

DO YOU UNDERSTAND SALES PSYCHOLOGY?



Understanding the psychology of sales is crucial to any business wanting to remain competitive in the 21st century. For a salesperson, superior selling skills are the difference between earning a good income and struggling to pay the bills each month. The sales force of any organisation is its backbone. A company may have the best product or service in the world, but if they don't know how to sell their offering, the majority will never know about it or get to experience it.

Despite the crucial role that sales plays in the success of a business, most salespeople are trained 'on the job' and do not receive any formal or ongoing training in their field. They believe they are trying hard to sell their company's product and when they don't achieve a sale, they chalk it up to 'bad luck'. These salespeople do not understand sales techniques or the psychology of selling. In fact, the majority of salespeople are in this group. It is a well-known statistic that in professions where sales is the key to revenue, 5% of the salespeople earn 95% of the money. How do they do this?

Brian Tracy, a world leader in the psychology of achievement and sales strategy, says that to become a top salesperson, you must do your work: study your craft, analyse your industry, gather knowledge, position yourself, look at your market, prepare yourself, prospect and make appointments. Professional salespeople know that they are actually problem-solvers. They employ an important technique called gap analysis.

BECOME A PROBLEM SOLVER

Understanding gap analysis and applying its principles are the keys to sales success. A sale is only possible when a problem exists. In this sense, customers buy solutions, not products. A salesperson helps identify the customer's problem and then offers the solution. With their product or service, the salesperson is able to bridge the gap between the customer's current situation and the desired outcome. These gaps between the actual and the ideal are opportunities to increase productivity or decrease cost.

According to Mark Garbelotto of the Australian Sales Academy in Melbourne, gap analysis is a highly effective technique that puts the salesperson in the role of 'problem seeker' and 'problem solver'. If you can identify the problems that a prospect is experiencing, they will realise their need for a solution (i.e. your product). In addition, listening to the prospect will build trust, show that you care and ultimately, you will build a healthy relationship with your new customer.

Garbelotto used gap analysis extensively with an Australia-wide importing company over a 2.5 hour, problem-focused interview which was aimed at uncovering the challenges that their sales professionals were experiencing. He developed and utilised a questionnaire that clearly highlighted the gaps between their ideal and actual results. Following this, Garbelotto presented a profitable and cost-effective solution that would not only solve their problems, but meet their desire to increase profits.

PREPARE YOUR QUESTIONS

Gap analysis is the art of asking questions in a general-to-specific order as a means of uncovering the wants and needs of a prospect. According to Tracy, a salesperson should not talk about the features and benefits of their product without first understanding the gap that their product can narrow for the customer.

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Pascal Martin of Pascal Martin Consulting in Brisbane, agrees that gap questions are vital for controlling the conversation of the sales process, raising buying desire and, importantly, for positioning the salesperson as a professional. Martin cites as an example, a major plumbing supply company in Queensland that he trained using Brian Tracy's Advanced Selling Skills seminar program.

As a result of the sales training, the plumbing supply company developed their own set of gap questions which allowed them to position themselves as the preferred supplier to new clients. They were also able to generate higher sales from existing clients by discovering previously unfulfilled needs, even in a price-driven market.

In addition, the formal training gave their junior reps the confidence to be aggressive in winning new accounts, which is something they had previously never done. Martin confirms that in terms of sales psychology, the skilful questioning process of gap analysis brings clients' emotional needs and wants to the surface, and thereby fuels and facilitates the sales processes.

CUSTOMERS BUY SOLUTIONS

The role of the salesperson is to uncover the customer's need. Product and industry knowledge help a salesperson identify the gaps that their products and services can fill for the client. What kind of gaps do your products help to resolve? What solutions do your products offer? How do you package your solution to appear cost-effective? You must build a list of questions and sequence them from general to specific, then paint a word picture of the value that the customer gets from using your product or service. Offer a third party reference from another customer you helped that was in a similar situation. Clarity is critical.

Some real-life examples of these questions and responses (condensed below) come from Bram Lagrou of Xsell Partners International in Adelaide. In competing for a training contract with a major commercial cleaning services company, he focussed on three areas that ultimately won him the deal.

- **What would be the desired outcomes of investing in your staff?**
A boost in staff motivation, effective delegation, better leadership in the workplace, improved self-management of staff and team management.
- **How would you assess the return on investment?**
Key staff being empowered and being more positive, taking ownership of the job, and thereby freeing up management to focus on other tasks instead of constantly overseeing staff.
- **Price aside, what would make you choose one provider over the other?**
Drive, eagerness in wanting to do business with us, positive personality, business flair and accountability.

In this instance, Lagrou earned the client's business by asking the right questions, understanding the customer's needs and having a positive, can-do attitude toward solving the challenges.

KNOW YOUR PRODUCT & INDUSTRY

Sales training specialist Mary Burton of Apprise Solutions in Melbourne, stresses that salespeople must keep aware of the changes in different market sectors. With internet shopping on the rise, for example, retailers need to recognise opportunities where sales are being missed. With shoppers going into stores, checking out products and then going home to buy them online, there is a huge gap between the actual and desired outcomes for retail owners.

Often, the owner is not aware that the salesperson is not even asking for the customer's business.

In her training practice, Burton has successfully used audits, surveys and coalface observation as tools which can be utilised to compare desired performance versus actual performance. These methods, in addition to the questioning process, are excellent indicators of identifying the gaps that exist between the actual results in a workplace or individual performance and the ideal or preferred outcomes that businesses are seeking. Burton says that gap analysis can be an ongoing process for supporting clients and their staff and for developing positive and continual improvements.

BEST SALESPEOPLE USE GAP ANALYSIS

Customer dissatisfaction is what leads to sales. A salesperson's job is to expose the source of the client's problem and offer the solution. People want to buy solutions. In order to uncover the problem, an effective salesperson uses gap analysis to show how their product can narrow the gap between the actual and desired result for their customer.

The technique of gap analysis is an important element of a successful sales strategy. Top salespeople study their craft and you or your sales team can stay competitive in today's market with Brian Tracy's advanced selling programs. His strategies are straightforward, and proven to achieve immediate and long-lasting results. These popular, interactive seminar programs have had four million graduates.

Andrew Phillips is the CEO of Brian Tracy International in Australia. His organisation has over 20 Accredited Licensees and offices all around Australia. Mark Garbelotto, Pascal Martin, Bram Lagrou and Mary Burton are Brian Tracy Licensees. Call 1800 634 227 or visit www.briantracyanz.com