



## Common Incident Personalities

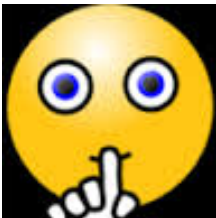
In emergency response we have experienced a number of personalities that show themselves in a crisis situation. The crisis doesn't matter; these personalities show up when stress is high. So when operating on an IT incident, these are the people who show up on the bridge, or video chat. Which one(s) are you, and which ones can you identify? We have provided the personality traits and then how the Incident Commander can handle the personality. Let us know if you know of any others and we can add them to the list.

### 1. The Awesome Contributor



- Arrives in a timely fashion
- If operating on a bridge, ensures their work environment is quiet
- Speaks up and speaks clearly
- Is specific, direct and factual
- Respects the IC timeline for assigned tasks
- Will request more help if he or she needs it
- Stays focused on the event

### 2. The Quiet One



- May be uncomfortable speaking up in a group
- Little interaction on a bridge unless called out specifically or a natural pathway is created for their contribution.
- May be reserved but invaluable

#### *IC Tactic:*

- Don't forget about or discount the Quiet One as uninterested or unqualified based on the amount of interaction.
- Ask direct questions of the Quiet One by name/function to create an entry point for them to participate in the conversation.
- If Quiet Ones are being rolled over in the discussion, take action to give them airtime!



### 3. The Naysayer



- Typically, outspoken with a large personality
- Frequently comes across as negative
- Often cites past history as justification why a current idea/plan etc. won't work
- May be a dissenting opinion for the sake of dissention. Finds many reasons why something won't work but few reasons why it will
- Often “what if’s” all plans or ideas to the extreme
- May be entrenched in their own position and defend it at all costs.

#### *IC Tactic:*

- The Naysayer isn't always wrong so beware of discounting the issues raised just because they may be difficult to deal with
- Require specificity when Naysayers throw up obstacles or dissention
- Don't engage in verbal sparring
- May need to tell a Naysayer they are in a minority opinion on a topic or idea and that the response must move forward. Remember consensus is not always possible on every action taken during a response.

### 4. The Overbearing One



- Frequently identified in the organization as a “know it all”
- Like the Naysayer, overbearing people typically have large personalities
- Put people on the defensive
- Can't or won't see other perspectives.
- Can't seem to be agreeable without some caveat or reason
- May be a person that commonly likes to push buttons and/or push limits
- Quick to make decisions and may be impulsive



- May not easily accept being wrong or that others are making contributions that appear to be more useful

*IC Tactic:*

- Stay calm and don't engage in verbal or written sparring
- Beware of very opinionated suggestions that may be more colorful and grandiose than helpful
- Use other response participants to help evaluate the offering of an overbearing person
- Avoid pointing out directly that an Overbearing One is wrong
- May be useful to assign tasks to an Overbearing One that takes them off the main communications channel

## 5. The Over Explainer



- Intelligent, competent and talented
- Gives lengthy explanations anytime a question is asked (tells you how watches are made when you ask what time it is!)
- Adds personal stories or historical background to descriptions or explanations that may or may not be relevant
- Not overtly disruptive but may be stealing time away with needless detail

*IC Tactic:*

- Recognize the Over Explainer and keep them in check. Interrupt if need be once the required information is obtained
- Many Over Explainers don't recognize the behavior pattern in themselves
- Beware when two over explainers are engaged. They may take you on a detailed journey that may or may not be useful!
- It might be useful to give them a timeline prior to asking a question. An example might go something like this, "Mary, it sounds like we need to get an opinion on this message que lag, can you explain that to me in a minute or less?"



## 6. The Joker



- Constantly injecting humor or non-relevant comments in to the conversation just like a class clown
- Doesn't make the switch from Peacetime to Wartime and in some cases prevents the entire response from making the switch
- Typically loves attention
- Most have high self-esteem and are usually good problem solvers

### *IC Tactic:*

- Limit The Joker's opportunities to disrupt
- If behavior persists, be direct in reminding The Joker to stay focused
- While this personality may not seem toxic to a response effort, be careful not to indulge The Joker or encourage the behavior

## 7. The Uncertain Contributor



- May be hard to pin down when looking for specific information or recommendations
- Frequently needs more time to “check one more thing” before taking action
- The higher the stakes, the higher the level of uncertainty
- Frequently uses hedging or uncertain language when offering opinions or recommendations. You might hear words like “maybe”, “perhaps”, “it could be”, or “it might”
- The Uncertain Contributor may fall in to trying to find perfect or 100% certainty even when it's not possible or practical to do so

### *IC Tactic:*

- Demand specificity and accuracy
- May phrase questions to the Uncertain Contributor that only require yes or no answers
- With this personality (and the others for that matter), ask one question and get on answer. Avoid long or complicated questions that allow the Uncertain Contributor to pick and choose what part of the question he or she might answer. Think specifically about what information you want and ask questions as simply and direct as possible



- Involve other technical experts to bolster the Uncertain Contributor and/or corroborate or even refute their opinions and/or recommendations.

## 8. The Gunslinger



- The Gunslinger is talented, knowledgeable, valuable to the organization and *knows it!*
- The company may reinforce The Gunslinger's Wartime value and role in Peacetime activities
- The Gunslinger is often called specifically because he or she has built a reputation as a key problem solver and "go to" person.
- Others typically are hesitant to challenge The Gunslinger because they are often right and generally have a large personality and don't tolerate competition well

### *IC Tactic:*

- Don't confuse the confidence of The Gunslinger with his or her ability to get to the right answer
- Take steps to prevent The Gunslinger from informally assuming the role of IC and taking over the response effort.
- As with The Uncertain SME, it may be wise to structure questions in such a way as not to provide a stage for The Gunslinger to take over the response effort.
- This personality is challenging in that it may be difficult to distinguish a key person with unique knowledge, skill or talent from the Gunslinger personality. Gunslingers may be more intimidating than helpful.



## 9. The Interrupter



- Bursts in to the middle of conversations. May have been lurking on a conference bridge or other communications channel prior to interrupting
- Routinely cuts off others during a conversation
- Interrupters typically aren't good listeners. They generally are only waiting for their turn to talk rather than carrying on a two-way conversation.

### *IC Tactic:*

- Keep the interrupter in check by observing and remarking on the behavior early.
- Interrupters can usually be kept in check by bringing up the behavior and commenting directly to the person that they interrupting conversations and to wait for their turn to enter the discussion.

## 10. The Grenade Thrower



- May derail a plan or line of thinking after decisions have been made
- Create doubt and divert attention from the main points or plan with “what if’s” to the point that nothing looks like a good idea
- This personality is difficult to recognize because raising objections and or “what if” points are healthy when done at the right time and for the right reasons
- Person may not recognize this tendency in themselves and doesn't see the behavior as distracting

### *IC Tactic:*

- If it appears that the Grenade Thrower has lobbed a distraction, refocus the discussion with a CAN report and stick to the verifiable facts. Facts are kryptonite to The Grenade Thrower
- Grenade Throwers often cite the possibility of a positive or negative outcome as justification for actions. The IC should acknowledge all possibilities, but keep the group focused on probabilities. Possible outcomes can be initially measured by yes or no. Example, is it possible that an asteroid will crash in to the earth and cause massive damage. The answer is yes, of course, because it is untrue to say it's impossible. It has happened before and even though it's been millennia since the event, it did happen and is therefore possible, although the chances are minimal. If the answer is no to a possibility question than the issue is solved right there. Example: is it possible



to walk across the ocean? The answer is no, which makes any further discussion of the event irrelevant and nothing more than an interesting thought experiment at most. 'Probable' may be interchanged in this context is with the word likely, indicating a strong sense that the event or consequence may occur. An event may be possible but not likely, which is where The Grenade Thrower may base an opinion or argument or justification. If needed, an IC can help defeat the Grenade Thrower by distinguishing between possible and likely when sorting through options or dissention on a particular course of action. An IC may poll the response group and ask if a particular outcome to an action is 'possible' or 'likely'. Anything possible becomes some degree of likely. The groups can then rank the likely events on a 1 to 10 scale with 1 being less likely and 10 being most likely

## 11. The Chicken Little



- Views every incident as a catastrophe
- Tends to focus on worst case scenario viewpoints
- Creates unhealthy sense of urgency amongst responders
- Typically conservative when it comes to taking action

### *IC Tactic:*

- Keep responders focused on efforts being taken to solve problem
- Refer to the probable versus likely thinking outlined in the Grenade Thrower personality in order to keep a sense of reality
- Avoid letting the Chicken Little take the response off course.

## 12. The Bridge Lurker



- Calls into conference bridge or other communications channel without identifying that he or she is there
- Won't participate until they believe it is necessary and then The Lurker chimes in without warning

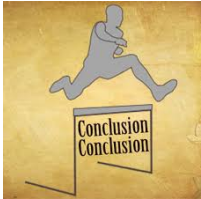
### *IC Tactic:*

- Acknowledge and ensure that everyone responder is identified when arriving to participate



- On longer incidents, conduct a Personnel Accountability Report (PAR) to identify all persons on the incident. This is a good practice for operational security (making sure who has access to the communications channel should have access to the communications channel – you never know who may be listening unless you take steps to find out!)
- It's okay for persons to join your response and stand by without contributing but as the IC, you should always know who is participating

### 13. The Jumper (to conclusions)



- Quick to arrive at a conclusion without fully investigating a situation, idea, thought etc.
- The Jumper may be right or wrong but one thing is for sure, they jump quick
- The Jumper may be very experienced and relies on that body of experience to make quick decisions. Again, The Jumper may often be right based on inference (something believed to be true based on previous experience). Beware, however, because this is not always the case. The goal of incident response decision making is to make the best decision in the shortest amount of time, not just make quick decisions

#### *IC Tactic:*

- Ensure that all responders are clear when discussing facts (able to be proven true or false) or opinions (something not measured against an objective standard)
- Keep The Jumper (and everyone else for that matter) focused on fact based decision making as much as possible
- The IC should always be evaluating information and placing in the fact, inference or opinion category in order to weight it correctly in the decision making process

### 14. The Tunnel Rat



- Typically takes a very narrow point of view or has focus on a single priority
- Difficult to move them off their position even in the face of compelling evidence
- May exhibit confirmation bias (take in, use or interpret only the information that favorably supports his or her position, belief, etc.)
- May ignore or downplay information that does not support their position





*IC Tactic:*

- Don't engage in a circular discussion with the Tunnel Rat. He or she may only find new or different information to support a position
- IC may "agree to disagree" on a particular point and move on
- Be factual as much as possible in order to avoid the Tunnel Rat to speculate or form opinions that cannot be verified.

**15. The Candy Crusher**

- Is not focused and is distracted by other things, which may nor may not be work related.
- Does not have a sense of urgency
- Is frequently not responsive when the IC or other SME asks them a question.
- Is frequently hears saying "can you repeat that"

*IC Tactic:*

- Keep responders focused on efforts to solve the problem
- Call them out to focus their attention to the problem
- Keep tight parameters on the time aspect and keep them on a tight time leash
- Require that they repeat back the request that you made of them to ensure they are clear on their direction

**Note: We are not professional psychologists and these personalities are not offered as character assassinations, or intended to be derogatory in any way. It's simply a reminder that there are a lot of big opinionated personalities in the IT field. If you are an Incident Commander and you recognize that one of these personalities (or the many more that exist) are present and adversely impacting the entire response effort, do something about it and restore a positive and directed tone to the response!**