

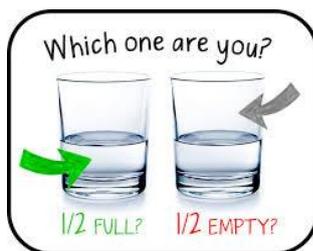
Are you speaking the same language as your Customer?

Have you ever been in a situation where you just don't feel that the Customer is on the same wavelength as you? Or even a work colleague!

OR

Have you tried your best to build rapport with a Customer, but you just get a sense that they don't appreciate your efforts?

Filtering



I'm sure you will have heard the question: *Are you a glass half full or half empty person?*

Why do people answer this question in different ways?

We all take in millions of bits of information every second through our senses, far more than our brains can manage. Thankfully our brain doesn't have to cope with this amount of information, instead our subconscious part of our brain will filter it, leading to much of the information being deleted and some being retained.



Why is this important to understand when you are communicating with customers? Well the simple answer is, that how your brain filters information will not be the same as your customer's filtering process. You are both different people, with very different experiences, memories, beliefs, values etc. All of which are some of the factors which play a big part in what we decide to let in and what information we keep out.

Do you want your customers to retain the information you provide rather than deciding it's not important and deleting it?

There are many ways in which our brains filter. I will outline some of them in this article.

Building Rapport

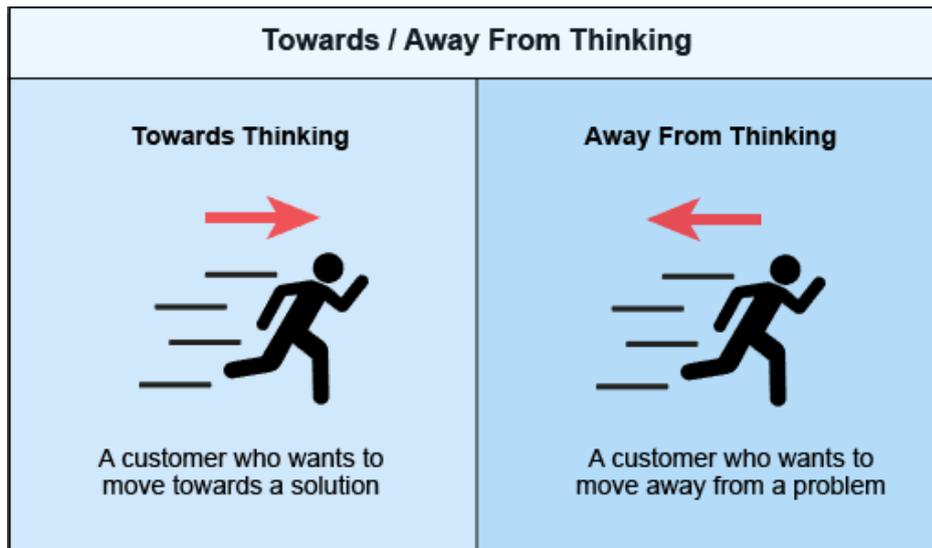
If two people use the same filters in conversation, this will often lead to a more productive conversation as well as build rapport. Equally if they are both using very different filters, then this can often lead to frustration - Have you ever asked yourself the question: *Why don't they get what I'm saying?* or *Are they deliberately trying to be awkward?*

If so, you are most definitely not on your own.

If you work in customer service or sales, then understanding some of these filters, will help you to identify which filters the customer is using in the conversation and thereby develop your flexibility in the way you choose to respond.

Equally these tips will help you to have more effective conversations with your colleagues.

FILTERS



1. Towards/Away From:

Q. When you think about a goal that you wish to achieve; do you imagine what it will feel like to achieve this goal? Or Do you think about what you want to get away from or stop doing?

If you are someone who focuses on working towards a future goal - then you are: *Towards Thinking*

If you tend to focus on what you want to get away from something, such as you want to get away from a 'boring' job, or 'avoid eating unhealthily' then you are: *Away from Thinking*



The next time you have a conversation with a customer, listen very carefully to their choice of language to help you understand which filter they are using.

- Is the customer telling you they want to work towards or find a solution? *Towards Thinking*

OR

- Is the customer telling you about the problem and its impact and how they want to avoid more disappointment or to ensure this situation doesn't happen again? *Away from Thinking*

Whichever filter is being used - it's helpful to match it!

Towards Thinking: Focus your communication around finding a solution e.g. *'I am very sorry this has happened Mr Jones. What I'm going to do for you today, is work with you to find the best solution.'*

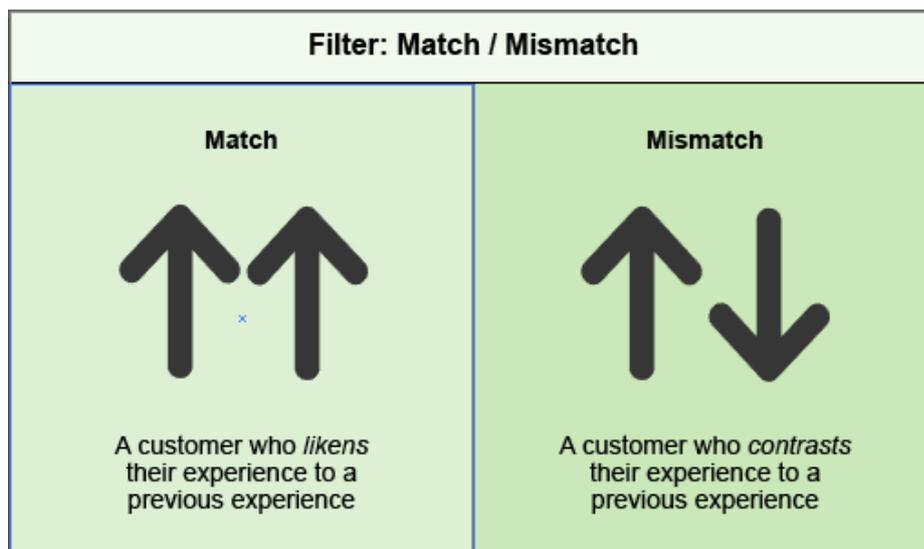
OR

'What would be the best solution for you today Mr Jones?'

Away from Thinking: Focus your communication around how you can help the customer to move away from this situation or avoid it happening again

e.g. *'I do understand how frustrating the long delay has been for you Mr Jones, and that you do not want to wait any longer for your refund. I'm certainly going to look into the reason for this immediately so that we can avoid any further delays.'*

2. Match/Mismatch



A person who sorts for a match will look for similarities between people they know and someone they've just met or consider how a current situation/product may be like a previous one.

A person who sorts for a mismatch will look for what is different about a person or situation/product compared to other people they know or a previous situation/product.

When speaking to a customer are they asking you about the similarities between two products or services?

OR

Do they want to know how a product or service differs to an alternative option?



Another way a customer may be showing you a Match or Mismatch filter is when they talk about a problem/situation or even your Company!

e.g.

*'This is the second time this problem has occurred - but it's more frustrating this time as I've had to wait an extra 5 days, compared to 2 days last time' - **Mismatch***

OR

*'This is the same problem I've had before and it's becoming more and more frustrating. Why does the same problem keep happening?' - **Match***

OR

*'Companies like yours are all the same - you simply don't care' - **Match***

OR

*'You are worse than my last insurance company - at least they didn't make excuses' - **Mismatch.***

Matching: When you discuss products/services start by talking about similarities to what the customer has had in the past. Reassure them how the important features they liked about the last product or service will still be available to them.

Ask the customer to tell you what they liked about previous products/services they may have had through your company or a competitor.

'Mrs Smith, what features did your last policy/product have, which you would like to keep with this policy?'



Mismatching: When you discuss products/services start by highlighting the differences between products, particularly any features which are more suitable for the customer.

'Mrs Smith, what additional features would you be looking for in this product compared to the one you currently have?'

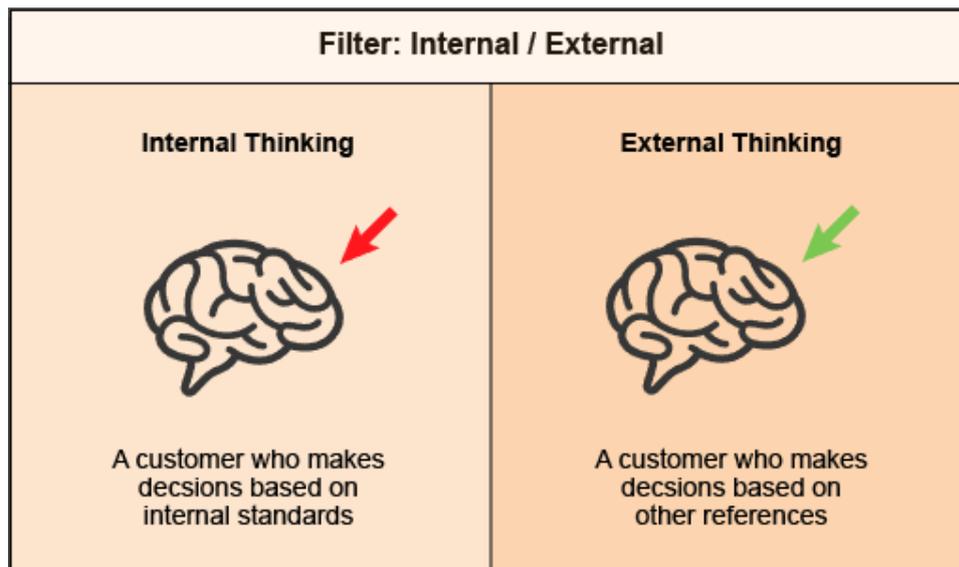
OR

'Mrs Smith, I would recommend going with this option because it has a much quicker processor thanbut still provides all the other features you liked about your previous product'

OR

'Mrs Smith, listening to what you've told me, I do understand that you want a solution which will give you more peace of mind as well as being a more simplified process. Let me look into achieving this for you.'

3. Internal/External



This describes the filtering process when people make decisions. An *'Internal'* person gathers information and makes a decision based on their own internal standards. They resist someone who is trying to tell them what to do - particularly if it is on the basis of what other customers think

e.g. *'Tell me what options I have, so that I can decide what will work for me'*

An *'External'* Person needs references. They like to hear other people's opinions to help them make a decision. They also find it useful to know what other customers have found useful.

e.g. *'What have other customers thought of these products/options?'*

OR

'If I opted for do you think that would be useful for me?'



Speaking to an 'Internal' Customer: Provide the customer with useful information, such as facts and figures and ask them for their thoughts and ideas.

'Mr Thomas, having heard the details of the 2 options we are able to provide today, what do you think would be the best option for you?'

OR

'Mr Thomas, what information would you like me to provide so that you can make the right choice for yourself today?'

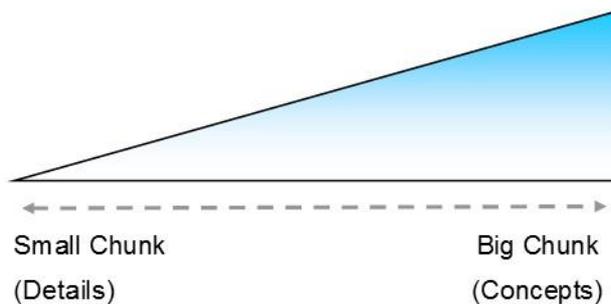
Speaking to an 'External' Customer: Help the customer to find the best solution, by providing your thoughts and also what you know has worked for other customers.

'Mr James, many of our customers have found this option beneficial for them because....., is this something which would work for you?'

OR

'Mr James, after comparing both options, I can share with you which product has proved to be more popular with our customers, would this be useful for you?'

Big Chunk/ Small Chunk



Have you noticed that some people only want a brief outline of the situation (the Big Picture) and others want to know all the details?

Have you become bored in a conversation because the other person is providing far too much detail? Or frustrated because you weren't provided with all the information you required?

To develop a great rapport with someone, it's beneficial to identify the chunk preference of the person you are communicating with

How do you know what their preference is? Well there are usually some clues:

Does your customer talk in terms of details or are they providing an overview of the situation?

Are they asking lots of specific questions to try and obtain more detail? Or perhaps they are prompting you to get to the point?



Example

Small Chunk (details preference): "I'm calling to discuss the order I made last week for the Samsung Galaxy C8 in Gold. I made the order last Tuesday, I think it was around 2pm. I thought I would have received it by now as I've always received previous orders within 3 days. Please could you tell me what the problem is and exactly when I can expect to receive the order?"

Or

Does your customer get straight to the point, just giving you a Big Picture overview?

Example

Big Chunk (Big Picture preference): "I haven't received the Samsung Galaxy phone I ordered last week, please can you tell me when I will receive it?"

When you ask questions, do you get very detailed responses (small chunk), or short, generalised answers (big picture)?

Big Chunk/Big Picture Customers: They like you to provide an overview in the first instance and avoid too much detail. These customers also tend to generalise.

Small Chunk/Detail Customers: They like detail, and specific next steps to follow. They check all the facts, dot the I's and cross the T's. They have longer attention spans than Big Chunk thinkers. They don't like vague information or generalisations.

Remember it's not about your preference – it's about matching your customer's communication preferences and creating rapport. You certainly don't want to bore your customers or leave them frustrated.



Your Responses:

Small Chunk (Want the details): *"Mr James I'm very sorry about the delay. I have looked into your order and can confirm there was a 4 day delay with the Supplier as they have received a large demand for this phone, particularly the Gold option. I've just contacted them for you and they have assured me that they have received an additional 500 phones in stock and your order will be sent out tomorrow. It will be sent 1st class recorded, as we know it's a matter of urgency. Will this be ok for you?"*

Big Chunk (Want an Overview): *"Mr James, I'm very sorry about the delay. I've just been assured by the supplier that new stock has arrived, and the phone will be sent to you tomorrow 1st class recorded, as a matter of urgency. Will this be ok for you?"*

Sensory Specific Language



You may have previously come across (Visual Auditory and Kinaesthetic (VAK) communication preferences. Perhaps you already know which sensory preference you have in terms of your thinking and communication.

What you say is an expression of the way you think.

Visual Thinkers: Use words and phrases with a visual context e.g. ‘I get the picture’ or ‘I see’

Auditory Thinkers: Use words and phrases with an auditory context e.g. ‘That sounds great’ or ‘I’m lost for words’

Kinaesthetic Thinkers: Use words and phrases which focus around actions, feelings and touch e.g. ‘I’ve grasped that’ or ‘That doesn’t feel right’

The reality is that we all communicate with a mix of sensory language, but if you listen very carefully, the majority of people usually have a preference for one of them.



This is great to practise with a friend or partner the next time you have a conversation with them. See if you can identify a preference.

If building rapport involves speaking the same language as your customer, then it's beneficial to start listening for a sensory preference.

Examples:

A Customer with a Visual preference may say phrases such as: *"Yes I can see that option working for me". OR, "In light of what you have just told me, I'm still a little confused...."*

A Customer with an Auditory preference may say: *"That sounds like a better option".*

OR

"Let me tell you what I think, it's all sounds very confusing....."

A Customer with a Kinaesthetic preference may say: *"The first option feels like that will work for me."*

OR

"I can't get to grips with what you're saying....."

Your responses

Visual Match: *"I'm so glad that this is **looking like** a good option for you."*

OR

*"I'm very sorry Mr Evans, let me **see** if I can explain it in a different way, so that it's **clearer**. I do understand it's a lot of information to take in. "*



Auditory Match: *"I'm so pleased that this **sounds** useful for you"*

OR

*"I am sorry that I have caused confusion Mr Jones. I want you to be well **informed** before you make a decision. What if **I talk you through** the main features of both options would that be more helpful?"*

Kinaesthetic match: *"That's fantastic, Mrs Jones, I'm so pleased that I've found an option which **feels** like a good solution for you."*

OR

*"I'm so sorry Mrs Smith, let me **break** the key information down for you, so that you've got a good **grasp** of what the benefits of each option are."*

Here are more words and phrases to help you identify your customer's sensory preference:

Visual

Look, see, pinpoint, clarity, appear,, view, show, snapshot, sight, perceive, light, watch, dawn, reveal, envisage, clear, vague, foggy, outlook, focused, hazy, crystal, inspect, imagine, picture, An eyeful, In view of, Mental picture, Paint a picture, Hazy idea, Plainly see, Get perspective, Eye to eye, Well-defined, Dim view, Looks like, See to it, Show me the bigger picture, Beyond a shadow of a doubt.



Auditory

Hear, listen, sound(s), announce, resonates, remark, speak, state, babble, echo, speechless, divulge, tell, talk, tune in/out I'm all ears, rings a bell, As an Afterthought, Loud and clear, Unheard of, Be heard, Tongue-tied, Utterly Lost for words, Inquire into, Word for word, I'm Dumbstruck, Pay attention to, State your purpose, Voice an opinion, Describe in detail, Clearly expressed, Clear as a bell, To tell the truth, Manner of speaking, Give an account of, Well-informed.

Kinaesthetic

Feel, touch, flow, grasp, hold, catch on, handle, solid, unsettling, concrete, smoothly, stumbled, muddled, relaxed, bearable, cool. Hang on a minute, Hold on, Dragging me down, Tap into, Lay your cards on the table, Get a handle on it, Pull some strings, Break it down, Firm foundation, I'm not following you, Start from scratch, Walk me through, I don't get it, I'm taking a firm stance, Boils down to, Get my drift, Get to grips with, Slipped my mind, I've got a gut feeling.

Hopefully you now have some great ways to enhance your communication skills and build a stronger rapport with customers and colleagues.

Using enriched communication forms part of my customer service and communication courses.

If you feel your employees would benefit from developing their communication skills either with customers/colleagues/or both - why not get in touch to find out how Turner Corner Learning Solutions can help?

Email@info@turnercorner.co.uk Mobile: 07597819293