**Selling With Certainty – Four Ways to Sell More Books to Corporate Buyers**

**by Brian Jud**

Numerous studies over the years have concluded that people who are certain of their beliefs are more likely to buy, buy sooner and spend more. These findings can help you sell more of your books to corporate buyers.

Viscerally, it makes sense. You are probably more likely to make a purchase if you are confident that you are making the right choice. It is a gut feeling, a sense that you are doing the right thing that makes you comfortable plowing ahead. You can get your buyers to feel the same about you and your book, too. And you can do all that not by using advanced sales techniques, but by being objective, building consensus, reinforcing a positive message, and building your credibility.

**Objectivity**. Buyers are naturally suspect of a salesperson’s pitch. They listen and evaluate your comments in real time. Your words reinforce their beliefs, and they become more confident in their decision – whether to buy or not to buy.

A prospect’s default position is skepticism, since most people assume you will present all the good points about your book’s content while you ignore or gloss over its drawbacks. If you present it objectively, with a list of its benefits and limitations, buyers are more likely to believe what you are saying and view your pitch favorably.

For example, a list of all five-star reviews for your book is less believable than a combination of three, four, and five-star reviews. A two-star review might actually be more credible and persuasive if written like this: “This book has unique, valuable information, delivered clearly and completely. However, I found the long list of acknowledgements off-putting.”

Similarly, your sales presentation should describe the pros and cons of your proposal, but describe the limitation in a way that is actually a positive feature. For example, a dog-food manufacturer may have a problem with poor sales of its 20-pound bags of dog food.

Begin with a demonstration of how your content can help them increase their sales by including a free copy of your dog-care book in each bag. Follow this by saying, “However, my content does have its limitations. It describes only the nutritional benefits for dogs, and not for other animals.” Your limitation becomes a positive factor, increasing their certainty of their mounting optimistic feelings.  In any case, do not say, “In all honesty, I should point out…” because your prospects might wonder why you are suddenly becoming “honest.” That will reduce their confidence in what you are saying.

**Consensus**. Business decision makers, like most people, tend to follow the crowd — especially if the person leading the crowd is their boss. Get people to play “follow the leader” by helping the top managers validate your proposal and become a favorable influence on the others.

Listen closely to what those people say. If it is positive, get them to repeat or expand upon it. The boss might say, “I can see how that could help us.” Follow up by saying, “In what ways do you mean?” By saying the plural “ways” you are presuming there are more ways than one. Or, if the leader says, “That’s interesting, I never thought of it that way.” You would say, “If we do it like that, how will that be better than the other way?” Note that by saying, “If we do it…” you are including yourself on their team. Now it’s you and them against the competition.

If the comment is negative, you have to turn it around, but not by proving the person wrong. Reduce tension and give some objective proof to the contrary. This will give the naysayers a way to change their mind while saving face. Say something like, “That’s an interesting (not a “good”) point, Ms. Jones, and I’m glad you brought it up. In fact, others have felt that way. But once they became aware of this survey they agreed that it actually demonstrates my point. Does that make sense?” Do not ask people to admit that they were wrong, but that given this new information they can agree that you are correct. You might even take the blame for not introducing the survey before.

1. **Reinforcement**. Marketers know the power of repeating a beneficial message to a target audience. The more people hear it, the more likely they are to remember and act upon it. A related effect occurs when people repeatedly express their own opinions. Not only does it increase their confidence in their views, “it increases their certainly about their position, and therefore, their willingness to promote, defend and act on it.” [1]

You have been asked to make a presentation to a company’s decision makers because one or more people believe that you have a potential solution to their business problem. Ask your allies to introduce you by stating their positive opinions of your content and proposal. That puts their stake in the ground as supporting you. Similarly, as others make affirmative statements, you could say, “Would you please repeat that so everyone can hear you?” As each person states an encouraging comment, it builds your support network one by one.

When you answer a question, or respond to an objection, always get confirmation that your reply satisfied them. Ask, “Did I address your concern adequately?” Or, “Do you agree?” Then at the end of your presentation summarize all the points of agreement before asking a committing question. Say, “It seems as if there are no more questions, correct?” Before we conclude, let’s review the major points we have discussed and agreed. First … “

**4. Build your credibility**. More goes into building buyer’s certainty than your words. The way you deliver your message vocally and visually influences their belief that you are (or are not) a credible source of information.

Project assurance in the way you speak. Do not talk too quickly, maintain good volume, enunciate words properly, and add inflection when you want people to pay attention to them.

There have been volumes written on the impact of your body language on the way your message is perceived. As a general summary, greet each person with a firm handshake, dress appropriately, sustain eye communication, maintain good posture and make your movement fluid and purposeful.

If you use visual aids, do not depend on them to communicate your message, but to enhance it. Use the proper aid (PowerPoints, handouts, etc.) as needed to maximize your impact and memorability.

Selling books in large quantities to corporate buyers does not require you to be a well-trained, highly skilled salesperson. You can be more successful simply understanding human nature. People want to make correct choices, and they need some help from you to make them feel confident that they are doing the right thing by placing an order with you. Be objective in your presentation, build consensus among the decision makers, reinforce their positive comments and build your credibility by making a professional presentation using your best verbal, vocal, and visual communication skills.

[1] Harvard Business Review, September 2015, page 101