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# Prospects of TA in Sales Management

## ABSTRACT

*Interaction is a word that is used frequently when we talk of relationships. Why do you interact? Probably to share your feelings and thoughts. Man is a social animal. There is a basic need of every person to communicate and interact with other people. This communication is carried out in any one of the three forms, i.e. verbally, non-verbally and through written communication. Each of these three forms of communication is instrumental in getting your message across to the other party. The importance of communication probably stems from the fact that the requirements of people differ and all people are different when it comes to their attitudes and behavior. Thus a salesperson has to master this art of communication – so as to understand people well while communicating with them, and produce the maximum number of successful call closes. Even in organizations the style of communication keeps on changing based on the size and culture of the organization. In spite of all the variations that can happen in the workplace, the salesperson is expected to produce results consistently. Salespersons have certain key characteristics that distinguish him from people in other trades. Once these characteristics are inculcated in the salesperson, he can perform in spite of variations, and is highly adaptable in workplace and during interactions with customers. In this paper we will look at the crucial parameters that make the salesperson a success in organizational communication.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Transactional analysis, commonly known as TA to its adherents, is an integrative approach to the theory of psychology and psychotherapy. Integrative because it has elements of psychoanalytic, Humanist and Cognitive approaches.

Transactional Analysis is a tool developed by Eric Berne and, in recent years, has been popularized in the writings of Thomas Harris, Muriel James, Dorothy Jongeward and Abe Wagner. TA is not only post-Freudian but according to its founder's wishes consciously extra-Freudian. That is to say that while it has its roots in psychoanalysis - since Berne was a psychoanalytic-trained psychiatrist - it was designed as a dissenting branch of psychoanalysis in that it put its emphasis on transactional, rather than "psycho-", analysis. With its focus on transactions, TA shifted its attention from internal psychological dynamics to the dynamics contained in people's interactions. Rather than believing that increasing

• awareness of the contents of unconsciously  
• held ideas was the therapeutic path, TA  
• concentrated on the content of people's  
• interactions with each other. Changing these  
• interactions was TA's path to solving  
• emotional problems.

• In addition Berne believed in making  
• a commitment to "curing" his patients rather  
• than just understanding them. To that end he  
• introduced one of the most important aspects  
• of TA: the contract - an agreement entered  
• into by both client and therapist to pursue  
• specific changes that the client desires.

• TA's popularity in the U.S. waned in  
• the 1970s, but it retains some popularity  
• elsewhere in the world. The more dedicated  
• TA purists banded together in 1964 with  
• Berne to form a research and professional  
• accrediting body, the International  
• Transactional Analysis Association, or ITAA.  
• The organization is still active as of 2008.

• How would it be if we were able to  
• predict the response that our interactions are

likely to evoke from other people? Can we predict the anticipated reaction of people that our actions are expected to produce? In this quest of understanding and analyzing behavior, Transactional Analysis goes a long way in giving deeper insights.

According to Transactional Analysis (TA), a transaction is a combination of a stimulus plus a response. For example, 'If you say to one member of staff, "You really did a fine job on that project, John" – that is a stimulus. If he says, "Thanks" – that is a response.

The process of communication is give-and-take of transactions. A transaction is complete only when a stimuli is given and a response to that stimuli is received. However, both stimulus and response can be given in a verbal manner, a non-verbal manner and, in some cases, in written manner.

The study of social interactions – when people interact and respond to one another – is called Transactional analysis. The study of Transactional Analysis (TA) provides an understanding of how people react to each other. TA, therefore, helps up to communicate better, develop and maintain better human relationships. TA recognizes that people have psychological positions in their minds, and they operate from one of the three psychological positions. These psychological positions are called the *ego states*.

Revising Freud's concept of the human psyche as composed of the id, ego, and super-ego, Berne postulated in addition three "ego states" — the Parent, Adult, and Child states — which were largely shaped through childhood experiences. These three are all part of Freud's ego; none represented the id or the superego. Unhealthy childhood experiences could damage the Adult or Parent ego states, which would bring discomfort to an individual and/or others in a variety of forms, including many types of mental illness.

Berne considered how individuals interact with one another, and how the ego states affected each set of transactions. Unproductive or counterproductive transactions were considered to be signs of ego state problems. Analysing these transactions, according to the person's individual developmental history, would enable the person to "get better". Berne thought that virtually everyone has something problematic about their ego states and that negative behaviour would not be addressed by "treating" only the problematic individual.

## 2. CONCEPT OF EGO STATES

A person usually operates from three different ego states. They are the *parent ego state*, the *adult ego state* and the *child ego state*. These ego states are in no way related to the chronological age of a person. Thus, a teenager, a senior citizen, a kid, a boss, a subordinate or a CEO will have a parent, adult and child ego states in him or her. Depending on the ego state of a person responds accordingly. A person may be predominantly in the parent ego state, adult ego state or child ego state or child ego state, as per his/her upbringing and family background. Let us try and understand the characteristics of the various ego states.

### A. PARENT EGO STATE

Parent ("extero-psyche"): a state in which people behave, feel, and think in response to an unconscious mimicking of how their parents (or other parental figures) acted, or how they interpreted their parent's actions. For example, a person may shout at someone out of frustration because they learned from an influential figure in childhood the lesson that this seemed to be a way of relating that worked. When this ego state is in control, the individual is protective, controlling, nurturing, critical or instructive.

Thus, a person who is predominantly in this ego state will be the one who would

like to preach others in every possible instance, one who would like to give comments on everything, one who would like to guide others. Interactions in business would tend to revolve around policies, rules and standard procedures. Such a person is likely to provide an answer like “Procedures do not permit me to accept your offer directly” even when things are more or less in order. The parent ego state is further divided into two distinct types: *controlling* and *nurturing*.

Under the influence of controlling parent ego state a person puts down others and their opinion. A typical example is: “There are clear guidelines for collecting payments, please follow them.” A controlling parent ego state attacks the behavior and the personality of people and makes others feel uncomfortable. People will not like to deal with a person who is predominantly in the controlling parent ego state.

A person operating from the nurturing parent ego state, on the other hand, is understanding and caring about other people. A nurturing parent ego will tend to nurture a person so much that the person starts lacking confidence in himself. A typical example can be of a boss who insists on explaining every minute detail to a subordinate who is highly experienced in the work. For example, such a boss might say: “If you wish to participate in the tender, you must ensure that your reaches us within 15 days. Beyond that, the due date for the tender will expire and your offer cannot be accepted. You must prepare the tender and send it in a sealed envelope at least 5 days in advance through courier” to a highly experienced subordinate who knows the job in and out.

#### B. ADULT EGO STATE

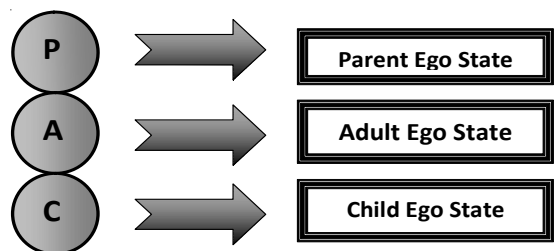
Adult (“neopsyche”) is a state of the ego which is most like a computer processing information and making predictions absent of major emotions that cloud its operation. Learning to strengthen the Adult is a goal of

TA. While a person is in the Adult ego state, he/she is directed towards an objective appraisal of reality.

When this ego state is in control, a person will depict rational, calculated, factual and unemotional behavior. Thus, a person predominantly in this ego state will be one who goes by calculations and looks into very other possibility, and makes rational, informed choices and decisions. Such a person will not hesitate to bend to bypass a rule it is a logical choice for him.

An answer like Confirm in writing your style of 20 photocopiers to large organizations and their satisfactory functioning, based on which only, I can give you this order or Only based on quality assurance reports of a reputed Test House, can I confirm your order can be expected out of such a person. The adult ego state is further divided into two distinct types: *photographic* and *compiling*. When the photographic adult ego state is in control, a person tried to find logic by looking at what others are doing. Example: “Everyone in the office has gone for a Nokia cello phone. It should be all right for me to do so also.”

On the other hand, in the compiling adult ego state, a person looks at all the compiled data and takes decisions or carries out analyses on the basis of that data. Example: “The customer feedback on our new product shows consistent approval. It should, be approved for a national launch.”



#### C. CHILD EGO STATE

Child (“archaeopsyche”) is a state in which people behave, feel and think similarly

to how they did in childhood. For example, a person who receives a poor evaluation at work may respond by looking at the floor, and crying or pouting, as they used to when scolded as a child. Conversely, a person who receives a good evaluation may respond with a broad smile and a joyful gesture of thanks. The Child is the source of emotions, creation, recreation, spontaneity and intimacy.

The child ego state is a reflection of the emotions in response to childhood experiences. These responses will be spontaneous, dependent, creative or rebellious. Such a person will be energetic, enthusiastic, trying out new things, and at times, be extremely rebellious to the group to which he belongs. This person will expect need for approval and immediate rewards which would carry an emotional tone.

Answers like *Why are you always giving these documents to me and There is so much work here and still nothing ever happens* are characteristic of such a person. Child ego state is further divided into three distinct types: natural, adaptive and rebellious.

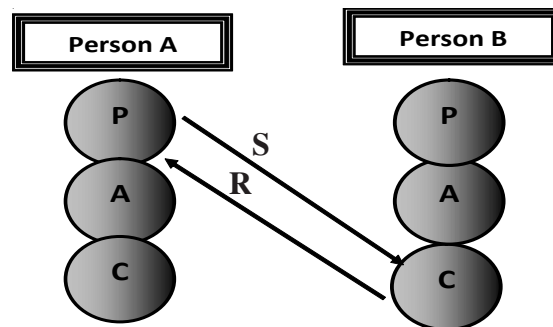
In the natural child ego state, a person adapts himself to the society and to the influence of others. For example, person in that state may be attending a meeting, which might be a useless one and he might have an urge to get away from there (natural child), but he sits quietly till the end of the meeting as all the superiors are there (adaptive child). This person is likely to make comments like "You told me to go out in the hot sun to collect the parcel, so I did not go."

A rebellious child ego state, as the name signifies, is of a person who does not obey rebels openly, creates confusion and deliberately disrupts functioning in the workplace. People operating under the rebellious child state will not do anything, even when an authority figure asks them to do so, or even if it makes perfect sense. Such people are extremely destructive and bad for the

office environment as a whole. Such a person can make comments like – Your saying so does not make this letter important. I'll deal with it later. TA suggests that the ego states of a person can be depicted through a diagram which is explain below. It depicts the personality of an individual.

Thus, the personality/behavior of a person can be diagrammatically represented by the three circles which depict the parent, adult and child ego states. Similarly, the personality of another person can also be depicted by a set of three circles. Thereafter, any transaction happening between the two of them can be in the communication of the receiver of the stimuli.

Similarly, the response of the receiver of the communication can also be mapped. In this manner, the complete transaction can be analysed as illustrated in the following figure:



where S indicates a stimulus and R indicates a response. It should be noted that transaction analysis is an online thing and a salesperson after learning TA can implement it successfully over any interaction.

A conversation is a series of transactions happening between the sender and receiver. Conversations are a mixture of reactions from parent, adult and child ego states of the person involved in it. Both the sender and the receiver keep on changing from one state to another. A good communicator is a healthy mix of all the three ego states. A predominantly parent is a very instructive and critical person who will tend to make the other person feel a lack of

confidence. A predominantly adult is a very calculate person who looks at logic always and thus will be boring person to deal with. A predominantly child is an impressive person who tends to make on-the-spot decisions, which might be ill-researched and may not hold in the long run

Each ego state has both positive and negative features. These are added or subtracted from an individual's personality. A person should carry a healthy mixture of all the three ego states. Thus the person should be instructive and authoritative (parent) while talking on an issue on which the person has expertise, have a calculative and a rational approach while making decisions (adult), and have an air of enthusiasm and liveliness around him generally (child). A good mixture in the three ego states of a person makes the person a well-groomed personality.

TA, as a method of understanding and analyzing transactions, has a key to play for sale persons. The salesperson in his day to day job has to interact with several kinds of people – all who are significantly different from each other. While communicating, a keen salesperson/negotiator should be able to understand the ego state that is in control of the other person by not only listening to what he/she is saying but also observing his/her tone, posture, gestures and facial expression (non-verbal communication). Thus the salesperson can adopt himself as required and emerge successful.

There might be a buyer who is extremely authoritative and critical (parent State) and treats all sales professionals in the child mode. In such case, it is best to either go to the child mode while talking to the buyer or to converse in a manner that enables the buyer to change stand and move into the adult mode which respect in an adult-to – adult interaction.

Thus, TA helps us understand the different types of behaviours and how best to

respond to them, by giving us an insight to the displayed behavior. The salesperson should understand that he, in the short time span of interaction, cannot change the attitude of the buyer. What the salesperson can do it so best understand the attitude and change his stance accordingly. Through TA, we get a guide to people attitudes. Attitudes assist in predicting how buyers may react or behave in response to different possible proposals. For example, if a person submits a price bid, and after one month revises the bid and drops the price to half the original value, it might evoke different type of responses from different buyers, like: One person might say it's good because less money needs to paid now. Another might say that it indicates that there will be a compromise in quality. A third person might say that it shows a newer, cheaper technology has been developed and put to use.

### 3. TYPES OF TA

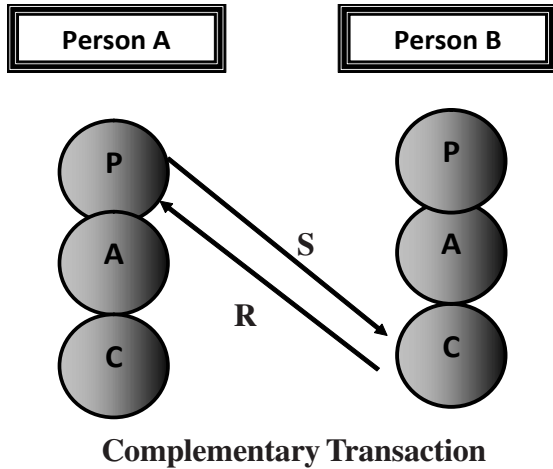
These three different comments on the same action stem from the different attitudes and beliefs that a person has. TA goes a long way to understand the implication of attitudes, behavior and the resulting action. There are two types of transactions which can happen between people:

#### A. COMPLEMENTARY OR PARALCEL TRANSACTION

When the ego states of sender and the receiver in a transaction are simply reversed in the response, then the resulting transaction is a complementary transaction. In this transaction, the same ego states respond to each other, receiver to sender and vice versa i.e. adult to adult or parent to child and then child to parent.

This primarily implies that there is a consistency in the understanding of the sender and the receiver, and thus, there is a harmony in the transaction. In a business

situation, a resulting transaction could be the General Manager saying “I want the reports of all the projects by today evening” and the project managers replying “Yes Sir. We will send it to you.” In this case a parent and adult are addressed in the stimuli and an adult and parent states are addressed in a response. Diagrammatically a transaction of this type would be depicted as under:



where S indicates a stimulus and R indicates a response. Two much of complementary transactions are detrimental to an organization. Imagine a case where a new product is designed, manufactured and marketed without proper market research, and the product is thereafter a non-starter in the market place. What will happen in the company? Every department will probably say that – I did what was told to me. Thus, there have been a lot of complementary transactions, which ended with disastrous results.

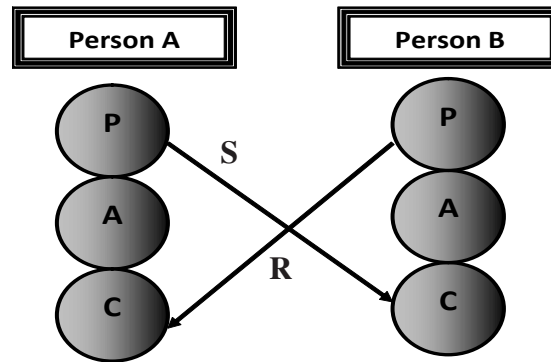
It does not in any way mean that complementary transactions are not good. They are the best transactions, and difficult to get. However, as the saying goes – too much of anything is not good. Complementary transaction reduces the chance of a conflict which, as we shall see later, might be detrimental in the long run for an organization.

**B. NON-COMPLEMENTARY TRANSACTION**

When the ego states of the sender/receiver are crossed in the response or are non parallel to each other, a non-complementary or crossed transaction may result. In this, the ego states do not respond to each other. Hence if the sender sends the stimulus from his parent ego state to the receiver’s child ego state and the receiver responds from his parent ego state to the senders’ child ego state, then a non-complimentary transaction takes place.

A typical case may be when a boss tells his subordinate “This is extremely important. Immediately drop all other activities and finish it first” and the subordinate replies “I need not be told what to do and I am fully aware of my priorities and this does not fit into my priorities”. In this case, a parent-to-child state was addressed in the stimuli and the parent-to-child state was addressed in a response. One can well imagine the reaction of such an altercation.

Diagrammatically, this non-complementary transaction is represented as under:



**Non-Complementary Transaction** where S indicates a stimulus and R indicates a response.

Non-complementary transactions lead to a breakdown of communication and, as a result, the desired outcome is not reached. However, a non-complementary transaction is a source of disagreement which might lead to conflict. A certain amount of conflict is desirable to evade the process of group-think or group-shift which sets up un

team. However, too much of non-complementary transactions led to a breakdown of teamwork.

A skilled salesperson will try to change the non-complementary transactions, if they are occurring between him and a prospective buyer, to complementary transactions so that the communication channel does not breakdown.

#### 4. TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

For a smooth transaction, which sustains communication that reaches the ultimate purpose, we must appreciate from which ego state a response/stimuli is generated and respond accordingly. A considerable amount of tact, skill and understanding of behavior is needed to change transactions from non-complementary to complementary ones. TA, as a skill, needs to be practised for long to be able to derive the full benefit of it.

While communication can be

maintained with any complementary transaction, the most effective is the adult-to-adult transaction, particularly in work situations. Thus, to arrive at a logical decision which is acceptable by both the parties involved in the transaction, an effort should be made by the salesperson to manipulate the buyer to the adult ego state so as to an adult-to-adult transaction level. Adult transactions help problem solving, improves understanding, as between equals.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

Transactional Analysis is the study of interactions between people; It helps in analyzing and understanding behavior. There are three predominant ego states in a person, namely parent, adult and child. The study of ego states – psychological positions – enables us to interact and communicate more effectively with people. While all the ego states have their own positive and negative attributes adult-to-adult transactions enable rational and effective communication to sustain. Salespersons must use TA skillfully to get across with people better.

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