



The Deal Room Podcast

Episode 226 – How to negotiate in difficult situations (and difficult personalities) using Behavioural Science with Bri Williams

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Transcript

Joanna:

Hi, it's Joanna Oakey here and welcome back to The Deal Room podcast, a podcast proudly brought to you by our commercial legal practice Aspect Legal now today we speak with fabulous Bri Williams. Bri is a guest on the show that brings some unique perspectives on business. She is the managing director of People Patterns, also known under the title of Behavioral Specialist, and he's also the host of the wonderful video series Talking Talks. And in this episode of The Deal Room podcast, we talk about how to negotiate difficult situations with difficult personalities using behavioural science to ultimately get the deal done, Bri kicks it off by introducing us to why behavioural science can be used in this context and shares tips on the ways to deal with different types of people. In the deal room, we discussed DISC profiles, how to recognize a motion in a deal, and how to move the deal forward without getting too captured in emotion that might hold us back. So for a bit of a different take on The Deal Room podcast. Here we go with our discussion with Bri.

Joanna:

Bri Williams, I just wanted to say an absolute thank you for coming on to the podcast today.

Bri:

I've been really looking forward to this Joanna. Let's get stuck in.

Joanna:

Let's get stuck in. Absolutely, absolutely. Now, the topic that we're covering today is how to negotiate with is... I don't even know if I can call it how to negotiate with dickheads. And I think that it will really resonate with our audience. Absolutely. Because in this area of business or an acquisition, there can be a predominance of different or difficult personality styles. And of course, um, our job in a deal just like Business Brokers' job in a deal is to find the way that we can get the deal done. So to negotiate often with these difficult personalities or different personalities. And and, you know, ultimately get the deal done at the end of the day. So maybe, Bri if we can start off by you giving a quick background of the perspective that you come at this from using behavioural science, what is behavioural science? Why we'll be talking about it in this context.

Bri:

Thank you, Joanna. Yes, behavioural science. What is it? Well, people sometimes unkindly say it's BS, but that's certainly the chance of the acronym. But behavioural science, really is the study of how and why people make decisions and how we can influence the decisions they make. So in this sort of situation, it's very much about how do we apply science to these people that we just might not be gelling with. It's not that they're difficult, necessarily, but their behaviour seems to be.

Joanna:

Brilliant. Okay, wonderful. And look, you know, the way this can turn up in deals is, you know, might be one of the parties, the buyer or the seller digging in, but it also might be their advisors digging in, which can also be, you know, it can be difficult, difficult space to navigate. So what are the tips that you have in negotiating with difficult personality styles,

Bri:

I tend to use what is known as the DISC profile. So the DISC Profile categorizes people in four ways. So there are the dominant types, there's the influencing types, study types, and conscientious types. Now, why do we like to type people, it's really so that we can start to shift from the focus we have on ourselves, which is just getting upset that that person isn't understanding us. And it helps to shift our empathy into hanging on this person is seeing the world in a way that is different to perhaps how I see it. With the challenge then to say, well, I need to change the way I'm expressing myself or conducting myself so that my message lands in an appropriate way. So firstly, the dominant types, they're the ones that will tend to give you short shrift. I name all of these categories after birds so I think of dominant types of bald eagles, you know, they've, they've got some attitude that they like sharpened and sharp sort of statements. If you ever say to a dominant type or a bald eagle, let me take you through the detail that will horrify them, they will cut you at the knees. So instead what we want you to do is play out to things that they've already said because they tend to there tends to be a preponderance of these dominant types in leadership positions. So no doubt you will come across them at some point. But things like using statements like as you said dot-dot-dot going to be helpful because they then hear their own words back at them. And they're going to be more likely to agree with your course of suggested action now influencing types, I call them parrots, right? So parrots are very gregarious, they're colourful, and they like to be the centre of attention very chatty. The challenge with influencing times is that they might be all talk, no action. And so they might in the room, be promising you everything and talking a great story, but they don't follow through. So the chance the opportunity there for you is to play on their desire for perception management, so making them look good. So how can they, for instance, be seen as the hero of this project, and you also, through this exercise, want to clarify who they are going to, for instance, delegate to the details, so that you have someone that's going to end up carrying the can carry the baggage of this, of whatever you're putting forward. So they're the two that's

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dominant and influencing, so the bald eagle and the parrot, they tend to be more, I would say, movers and shakers in the business. We also have two other types of study types. Think of these as like a dove, a more gentle bird. But also one that you know doesn't want a whole lot of attention, doves notoriously pair off. So doves are very much about the team and harmony, think of the harmony of the doves. And so they will want to nullify any risk, they don't want to have any sort of exposure. So when you're talking with someone who you think is going to be a steady type, it's really about wanting the detail, take them through the plan, take them through slowly, slow and steady for the steady types, so that you take them on board with this. And the final type conscientious types, well, these are owls. So they like to be intellectual, they like to sit within with wisdom, and they don't tend to respond to idiots particularly well. So you've got to be careful,

Joanna:

Try not to be one is that the idea, or appears to be?

Bri:

Definitely right, you've got to, if you are an idiot, pretend not to be for sure. But with both the doves and the owls, or the study and the conscientious types, it's really good to give them time, do not put them on the spot, do not expect a decision at the moment, you want to really solicit their views, things, like I'd value your thoughts on this, will go a long way to getting conscientious types on your side. And once you have them one over, of course, they are going to be a strong advocate for you. So when it comes to these difficult situations with difficult people, an awareness of the type of personality you're dealing with will help you then navigate how you're best to approach them.

Joanna:

I just love that. I mean, we we had a bit of discussion in the past about this. And I'm big into DISC profiling as well. I have never heard the connection of it to birds, however, and this is what will stay in my head forever. I love it. The Bald Eagle, the Parrot, the Dove and the Owls, okay, all right, great. And just I just want to reiterate here, because people often you know, walking along the beach, half your luck, if you're doing that while you're listening to this or on their commute into work or home or whatever. People are usually doing other things while they're listening to us on the podcast. So I just want to reiterate each of these areas when you said for the dominant personalities, so that's our Bald Eagles. A great way to deal with them in discussions is to feed back the components of what you want to rely on that they talked about to remind them that that's what they said. So you said blah, blah, and work on it from that. That's right. That's the approach with dominance.

Bri:

Yeah, not in an accusatory way. So it's not like oh, you said this instead we want to play on their ego and so as you said dot-dot-dot playing on the as in I've heard you because you are a leader and I am listening to intently, so playing on their ego, because otherwise, I tend to be pretty dismissive of people that are long indeed all people that are trying to, you know, dance a fancy tune, they want to keep it short and sharp. But also, it really helps to echo what they've said. So it's like, they want to cut to the chase. And so if you can short circuit things by saying, as you said, or in line with your ideas, then you're going to go a long way for that.

Joanna:

Brilliant. Okay, wonderful. And just as we go through it as well, just one thing I wanted to add as well is that you're unlikely to have someone who's only I mean, you won't have someone who is only one of these personality styles. So there'll be a mix of them, but with one dominant, although we've used dominance already, one dominant, predominant personality style out of all of these, but I guess one thing to bear in mind, so we talked about the dominance, you know, you need to play to their ego go cut to the chase, maybe not spend too much time in the lead up with useless detail. But if they have a bit of seeing that conscientiousness that owl in there as well, where they might like a little bit, you know, they might like a bit of fact, I guess you have to read into that as well and work out, you know, maybe you're dealing with someone who's got elements as well, for you, for you to think about, I guess it was just the one thing that you know,

human beings are complex, aren't they?

Bri:

Yeah, the big flaw of any sort of personality profiling tool is an assumption that that's all there is with people. So I would really just say, see this as a hypothesis generation or device or something like that, were you saying, oh, that's, they're interesting. They're, they might be a different psychological makeup to me, I wonder what's going on there. And it really just helps you inquire. And it doesn't mean that you're going to necessarily only build your case solely around the assumptions that you're making, whether they're an eagle, or now, for instance, but it means that you then have thought through whatever you're proposing, from different perspectives, so that you can pivot in the room, you can pivot on the phone call, whatever you'd like to do, but we sort of jumped into the conversation without what I normally talk about, which is there are more similarities and differences in people. So we are wired, most of us to be handed we'll talk about this on a different podcast, but lazy, scared, and confused is the model that I have developed. And so those are the three things that run through any sort of negotiation that we have with someone. This is sort of the flourish. This is the nuance This is how am I going to maximize my opportunity with this particular stakeholder? Or make sure that I've covered all my bases with this if I'm because for instance, personally, I'm a conscientious type on the now. So I am an Owl tends to want the detail on the plan and all that sort of thing. If I go into a dominant type, and try and go take them through the logics logical steps, they might cut me off. And it's like, no, you're giving me too much for this decision. So it's my responsibility as the person tabeling this, it's not their responsibility to change. It's my responsibility to change how I'm approaching the situation.

Joanna:

Yeah, brilliant. And I guess, you know, implicit in all of what you have said, or explicit in all of what you've said, is that you're not using the same style for everyone, you know, you're really breeding your audience and adapting your communication style based on your audience. And that's, it's also upon the needs of your audience in relation to how they're taking in information. I guess that's the other element of what you're talking about here. But just to continue with a summary. So we talked about our dominants being Bald Eagles, we talked about our influencers being Parrots, and here really good tip, find a way to help make them the hero of the situation. But make sure you're also finding out who you need to send all of the detail to get action to actually happen. After the discussion with our Parrots,

Bri:

Parrots love the big pictures and they love to find out what other people are doing. So you can say, Oh, this is what other businesses are doing so that then they can sort of run with it as well. But yeah, don't expect people who are Parrots to see every task through you'll probably need a team around them.

Joanna:

Yeah, okay. Perfect. Okay, very good. Tip there. Good tip. If you're identifying some parrot tendencies, okay, in your, the parties you're negotiating with Okay, and so next we moved on to steady or our dove, or dive our dove sounds very calm and harmonious and graceful. So here we are giving the detail in this instance to our doves because our doves want the detail, but also I guess our doves may not want to see it front and centre on the negotiation table if they're feeling exposed. So maybe it's about thinking about ways to protect or work around the fact that they may not want to come to the negotiation table, not because they don't want to negotiate, but perhaps, because they're, it just doesn't fit their personality style. They don't like, you know, the exposure, that that that it creates.

Bri:

That's right, you'll probably find the dominant and the influencing or the bald eagles and the parrots are keen to get in the cut and thrust of a negotiation. But behind the scenes, it's going to be conscientious and steady types that tend to look after the detail not in a dull way either, I should say because they can kill a deal if you're not giving them what they need. So they can wield a lot of power now that the dogs think of harmony. So when you're talking with them, it's

personalities) using Behavioural Science with Bri Williams going to be about nullifying risk and particularly nullifying risk to Team harmony. So they're going to be most interested in what is this going to do to the people around me. So they're going to have that sort of focus. And so when you're talking with them, it's about making sure that you've thought about those issues and can work with them through those issues.

Joanna:

Brilliant, Okay, wonderful. And very lastly, he talked about our hours, giving them time. And respect the fact that they liked the detail, I guess that's sort of where we're rounding out our personality styles.

Bri:

They liked the detail, and they like that their thinking is incorporated. So make sure that they have an opportunity to share with you their insights, which You've given me today, Joanna, and I really appreciated it as you know, as an owl.

Joanna:

I love it. I love it. I love it. The personal approach. Yeah, brilliant. And look, just one thing before we leave, which sort of touches on another discussion that we've had about a motion in a deal. Because, you know, as he said, we're talking here about the distinction between personality types, and perhaps how this can contribute to you being an effective communicator with different personality types. But the other things that can be a player or emotion, I really feel that emotion has a large role in potentially creating issues along the way with deals and suddenly causing confusion, and interrupting communication within a deal. So just very quickly, maybe if you can talk about your thoughts about the elements of emotion, and whether behavioural science has any insights into how we deal with emotion, and how we help people resolve Well, rather than resolve the motion and move the deal forward without getting too captured in emotion that can hold us back.

Bri:

I think that's so central because there's something strange happens. And we think because we're in a business context, people have put their business pants on their big girl pants on or their big boy pants on. And they're immune to emotion when in actual fact, you're dealing with a human. And humans are not robots, right? And so whilst people might talk a big game about I'm a data-driven or fact-driven decision maker. My perspective is that it's not the data is currency. In other words, the data is giving them a level of comfort, for instance, or it's helping them feel that they've done their due diligence. So it might not be the data itself that is driving the decision that they ultimately take. It's the data the feeling the data gives them. So that's one think of data as a currency, rather than an objective lever that you can pull. If I only give them the right data, of course, they're going to act on what we're suggesting. Well, no.

Bri:

The second main point I will make and yes, there's a very big conversation you've just opened up is hot state and cold state. In other words, behavioural science tells us that some days we are in a hot state, so we might be fatigued, or we might be emotional, or yeah, we're aroused in a particular way. However, you want to take that word. So hot state arousal versus cold state, that's when we are probably removed from the heat of the conversation or the heat of the deal. And that's often when we do our planning and think, Oh, well, if they say this, I'm going to say that and then you get in the room. And it's an entirely different scenario. So just knowing that you have the two states that you flick between with just because you're in a cold state doesn't mean you'll be in a cold state in the room. So one of the examples I often think about is if, for instance, you're, you might be encouraged to cut some corners. If you're just trying to get a project done, you'll think, Oh, I'll get the sign-off later, you know, I just need to get it done right now. Imagine yourself in a courtroom, this is right up your alley, Joanna, imagine yourself in the witness box, trying to explain your behaviour at that moment because, in the hot state moment, you're going to be willing to, you know, cut corners and get it done, because you've got pressure, and you just have to do it. Imagine yourself though, in a cold state in a witness box, reflecting on that experience, and you would have made very different decisions. So in order to douse some cold water on your hot state, it helps to time travel, and put yourself in a different situation

personalities) using Behavioural Science with Bri Williams and think, how would I, in six months, look back at this, and that will be enough to, you know, take the sting out of it, take the emotion out of it, and help you control the decision that you're trying to make.

Joanna:

That's, you know, it's a really good point there. Because for our buyers and sellers who are listening, I think when they're in situations, an emotion has crept up, whether you realize it or not, but when you're in that period of time, we have to make decisions. If you're finding the decisions hard when you feel like you're butting up against a wall, I think that's a great question. How will I look at this when I'm looking back at six months, and what will I think about these decisions when I'm looking back at it in six months' time, and I guess, perhaps the whole point of that is about, you know, removing yourself from where you are now and putting yourself trying to distance yourself from that emotion, of course, which is such a, you know, it's such, as I said, overlooked area.

Joanna:

I think when people are going through from a buyer's perspective, they can be one of two things, they can be really excited and don't care about the detail. And that makes them not take enough caution along the way, or they can be overly cautious and too caught up in the detail and too scared to make a decision. And the same with our sellers, you know, they can be harbouring this emotion of, of not realizing that they haven't really come to terms with the fact that this is going to be being changed for them for their life. For many of our business owners who own their businesses for decades, you know, it's a big change. But when they get belligerent and all scared, or suddenly concerned about warranties that they're signing, that might be quite normal in the situation, you know, once again, recognizing that that's emotion, perhaps in their sense, if they can think of themselves sitting on a beach off in Hawaii, or the Bahamas, or you know, I don't know somewhere fabulous sipping a cocktail thinking back on that decision, you know, maybe it'll make a lot easier for them to make those some of those tough decisions along the way,

Bri:

You just reminded me of a principle called the endowment effect. And it really it means that the things that we own the things that we've put time, and effort ego into, we're loather to give up or to sell for perhaps a market price. And we see this all the time in real estate. So we try and sell our houses more for more than the market wants or our cars. So we think our car is amazing. And you know, why wouldn't people want to pay X amount of dollars, and the market tells us something else? So the endowment effect really is about the psychological hold these things have over us. And when we're a business owner, trying to sell our business, it always helps to have someone external to us a trusted third party, whether it's a broker or whether it's your lawyer, or, you know, a trusted colleague, really give you a sense check about really, this is what the market is because we always overestimate what we have to sell because, you know, we love it. Well, we know it, whereas our buyer is looking at risk. They're looking, it's all unknown to them. And so we're coming at it from different perspectives.

Joanna:

I'll tell you what, I could just talk all day about this topic Bri, but we should let you go and look, I just want to say a huge thank you for coming on to the podcast. Such a different perspective than the perspective we normally take here. And just so interesting to come at it from this different perspective. Bri, how can our listeners get in contact with you on what are the sorts of things that services that you can provide for our listeners that might be useful for them who are dealing day in and day out with different personalities and difficult situations?

Bri:

Thank you, Joanna. Yes, it's sort of an untapped opportunity for anyone in business at the moment, because we have been successful to a point with what we know about human behaviour. If you overlay that with behavioural science and just refine what you're doing, you will just see such an improvement in your effectiveness. It's very exciting and that's what I love working with clients on. If people are interested in an online course, in my influencing action

personalities) using Behavioural Science with Bri Williams course, for instance, that really teaches people about the eagle, the parrot, and all of the different strategies as well as the lazy, scared and overwhelmed model I was talking about, find that on briwilliams.com. I'm also available for coaching, consulting, keynotes, and whatever you happen to do, I love talking about it. And I hope to share it with as many people as possible.

Joanna:

Absolutely fabulous. And of course, we will link through to all of that in our show notes. So you weren't missing it if you're running along on the beach right now. Bri, I just want to say a huge thank you for coming on to the deal room podcast. It's been an absolute pleasure having you.

Bri:

I love dealing with you, Joanna. Hahaha

Joanna:

Hahaha That's too good.

Joanna:

Well, that's it for this episode of the deal room podcast with Behavioral Specialist, and Managing Director of People Patterns. Bri Williams, we hope you're primed for your next deal with these pointers and enjoy these fascinating insights on using Behavioral Science in The Deal Room and beyond. Now, if you'd like more information about this topic, then head over to our website at thedealroompodcast.com, where you'll be able to download a transcript of this episode, as well as any contact details and any additional information we refer to if you'd like to get in contact with Bree Williams her details including a link to her show Talking Talks and consulting business People Patterns are in our show notes.

Joanna:

You can also book in directly with our Legal Eagles at aspect legal if you'd like to soundboard your next steps, or find out more about how we can assist from a legal perspective, whether in buying or selling a business or perhaps somewhere in between. Well, that's it. I hope you enjoyed what you heard today. Don't forget to subscribe to The Deal Room Podcast on your favourite podcast player to get notifications whenever a new episode is out. Well, thanks again for listening in. You've been listening to Joanna Oakey and The Deal Room podcast, a podcast proudly brought to you by our commercial legal practice Aspect Legal. See you next time.