**How to Sell More Books to Any Buyer**

By Brian Jud

People are different. That may sound like an unnecessary understatement, but it was never more true than when selling your books. Each sales situation is unique, and every buyer you approach will have a distinctive personality. You must adapt your strategy to each environment much like chameleons do to help them blend in with their habitats.

Each distributor, retail-store manager, or buyers at businesses, associations or schools will act in a manner consistent with their individual personality. After years of experience selling books and other products, I’ve found there are several categories of buyers who are more difficult with which to work. Here are descriptions of those I have run across most frequently and some tips for dealing with them.

**The Complainer**.

You have heard these people in restaurants saying, “It’s too expensive” or, “My steak is overdone.” Complainers carry this same chronic attitude to business, always looking for something about which to find fault.

Across the desk you can see their eyes darting as if searching for the next opportunity to start whining. You may think there is no satisfying them, but there are ways to deal with these thefts of amiable discussions.

Start by removing the small stuff from the equation so you can both focus on the bigger picture. The strategy is to get them off track with a startling question, one that gets them traveling on a different train of thought. One way to do that is to ask a question beginning with “What if we…” This is not confrontational and gets them involved in the discussion to become part of the solution.

For example, let’s say your content is about motivating people, making them more productive on the job. You are meeting with a Manager of Human Resources, trying to get this Complainer to buy your book and give it to all employees. After making your pitch the Complainer says, “You have good information, but your plan won’t work. My employees will never read a book. They feel it will take too much time. It’s not interesting. They have better things to do with their lives.”

**The conversation might go like this**:

You: “Why do you feel that way?”

Complainer: “It’s just the way people are. Once they are off the job they want free time.”

You set the hook by saying:” What if *we* (always say “we”) could find a way to get them interested, read the entire book, and then make them more productive?”

Now you have the Complainer’s attention: “How can you do that?” (The strategy here is to get the buyer to move from the position of “How can *you* do that?” to “How can *we* do that?” At that point you can be confident of the sale.)

You: “What if *we* hide a code in text, and your employees who find it become eligible to win a major prize? We could place the code on a different page in each book so all employees would have to read the entire book to find it.

Complainer: “That might work. In addition, what if *we* gave them some company time every day to read, such as an extra 15-minutes on their lunch break?

Now you both begin talking about how to implement the HR Managers’s idea. It is no longer *if* they will buy, but when and how many. You are working together to iron out *their* details.

**The Contrarian**.

These people just like to argue. You say it’s a nice day. They say it’s too hot. While you are trying to discuss issues, they are arguing for the argument itself, and they win every time in their minds.

This may sound counterintuitive, but the best way to handle Contrarians is to agree with them. This doesn’t mean that you give in. Instead, your strategy is to find a way to change the subject – back to the benefits of your proposal. For instance, suppose you are trying to sell your book to a Contrarian Marketing Manager as a replacement for the coffee mugs they currently give to people as thanks for visiting their trade show exhibits.

After your initial presentation the Contrarian says that your book will cost more than a coffee mug. Your strategy is not to cut your price, but to find Pain Points, or problems the buyer would like to solve. Turn their Pain Points into your Opportunity Points. Again, use questions to get the Contrarians to come up with their solutions.

**The conversation might go like this**:

Contrarian: The price is too high.

You. Why do you say that?

Contrarian: It costs more than the coffee mugs we currently use.

You (And the Contrarian’s replies): Actually, I agree that my book does cost more than the coffee mugs you are using. But may I ask you a few questions? (Yes) Don’t other exhibitors give out coffee mugs? (Yes) You must store them, right? (Yes) And ship them to each show, correct? (Yes) Do they ever break in transit? (Yes, of course. They are ceramic.). How many do you usually buy at one time (About 5000.).

An important strategy is not to tell the Complainer, “You have high costs for storage, shipping and breakage.” Instead separate them into questions and get a response to each.

Now you have information upon which to demonstrate a lower total cost using your book: They do not have a unique premium, and they have costs for storage, shipping and breakage. You also know their budget is about $15,000 since an imprinted coffee mug may cost $3.00. Show how your ebook will give them a unique premium and save them money by eliminating their costs. When all these expenses are removed, the total cost of your $3.50 ebook is the less expensive option.

You finish with the question, “How much will *our* plan save you in your overall marketing budget?

**The Know-It-All**

A major barrier to changing some people’s view is their arrogance. Many business buyers have never used books as promotional items before, so they are overconfident through misunderstanding: they don’t know what they don’t know. But if you call out their ignorance directly, they will get defensive.

A better approach is to get them to recognize the gaps in their misunderstanding.

When Know-It-Alls are the ones generating ideas, they are more open to considering alternatives. Plant the seeds of your concept with – yes, you guessed it – questions. Overcome the Know-It-All’s defensiveness and spark creativity by making them curious about what is possible. As they imagine the new potential, they start to take some ownership of the idea and eventually give you the green light to implement *their* idea.

**The conversation might go like this**:

You: Tell me about your last campaign?

Know-It-All: We tried to increase the sales of our 20-pound bags of dog food.

You: “You *tried* to increase sales? What didn’t work?

Know-It-All: “People do not choose their pet’s food based solely on price. They want quality and value. But I knew that going in.”

You: “I’m sure you did. But if you could wave your magic wand, what would you change to make it more effective?”

Know-It-All: “I would give them a free incentive that added value to their purchase.”

You: “You are so right. What if *we* had a way to increase your sales and profits while giving the dog owners added value when purchasing your products?”

Know-It-All: “I would be interested in learning more, What do you have in mind?”

You describe your proposal to place a coupon on each bag for the purchaser to download your free ebook on dog care. The cost of your ebook would be less than the previous price discount, so *our* campaign will be more profitable even at the same volume.

## The Narcissist

You can identify Narcissistic buyers immediately as you walk into their offices. Their Ego Wall is emblazoned with diplomas, certificates, and awards. Narcissistic buyers believe they are superior and special, and they do not take kindly to being told they are wrong. But with careful framing, you can coax them toward a favorable decision.

How can you do that? First, remove any feeling of disagreement with their opinions. Then let them know that they are not alone in their assumption. Finally, explain how other *special* people changed their minds without being embarrassed when they discovered new information. Do that with the Feel-Felt-Found technique.

**The conversation might go like this**:

Narcissistic buyers will lean back in their chair, and with a smirk of superiority say, “From my 20 years of experience in this business, it’s a fact that people are motivated by gimmicky items, not something like a book.”

You: “I understand how you ***feel***. Other successful executives initially ***felt*** that way, too. However, once they began using books as promotional items, they ***found*** books are engaging (not like a key chain), targeted (not like a coffee mug), portable (displaying your logo to many others), transferrable (increasing the exposures), durable (not like flowers or candy) and tasteful (matching your luxury brand).

You continue: “What if we…” Now the Narcissistic buyers can change their minds without losing face.

A sales axiom says, “The less you tell the more you sell.” This means that by asking questions you can learn more about buyers and get them involved in a discussion that will steer them to creating *their* solution. This will also get them to change their position more quickly from *you* to *we*, making the likelihood of closing the sale greater. What if we give it a try?

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