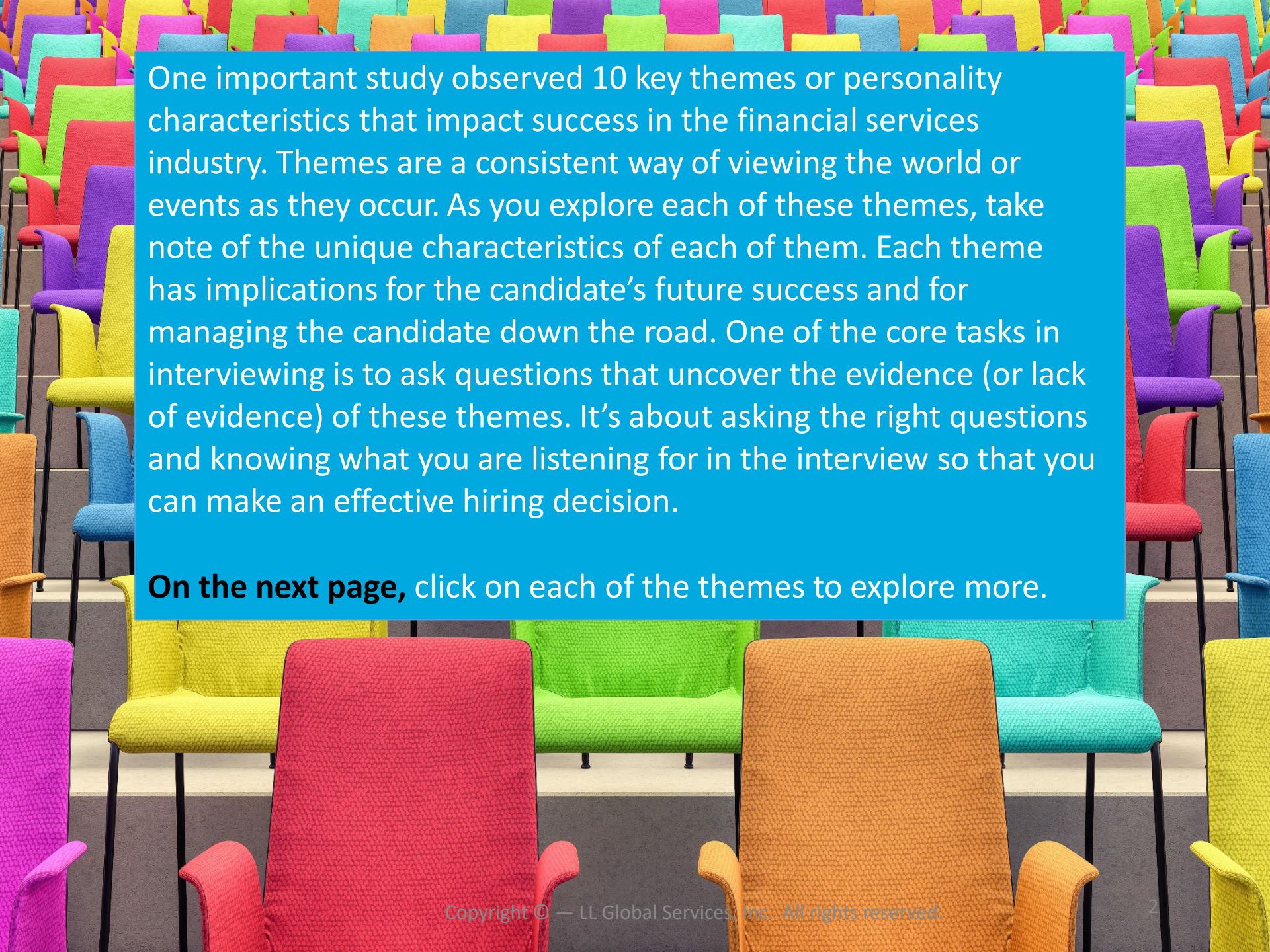


RIGHT *choice* SYSTEM

TEN INNER THEMES OF SELLING

As noted by Gallup researchers in the book, *First, Break All the Rules*, it takes a somewhat unique talent to succeed in selling in the financial services industry. In this document, we will define that talent in terms of themes or personality characteristics. You'll be able to identify and describe the 10 themes for success in selling and their interplay with each other.



One important study observed 10 key themes or personality characteristics that impact success in the financial services industry. Themes are a consistent way of viewing the world or events as they occur. As you explore each of these themes, take note of the unique characteristics of each of them. Each theme has implications for the candidate's future success and for managing the candidate down the road. One of the core tasks in interviewing is to ask questions that uncover the evidence (or lack of evidence) of these themes. It's about asking the right questions and knowing what you are listening for in the interview so that you can make an effective hiring decision.

On the next page, click on each of the themes to explore more.

Courage

Command

Ego

Competition

Belief

Focus

Persistence

Sophistication

Responsibility

Interpersonal

COURAGE

Courage is the ability to do something that frightens or intimidates you. It is finding strength in the face of adversity or challenge. In the financial services industry, courage comes in the form of willingness to overcome resistance and obstacles. In fact, it's more than willingness – it's eagerness to take on the challenge. It takes a great deal of courage to sell. Rejection is a natural byproduct of the sales process. Courageous salespeople will ask for the sale, pick up the phone or ask for referrals. They really hit their stride when the adrenaline is flowing. They see no roadblocks, only minor hurdles.



COMMAND

Command is the intrinsic ability to apply influence and direct the actions of others. It is having a certain aura or confidence that others respond to. Today's consumers in the financial services market are notorious procrastinators. They are confused, intimidated and need direction. Command is the presence that motivates consumers to take action on their desires. Salespeople with high levels of command have the authority required to sway or compel prospects and clients to pay attention to them and to follow their advice.



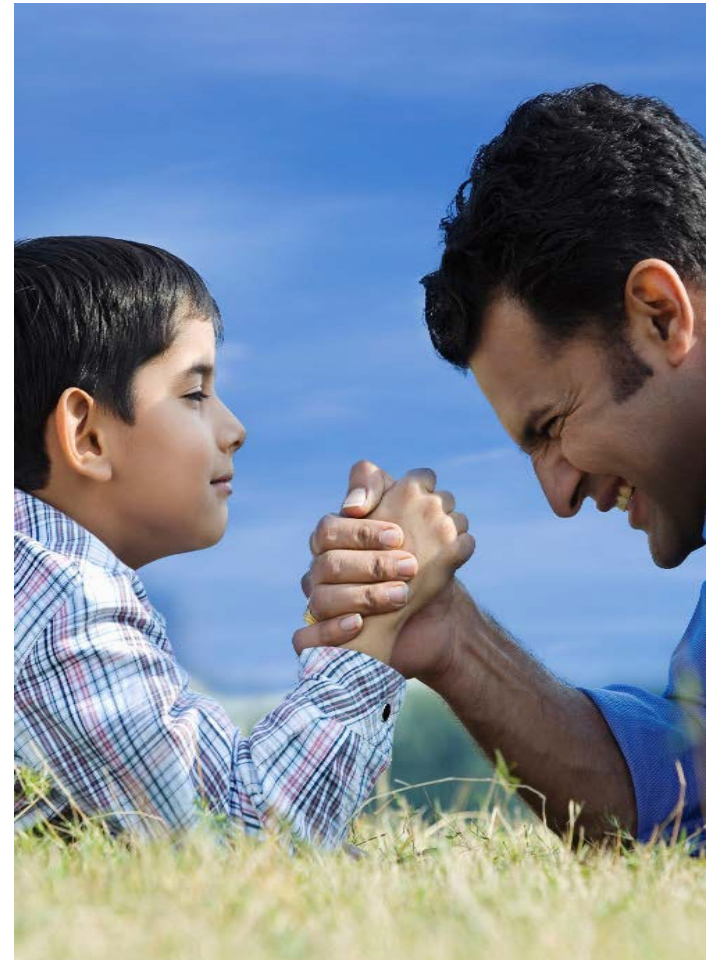
EGO

Ego is a person's self esteem or self-image. People with a strong ego have an unwavering, confident impression of themselves and a desire to be the best at what they do. They have a high locus of control, believing that they determine the outcomes of the events in their lives. The turnover rate for salespeople in the financial services industry is very high. The successful salespeople are those that possess the natural buoyancy to weather the storms and bounce back from rejection. High ego enables people to be responsible for their own successes and failures. *Lack* of ego is the number one reason for failure.



COMPETITION

Competition is a person's natural urge to compete. While some people are motivated to be the best, others are motivated by comparing themselves to others. Competitive people are motivated by winning, regardless of the size of the prize. They have an innate drive to succeed and belief that they can win. Sales is a zero sum game. Salespeople either win the prospect's business or their competition does. As a result, successful salespeople in the financial services industry have to love a good fight. It has to be a fair fight though. Truly competitive people want to feel they *deserve* the win and that requires sportsmanship and fair play.



BELIEF

Belief is the internal conviction that a person is doing what is right, ethical and just. It is related to a person's value system and how they make choices. Salespeople with high belief have confidence and certainty about what approaches to take and which products to recommend. When it comes to consumers in the financial services market, younger generations, in particular, do not know who to turn to. The salespeople who will be most successful are those that have the conviction in the good they are providing to their community. They instill confidence in the choices they recommend and the service they provide to their clients. They live by the motto that *selling is serving*.



FOCUS

Focus is clarity of purpose and a keen understanding of what it takes to succeed. Focused people make efficient use of their most important resource – time. They set their own direction and effectively manage their own work efforts. They understand how to accomplish larger goals by breaking the tasks into smaller steps. They take actions every day that result in progress towards their goals. Successful sales people in our industry focus on making the best use of their time, meeting their objectives and servicing the needs of their clients. They don't waste energy on extraneous activities or procrastinate.



PERSISTENCE

Persistence is steady commitment to a course of action. It is the ability to sustain effort in spite of difficulties, obstacles or rejection. Successful salespeople have tenacity and can work hard day in and day out. They have perseverance and can stay the course without becoming overly discouraged when things don't turn out the way they expected. Successful sales people have a natural endurance that allows them to hold fast and come back fighting for more. They understand that long-term success often comes with short-term setbacks.



SOPHISTICATION

Sophisticated people make use of their education, worldly experience and intuition to make effective and efficient choices. They know how to make the best use of their time in order to work smarter, not harder. Sophisticated sales people evaluate, sort and rank their options. They know who best to prospect and what products to present. They use their experiences to continually grow, evolve and refine their habits. They embody the belief that all clients are not created equal when it comes to use of their time.



RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility is the belief that one is personally accountable and answerable. A responsible person believes that it is within their power or control to behave in a certain manner. They can be trusted to make appropriate choices without supervision because they have a strong sense of right and wrong. A responsible salesperson is trustworthy, reliable and dependable. These characteristics are critical in the financial services industry because trust is at an all-time low. Successful salespeople have ethics and integrity and can be relied upon to act at all times in the proper manner.



INTERPERSONAL

Interpersonal people have tremendous social abilities and define themselves by the relationships they possess. They strive to build meaningful, long-term relationships with the people in their lives. They have a natural concern for others and tend to be social oriented and cooperative. Interpersonal people work hard to create a strong network both in the physical and virtual worlds. An interpersonal salesperson believes the relationship begins with the first sale. They know how to develop rapport with prospects and clients by remembering the small details and personalizing solutions.



The WHY

Questions related to **Ego, Competition and Belief** provide evidence of WHY the candidate does the job. So in other words, the intrinsic reasons for why they get up and out of bed each morning and strive to do what they do – what makes them “tick”. Will they do it to *be the best, be the winner or be of service.*

The HOW

Questions related to **Focus, Persistence, Sophistication, Responsibility** and Interpersonal provide evidence of HOW a candidate does things – so their methods, level of thoroughness, that sort of thing.

The ten themes we just reviewed were found to be the most important personality characteristics in sales. All of the themes work together in different ways.

Your goal as an interviewer is to uncover which of these themes or personality characteristics are evident and in what combination.

As human beings, we are not a list of personality characteristics but rather complex organic beings that are made up of a mix of talents.

When candidates show up to work, it's the interplay of their talents that will define their success or failure in this career.

We've included a group of theme combinations at the top of each of the boxes. Themes listed in ALL CAPS are dominant in the mix.

Let's look at a few examples of themes and how they interact with each other when it comes to candidates.

EGO-courage-command

This is the person who may be always frustrated and may want to be more than they are (and perhaps more than they are capable of from a manager's viewpoint). They are always out in the future – what they'll do next month, next quarter, next year...

COURAGE-COMMAND-ego

This is a person who can sell. They have the ability to knock down all obstacles...but they may not because they are simply satisfied. They may have no personal need to do more.

BELIEF-ego-competition

This is a person who may place the most importance on their personal relationships and values system. As a result, they can be self sacrificing at the expense of their own livelihood. They may spend more time servicing their existing clients than prospecting for new ones.

PERSISTANCE-focus-sophistication

This is a person who will likely go the extra mile and work the long hours without complaint. BUT – they may not be either efficient or effective. They may waste their energy on the wrong things at the wrong time and need constant redirection.

COURAGE-belief-responsibility, COMMAND, belief, responsibility, EGO, belief, responsibility

Be careful of the person who comes in low on the belief and responsibility themes no matter what the combination. There is a risk that this person's power and greed may take over. They may say the wrong thing and stretch the truth with prospects and clients.

Awareness of the interplay of themes is important so that you can hire candidates with the best aptitude for the job and head off potential management headaches (or nightmares) down the road.

On the following two pages, you'll see quotes from several different financial representatives who have been hired. Review the quotes noticing the mix of themes we just explored to illustrate the potential challenges that could be in store.

“I don’t like to make calls because I take rejection personally.” (**EGO, courage, command**)

END RESULT: This person is not so much a problem. You’ll fire him/her for lack of production.

“I don’t want to lose my clients’ money on them.” (**BELIEF, ego, competition**)

END RESULT: Uh oh – you don’t need a social worker on your hands.

“Why should I? I’m satisfied with my current production.” (**COURAGE, COMMAND, ego**)

END RESULT: This person IS a problem. You’ve seen him/her close sales. He/she just won’t.

“I stretch the truth to make the sale.” **(COURAGE, belief, responsibility) or (COMMAND, belief, responsibility) or (EGO, belief, responsibility)**

END RESULT: Your compliance worst nightmare. Run.

“I work really, really hard...on all the wrong things.” **(PERSISTENCE, focus, sophistication)**

END RESULT: Not a problem...unless you enjoy saying, “Didn’t we talk about this?” Every week.



What's the right mix of these themes?

Well – in this industry salespeople certainly need a healthy dose of **courage, command and ego** but these things must be tempered with a belief in the power of our products and the good they can do in our communities. These themes must also be matched with a **sense of responsibility** so that they stay compliant, ethical and trustworthy. Finally they will need a smattering of **persistence** so that they can remain resilient in the face of adversity – certainly a reality in our industry.

In the end, it's really about finding the candidate who has the right balance and avoiding those that present potential red flags.