

Towards and Away From

How people like to be motivated

Some people take action to avoid problems or unpleasant consequences. Others are motivated by the prospect of gaining something desirable. People who think **towards** are future oriented, looking forward and are pulled towards a goal or idea. To 'not want' is to move **away from**. These people tend to be motivated to move away from a potential problem or an unpleasant event or idea. Most people use a mixture but tend to have a preference in a given context, such as work, for example.

Distribution*

Towards	Both	Away from
40%	20%	40%

Understanding the way the client likes to be motivated will help you direct your actions more effectively. It is essential to know your own preference.

Recognise the client's preference

To establish the preference of each of your key relationships recall the way they speak.

'I'll be in big trouble if I don't get this done' – away from

'I'd like to try that, it sounds exciting' – towards

Below are further examples of how to recognise the different preferences from the way the client speaks.

Towards	Away from
This project will lead to more visibility.	Not doing the project could affect your promotion.
If you attend the training you will have more chance of leading the team.	If you don't do the training you will never succeed.
The new role will stretch and develop you.	Leaving this role will enable you to leave behind a lot of hassle.

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People with an **away from** motivation can sound negative to someone with a **towards** motivation. Equally, someone with a towards motivation can sound hopelessly optimistic to a person with an away from preference. If your client is not accepting an idea or new project consider the way in which it has been described to them.

If you have trouble deciding a person's preference, or you are talking to a group, try using both styles – one will hit the mark.

The client with a **towards** preference will respond best when you:

Show you understand what their goals are and what they want to achieve.

- Emphasise that you can help them meet their goal.
- Describe the advantages in the future.
- Check that they have considered potential problems.
- Use words like 'attain', 'have', 'get', 'include', 'achieve'.

The client with an **away from** preference will respond best when you:

- Show you understand what they want to avoid or what problem they have.
- Emphasise that you can help them avoid what they don't want.
- Anticipate potential problems and work out how to minimise them or eliminate them completely.
- Are aware that it is often difficult for them to clarify what they do want.
- Acknowledge that their motivation may wane when the thing they want to avoid appears to have receded or disappeared.
- Give them clear deadlines.
- Work with them in projects that require troubleshooting and problem solving.
- Use words like 'avoid', 'prevent', 'eliminate', 'get rid of', 'solve'.

Big Chunk/ Small Chunk

How much detail people like

"Behaviour is a mirror in which everyone displays his own image."

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

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Some people like a lot of detail, while others are more interested in the big picture. The chances are that you automatically give others the level of detail you like to receive.

You'll get your message across much better if you always give the level of detail your client prefers. So notice if they focus, first on the steps and details, or on the concepts and connections and you do the same.

People typically have a preference on a continuum with detail and procedural steps – small chunk – at one end and global or context – big chunk – at the other.

Distribution*

Small chunk 15%	Equally small and big chunk 25%	Big chunk 60%
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*Taken from *Words that change minds* by Shelle Rose Charvet

Examples

Small chunk	'Yesterday at 10am George and I met with Mr Milo, our main recruiter in Rome, who spoke about renewing our contract for recruiting graduates. He wants to include advertising in the price for next year.'
Mainly small chunk	'Yesterday at 10am George and I met with Mr Milo, our recruiter in Rome, to discuss renewing our contract. He wants to include other services in the deal.'
Equally small and big chunk	'Yesterday Mr Milo told George and me he wants to include other services in the deal next year.'
Mainly big chunk	'Next year Mr Milo wants to renegotiate our contract.'
Big chunk	'Rome wants to renegotiate.'

It is important to know your own preference for details before checking your clients. Below are some of the characteristic that will help you identify a preference for:

Small chunk preference

People with this preference tend to:

- Describe the details and specifics first.
- Perceive a task in terms of its constituent parts.
- Break down projects or tasks into smaller steps.
- Want the details first.
- Need details to make a decision.
- Miss the overall goal or purpose of a task because they are immersed in the detail.
- Like to have the sequence or steps. They focus on how each step relates to the others and talk about steps and sequences.

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- Need concrete examples.
- If distracted or interrupted they may have to go back to the beginning.
- Can be thought of as using a 'telescopic lens'.

Big chunk preference

People with this preference tend to:

- Describe goals, ideas and actions in general language and the broad context.
- Talk in generalities.
- Become convinced by an overall concept or idea.
- Focus on the overall direction of a project or task.
- Need to understand the context first before thinking about the details.
- Use abstract examples and summarise.
- Dislike step by step procedures and often have difficulty following them.
- Will give an overview or ask for an overview first.
- Describe situations without attention to sequence.
- Like to delegate the details.
- Can be thought of as using a 'wide angle lens'.

Once you know the amount of information you prefer, and the amount of information your client prefers you can modify your approach to meet their needs. Some ideas on how to do this are listed below.

Communicating small chunks of information

People with a preference for small chunks of information tend to respond best when it is communicated in the following ways:

- It is broken down into specifics.
- The details are emphasised and presented in sequence.
- General comments and descriptions are avoided.
- The big picture is left to the end.
- Use words like: 'exactly', 'precisely', 'first', 'second', 'next', 'then', 'after', 'plan', 'schedule', 'organise', 'structure'.

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Communicating big chunks of information

People with a preference for big chunks of information tend to respond best when it is communicated in the following ways

- The big picture or the overall context is explained first.
- Details are left to the end or missed altogether.
- Focus is on generalities.
- Allow the client to 'read between the lines' and fill in details that are different to yours.
- Use words like: 'generally', 'basically', 'overall', 'perspective', 'idea', 'concept', 'open ended', 'spontaneous'.

When planning a project or new task it is useful to include input from people with both preferences to ensure completeness.