

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SALES

by Johan de Villiers | Enspire Consulting



Johan is a corporate executive with over 20 years experience in the marketing, sales & operational arena. He was CEO and national marketing director for Enterprise Connection (Pty) Ltd, before selling the company to a JSE listed IT-player in 2006. Johan has contributed to a range of business publications, including Acumen, ITWeb and Intelligence magazine. One of his many passions includes travelling and as a result he has summited Kilimanjaro, explored Mountain Gorilla's in Rwanda and over landed through Africa. In addition to that, Johan is also a qualified helicopter pilot.

He currently consults on business development and marketing to a range of corporate and SME clients. His next adventure will be trekking to Everest Base Camp in 2010.

Visit www.enspireconsulting.co.za or email johan@enspireconsulting.co.za for more information.

One of the key factors that should be taken into account is a company's commitment to continual sales training of their brokers, account managers or sales executives. Training is sadly an incurred expense that is normally first to be cancelled by the financial powers that be, when the pressure is on to perform and margins are shrinking. This is normally followed shortly by the marketing budget, which are common mistakes made by companies in a down turned economy. Empowering your sales staff with knowledge leads to two direct benefits to the company, being:

- A direct indication to the sales team that their services and skill set is valued by the company and deserves direct investment; thus leading to a retention effect
- The additional knowledge transferred, equips the sales person with additional resources to enable a higher closure rate, thus leading to an increased performance and resultantly, profit.

Significantly, when asked what the primary motivators for a client to purchase are, few sales executives or account managers can correctly identify them. It is vital for an account manager, sales representative or broker to understand the psychology involved when a human being decides to make a buying decision. Every person has one or more of the following purchase triggers that you need to appeal to:

- Power
- Achievement
- Recognition
- Association
- Safety
- Order

Selling to a financial director for instance, would entail changing the sales pitch to highlight benefits that would appeal to the more conservative thinker in terms of safety and order. E.g. this product will save the company money; ensure greater safety against hacking attacks or protect the integrity of data on the company webserver.

On the other hand, selling to a confident managing director would entail addressing the features and benefits from a power and achievement perspective. E.g. this package or solution will increase productivity, improve bottom line results or ensure a competitive advantage over your competitors.

Getting somebody in an administrative or technical position to buy into the unique selling proposition could potentially entail various combinations of recognition and association on the one side, coupled with safety and order.

Given the above, it would be beneficial to the broker or sales executive to understand the key criteria for any organization to make a decision, as opposed to a personal choice. Companies worldwide, make purchasing decision on one or more of only three different criteria, being:

- Image
- Financial
- Performance

Selling to the board of directors of Investec would possibly entail all three of the above factors, with an emphasis on Financial and Performance. However, pitching for the Shell account would entail putting a direct emphasis on Image for instance, in terms of social awareness and environmentally friendly concerns.

Equipping your sales or broker team with this kind of knowledge puts them in a better position to evaluate their prospective clients, thus making their forecasting more accurate and ensuring the correct focussed approach required on an individual and company basis are made.

Finally, expanding on the client psychological aspect once again, brokers' or sales executives' motivation will increase if their knowledge base expands in terms of profiling the character types of the different clients that they interact with on a daily basis. There are broadly four generically accepted character profiles in use today, to categorize every individual that they come across. Although the very nature of this article emphasizes the sales environment, it can be applied to just about any facet of life:

ASKING TELLING

SCIENTIST	DIRECTOR
AMIABLE	EMOTIVE

Referring to the enclosed quadrant, most character types can be defined into one of the above blocks.

The DIRECTOR type of individuals are normally key decision makers, such as company directors, executives etc. They are easily identifiable and will display the following characteristics:

- Little emotion involved in decision-making.
- Very blunt and direct
- Decisive
- Will "tell" people what to do

Never "bore" this kind of client with technical details and specifications. Ensure that you understand his needs upfront and if you comply, the order is guaranteed to be yours. Short sales cycle and good for pressure close.

The EMOTIVE type of individuals are normally involved in sales or marketing, such as sales managers, marketing executives etc. They will display the following behavioral patterns:

- Extroverted individuals
- Social animals, very emotive.
- Uses hands and eyes to express themselves
- Never clinical or even keeled. Either "up" or "down" for the day.
- Will "tell" people what to do, once again.

Ensure that you match their level of animation and infectious behavior and do not be shy on the entertainment and social side of things. Once again, short sales cycle and impulse buying decision.

The SCIENTIST type of individuals is normally involved in technical, engineering, R&D, financial or an administrative role. Purchasing managers, accountants, technical managers etc fit this profile. They will display the following behavioral patterns.:

- Interested in the detail level. Specifications, features, benefits.
- Asks a lot of questions.
- Takes a long time to make a decision
- Very analytical
- Reserved in terms of displaying emotion

Ensure that the above kind of customers gets as much specs sheets, details, case studies,

references sites as possible. Basically, overload on info and they will eventually make a decision. Expect a long sales cycle and never try to pressure close.

The AMIABLE type of individuals are the most difficult to sell to that your sales team will ever come across.

- Asks a lot of questions.
- Hates confrontation
- Vague to commit
- Uncertain about levels of authority
- Doesn't like making enemies, unpopular decisions
- Strong need for association and recognition
- Never rocks the boat.

These kinds of individuals are difficult to identify as they can be found in any cross section or position within a company. Typically they make a safe decision that would not entail any level of confrontation. Pander and stroke but insist on a pressure close or you will be throwing resources, time and money at this for a very long time with a negative result guaranteed. PS: Never, ever employ this type of individual in a sales or marketing capacity. It is virtually impossible for them to sell.

Until next time, happy selling and remember at the end of the day, a motivated broker team is critical to the success of your business. Go spend that training money!

