthetic Communication Style

- Kinesthetic people like to **get a feel for things and people** and use:
 - **Words** like: “concrete”, “emotional”, “sensitive”, “firm”, “flow”, “feels”, “touch”, “heavy”, “burdensome”
 - **Phrases** like “boils down to”, “get a load of this”, “heated argument”, “keep your shirt on”, “get a handle on”
- Need **to be doing** - to pick things up and play with them
- **Slower** processing of information than visual/auditory
- Often **looking down** - ‘getting a feel’ for what is being said

Auditory Digital – Definition

- Auditory Digital people need:
 - to **understand** why something is important
 - instructions that have to **make sense**
 - everything must be **ordered and logical**
 - printed **details** & flow charts
- Use **words** like “logic”, “common sense”, “reason”, “system”, “understand”, “think”, “analyse”, “know”, “learn”
 - Use **phrases** like “due diligence”, “I’ll consider the idea”, “to sum up”, “to make sense of”