

## Are You Motivated by Power, Relationships, or Achievement?

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

I have been restoring two old Aston Martins for probably close to a decade. I have had various parts of the cars repainted, new carpets and upholstery installed, the dashboards redone, and the engines rebuilt. I am not sure what got me interested in this project in the first place, but my efforts have been well rewarded; during the restoration of these cars I have had countless hours of enjoyment, and the cars have appreciated in value.

While you may be wondering how my restoring cars is relevant to your career and life, I have found that how people react to seeing a restored car is often a good indicator of what they are like in business and on the job. These two cars have helped me screen countless people for business deals, employment, and more.

All I need to do is have someone take a seat inside one of the cars and he or she will start opening up and giving me all sorts of insights into the sort of person he or she is. There are essentially three sorts of personalities that might emerge whenever someone takes a seat in the car. One personality type is concerned with power; another is concerned with relationships; and the third is concerned with achievement. If you take a moment to look at yourself and your work style, personal relationships, and so forth, you will soon discover that you are most likely motivated by one of these three primary motivators.

When I meet people who have sought me out to do [business deals](#), the most common sort of person I meet is someone who is concerned with power.

Within moments of taking a seat in the car, this type of person will start asking all sorts of questions about the value of the car, how much time it took to restore, how many of them are on the road, how much the car cost when it was new, and on and on. People concerned with power view cars as a symbol of power and status, and they can feel threatened and intimidated by anything that challenges their own power or status. Because these particular cars are quite valuable, after getting the answers to the above line of questioning, the person will generally start to feel a little threatened. The person might react by mentioning some perceived flaw, or some reason why he does not particularly care for the vehicle.

- Some people may start telling me about why they would never be interested in collecting an old car because their time is too valuable, and they have better things to do with their time.
- Some people may ask again about the price of the car and may indicate that they are [interested in purchasing](#) it from me (purchasing something valuable from someone is a way of exerting power of him or her).
- Some people will be critical of the car in several different ways and will likely start telling me why they could afford a similar car, for example, but they have purchased a toy that is even more significant.

Around Los Angeles, I have known at least two people over the past decade or so who purchased brand-new and very expensive cars that got badly scratched up by vandals with knives. I never really understood until recently why people would feel the need to scratch up someone else's car like that, but if you think about this, it actually makes perfect sense. Someone who views the world in terms of power and power relationships is likely to be threatened by a nice car; therefore, this person might put it down or even destroy it, so they can feel better than it.

With the Internet, people who are threatened by others can also go on message boards and do anonymous postings, for example, to attack people they are threatened by and to attempt to lessen their reputation in the eyes of others. This scenario is no different from someone who is carving up a new car in the street with a knife. Both of these are efforts people make to feel power over those whom they feel otherwise threatened by.

For many people, cars represent power. There are many people who are extremely concerned with power relationships, and their obsession with maintaining power can even be comical. Have you ever known someone who seems to perceive everyone around him or her as an opponent, someone to be dominated in some form or another? The domination could be mental or physical, for example.

When I was in [law school](#), I started working in New York City. I had people from my hometown in Michigan come visit me there during the summers. I remember that those visitors who were "power people" expressed great concern about how everything in New York seemed, compared to how things were back in Michigan.

- If we went to the theater, they would say: "We have a theater too, and it is more comfortable and easier to see the people on stage because it is smaller."
- If we went to a restaurant, they would mention several better restaurants that were located in Michigan.
- Once inside my apartment, these people would go on and on about how I could get a larger and nicer apartment back in Michigan for a better price.

This is just how power people are with most things. Power people do not like anything that they feel is a threat to their perceived power. The idea of someone they know living in a larger city is a sort of threat to the power and influence of the person. Power people see the world as a highly competitive place in which people are constantly struggling for power and influence over others.

Power people will tell you how they won an argument, and they might talk about this for days. Power people are incredibly competitive, tend to be extremely focused on themselves, and have a hard time identifying with others. Power people love to be seen as people who *step up* and take control of various situations.

Have you ever known someone who seems to be motivated by being in power over other people, places, and things? They seem to view every human interaction as a struggle for power. There are people like this all over and they make up a good proportion of society.

- People who are concerned with power are more interested in giving orders than taking them.
- People who are concerned with power have no qualms with yelling at people who upset them.
- People who are concerned with power become quite upset when things do not go their way or people do not listen to them.
- People who are concerned with power may create problems with others just for the sake of creating problems, and then attempting to assert dominance.

Power people are everywhere. They are good for some jobs and not others. For example, if you are a power person, you need to understand that there are numerous jobs you simply will never be comfortable or happy doing. The need to feel in power and to have power over other people is just a part of who you are. There is nothing wrong with this but you need to be in a position and in a job that makes the most of this characteristic of your personality. You are likely never going to change.

The second type of person who takes a seat in my car views checking out the car as an opportunity to establish a relationship. When this person sees you are sharing something that is important to you, he or she will feel happy and excited--not necessarily about the car, but about the fact that you are providing them with an opportunity to deepen his or her relationship with you. Relationship people are strongly motivated by creating and maintaining positive relationships. They like or dislike people based on whether or not the people help them to create good relationships. Being included in relationship-forming activities is very important to these sorts of people.

When someone concerned with relationships takes a seat in the car and we start driving, he or she will start saying things like, "It is so cool that you are showing this to me" and, "I really feel included." Relationship people will not be the least bit intimidated or competitive when checking out the car. While we are driving, they might talk about other people they know who also like cars and suggest that the two of us be introduced to one another. A few days after showing the person my car, he or she might forward me the contact information of another person who likes cars and suggest we get together. This person will also tell me how much fun she or he had and thank me for "including them" by showing them my car.

- People who are interested primarily in relationships enjoy spending their time with people they are close to. In fact, the largest priority for relationship-based people typically revolves around spending time with the people they like or love.
- People who are interested primarily in relationships, are more focused on others than themselves.
- People who are interested primarily in relationships are rarely confrontational with others.
- People who are interested primarily in relationships are not interested in spending time with people who are overly competitive, power hungry, or not nice.
- People who are interested in relationships want to excel in work and other activities in order to please others and to develop a better relationship with them--not necessarily so that they can earn more money, get more power, or become more successful.
- People who are interested in relationships feel a deep-seated need to be appreciated by others.

A relationship person is likely to be good at some jobs and not others. A relationship person typically is a very good employee but will not be overly competitive or all that interested in managing others in anything but a cooperative way. This type of person tends to be much more focused on getting along with others, harmony, friendship, teamwork, and so forth--and not as much with authority, for example.

It is important that you identify it, if this is the precise sort of person you are, because you are unlikely to be happy if you are in a position or job that is not making use of your natural interest in getting along with others. I have in the past promoted relationship people to jobs that required them to ruthlessly manage various aspects of businesses--and they found themselves often taken advantage of. Since a relationship person is most interested in harmony, it is not a good idea to put relationship people in a position in which they are required to see the worst in people, fire people, and so forth. This sort of job is better for a power person.

The third type of person who will take a seat in my car is the type A, achievement- minded person. Have you ever known someone who seems to be completely motivated by success? These people set all sorts of goals and are generally opposed to anyone or anything that prevents them from succeeding. They are interested in success personally, professionally, and in just about everything they do. People like this are focused on accomplishment--no matter what the cost is.

When an achievement person takes a seat in my car, he or she will typically start asking all sorts of questions about the car. However, in most cases, after learning about the car this person will start saying things like:

- "Have you taken the car to any shows or competitions?"
- "Is this wood on the dashboard the original wood?"
- "How much does it cost for the best possible paint job?"
- "Was the leather on this hand-stitched?"
- "How did you prioritize what sort of work to do on the car?"
- "What is the next project you have planned for the car?"
- "Are the others cars like this out there as high quality as this one?"

Each of the questions is geared, in one way or another, toward understanding how much has been accomplished with the car. As you are driving along with an achievement-oriented person, he or she will ask all sorts of questions to assess how the car "pans out" and how you "pan out," in terms of the restoration work that you have done.

Someone who is motivated by achievement is interested in making sure that things are of the best possible quality. For example, you could pop the hood and explain how some complex welding was done on a certain part under the hood, and explain how this is different from how it is done on other cars--and the person would be impressed. If he or she were to see you as someone who is obsessed with details and perfection and making the car the absolute best it possibly could be, that would also be impressive. Because achievement-oriented people are competitive, they like things and people to be the best they possibly can be.

Achievement-oriented people like tasks. They like goals and they like setting priorities. They think in terms of goals, tasks, and priorities, and when you speak with them they say things like:

- "My goals for this year include ..."

- "My first order of business is to ..."

Last night my wife and I went to look at a preschool for our daughter. My wife enjoyed something that she heard during a presentation the preschool gave:

"We want our kids to be competitive with themselves and not other kids."

People that are achievement-oriented are more concerned with competing with themselves than with others. People who are power-motivated, on the other hand, are more interested in being more powerful than others, and therefore are in competition with others. Achievement-oriented people are interested in success, in being experts; they are ambitious, set goals for getting ahead, respect competence, have missions, and think in terms of what they can accomplish and attain. These people often make good entrepreneurs.

If you are motivated by achievement, you probably do not like lazy people. You believe that others should constantly be motivated to do things better, just as you are. When they evaluate others, achievement people look at what people have accomplished. For example, an achievement-oriented person is likely to be very concerned with what school someone went to and how well the person did there.

In your career it is important that you understand and realize whether or not you are mostly motivated by power, relationships, or achievement. You need to be in a job that allows you to thrive with whatever your particular personality style is. Failure often comes to people simply because they are in a job, or company, that requires them to be motivated by a particular style--when they are not.

You should ask yourself which sorts of people you get along with best. You should consider your favorite activities. It is incredibly important that you are in a position that makes the most of your particular outlook and approach to the world.

### **THE LESSON**

There are three universal motivators; power, relationships, and achievement. It is very important that you determine which of these three things motivate you, and seek a career that caters to this distinct personality type. Question yourself to understand your personality style, and position yourself to make the most of this personality and outlook.

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