

## The Eight Buying Personas

By Mike Schultz

**Editor's Note:** In this article, Mike Schultz describes how understanding your buyer's personality type can guide you in using specific tactics to help you be more effective in the selling process. Knowing how to differentiate buyer types and tailoring your approach appropriately can make all the difference. You'll definitely recognize some people you know in this article.

Regardless of the business or emotional reasons why people buy, every buyer has personal preferences for how they like to buy. There are multiple buying styles and preferences to consider, but the number is not infinite. It's eight. If you understand all eight, can identify which ones your prospects resemble, and plan your actions to meet their personal buying styles and criteria, you'll win more sales.

We give the eight buyer personas names because they have distinct and identifiable personalities. The names will help you remember who's who.

### 1. Decisive Danielle—Code name "Driver"

Decisive Danielle is directive. She solves problems in an active and assertive manner. She's proactive, results driven, and wants to win. If you're dealing with Danielle, she might seem pushy and overbearing, and may lack tact. She's probably pretty demanding and wants things to happen her way and in her timeframe.



If you're selling to Decisive Danielle, you should be decisive as well, and demonstrate willingness to take some risks on your end that can help her succeed. Don't worry too much about conflict that may arise with Danielle—it doesn't bother her, and she may even thrive on it. Building consensus is not her natural thing. Not only does she not like the idea of forming a committee, but she doesn't like the word.

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**2. Collaborative Claire—Code name “Consensus”**

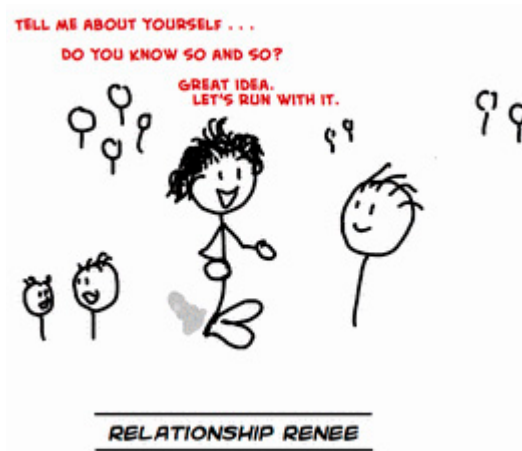
Collaborative Claire is the yin to Decisive Danielle’s yang. Collaborative Claire likes to solve problems with other people. She’s deliberative, tactful, diplomatic, and adaptable. In a world where people can be pretty blunt, it’s likely you’ll find her to be respectful of you and everyone else.



If you’re selling to Collaborative Claire, keep in mind how important consensus building will be to her. You’ll have to work with her to understand and include all of the various buying influences. Make sure you facilitate discussions to draw out Claire’s and everyone else’s thoughts, needs, and questions. Don’t get frustrated if things take a while. And if you need to push back, do it tactfully. If she is going to buy, she will buy when she is ready and her team is all on board. Need to make a big decision—let’s form a committee!

**3. Relationship Renee—Code name “Friend”**

Relationship Renee is interactive. Social interaction and engagement are important to her. She’s enthusiastic, a creative problem solver, a team player, and (of course) a relationship-builder. She likes the big picture, and she’s not shy about taking up a lot of air time in discussions. A question or two will really get her going.



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If you're selling to Renee, you might want to keep technical details to a minimum. Make sure you hear her ideas, and share (and stoke) her enthusiasm with your own. Renee probably weaves fairly seamlessly between talking about business and personal matters. You might find the talk about her recent vacation or your son's basketball team goes on for a bit. When discussing ideas, don't overdo being the "voice of reason" or reality. What you might see as realism, she'll see as a downer.

#### 4. Skeptical Steve—Code name "Guardian"

Skeptical Steve is the yin to Relationship Renee's yang. Steve is introspective. He's a reserved critical thinker. Skeptical Steve won't embellish and doesn't want you to do so either. It takes a while for Steve to develop trust with people, which can be great for you if you put in the time and effort. (By the way, Steve doesn't mind being called a skeptic. He's proud of the realism he brings to the table.)

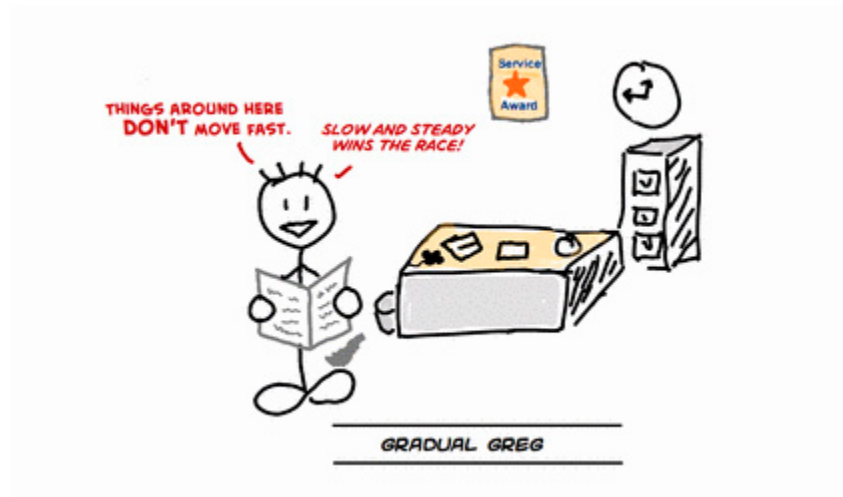


If you're selling to Skeptical Steve, don't be surprised if he's not super comfortable on the phone and prefers email to communicate. Don't be unnerved by lack of gestures or "feedback"; he tends not to be demonstrative one way or the other. Don't try to be too personal or friendly too fast. And know that Steve might not share much at meetings, but you still need to make sure his needs are met or he could quietly block your sale. And you might never even know it.

#### 5. Gradual Greg—Code name "Tortoise"

Slow and steady wins the race—that's what Gradual Greg says. Greg embodies (and prefers) stability and security. He's a dependable team player. You'll find Gradual Greg to be patient, empathetic, and service-oriented. He sees himself as the steward of his organization. Boat rocking is not his thing.

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If you’re selling to Greg, don’t push too fast or focus too much on messages of change. You also don’t want to overwhelm him with too many options or possibilities, as he can consider, and consider, and consider. Unless he’s forced by environmental factors to act with urgency, decisions are likely to take a long time. You need to decide if the effort of working with Greg is worth the eventual possibility of a sale. If you decide it is, keep Greg on track. If he gets distracted, he might focus on the other thing until it’s done (one thing at a time, you know) and not get back to you for a while.

**6. Warp 9 Walt—Code name “Change Agent”**

Warp 9 Walt is the yin to Gradual Greg’s yang. Warp 9 Walt wants it done yesterday. It doesn’t matter what “it” is. On second thought to Walt, yesterday isn’t fast enough. Walt’s a change agent. He has a strong sense of urgency; he makes decisions quickly and often spontaneously. He’s open to taking risk. Having multiple initiatives going on at once doesn’t bother Walt one bit. He likes the big picture, and he gets bored with too many details.



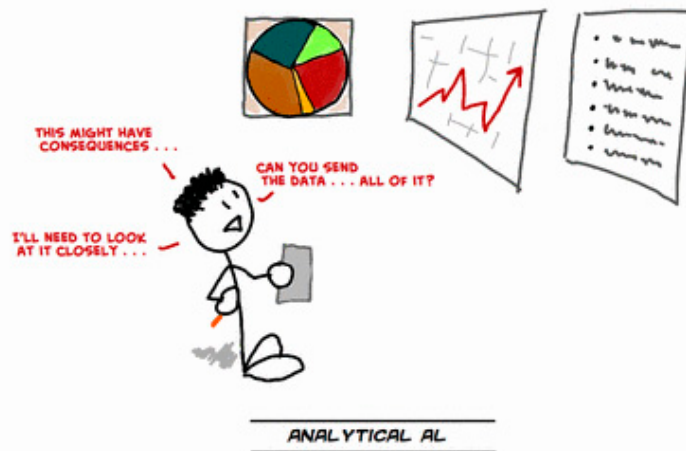
If you’re selling to Warp 9 Walt, you’ll need to match and validate his desire for speed. Help him set the agenda and find the path forward. Sell adaptability and flexibility as benefits—when you go this fast, you need to be able

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to change as conditions on the field dictate. Because Walt can be a pot stirrer, don't get frustrated if he stirs your pot—when he pushes back on you, he won't mind so much that you push right back. Once you sell to Warp 9 Walt, make sure you stay on your toes and stay connected because he'll always be looking around for the next thing. You don't want a competitor to catch his fancy without you knowing.

**7. Analytical AI—Code name “Spreadsheet”**

Past success is an indicator of future success. The way it's been done, established methods and data are important to Analytical AI. This doesn't mean he won't lead the pack and do something new; it just takes a lot of processing for AI to take a leap of faith. AI is cautious. He follows rules, procedures, and established standards. He's a comprehensive problem solver because he examines from all the different angles.



If you're selling to Analytical AI, provide the backup and data that will help him make a decision. Appropriate detail will be important (and “appropriate” to him is more than most). At some point, because he can sometimes leave the data gate open longer than it needs to be, you might need to push back. But take special care not to criticize, as he might take that more personally than most. If you push him too hard to move before he has completed his analysis, you can find yourself and your sale blocked.

**8. Innovator Irene—Code name “Maverick”**

Innovator Irene is the yin to Analytical AI's yang. When it comes to rules, procedures, and how things were done before, Irene couldn't care less. While AI might say, “Past success is an indicator of future success.” Irene would say, “What got us here won't get us there.” Innovator Irene develops ideas and strategies independent of rules. She's informal and solves problems creatively. Boundaries are for testing, pushing, and crossing. (Anyone who has a 3 year old has met this side of Irene.)

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If you're selling to Innovator Irene, brainstorm with her. Stoke ideas for new ways of doing things. When you help set the agenda, allow it to become Irene's agenda, not yours. Don't shut down creative talk; keep it moving forward, as Irene can be on the disorganized side. Don't give Irene the sense that she, personally, will have to do much detail work if she buys from you because details put her off. Instead, show how working with you will bring those ideas into reality.

Now that you're aware of the different buyer personas, keep in mind that while some personas may be better suited to buying what you sell than others, there are no "bad" buyer personas. There are just different styles and preferences that you will need to learn to match to increase your success. Buyers may also be a combination of personas, but there's usually a dominant persona to work with. Get to know the eight buying personas, and you can give yourself and your team advice to win more sales in the right way for each type of buyer.

#### About the Author

Mike Schultz is President of RAIN Group, a [sales training](#), assessment, and sales performance improvement company that helps leading organizations improve sales results. Mike is author of [Rainmaking Conversations: Influence, Persuade and Sell in Any Situation](#) (Wiley, 2011) and publisher of [RainToday.com](#). He also writes for the [RAIN Selling Blog](#). Mike can be reached at [mschultz@raingroup.com](mailto:mschultz@raingroup.com) or follow him on Twitter @Mike\_Schultz.

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