

Why Johnny Can't Sell

by Paul Myers

A TalkBiz News Report

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Introduction

This report is made up of 4 articles that appeared in TalkBiz News, in the spring of 2008. TalkBiz News is a free email newsletter for online business that I've published since December of 1996. I've edited this to try and take out any references that would only make sense to regular subscribers, but I may have missed some. If so, please forgive the “continuity gaps.”

Other than removing those references, very little has been changed from the original articles.

Some of you will probably be thinking that a report with information from a year ago is “out of date.” Fear not. This is about selling, not any specific technologies. The art of selling is based on human motivations. While the techniques may change, those motivations don't. This information is still very current. Some of it is actually a little ahead of the curve.

If you like what you read here, you may want to subscribe to the newsletter this information is from. The link for that is at the end of the report. As is my email address, in case you have any comments.

Enjoy!

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There is no intent here to offer advice regarding legal, accounting or other professional services which may be regulated. If you need professional advice for a specific situation, we recommend that you consult a licensed individual who is knowledgeable in the appropriate field.

This report is provided for educational purposes only.

The Set-Up

One of the topics I keep coming back to in TalkBiz News is the art of selling. The reason for that is simple:

Most people can't do it.

They don't know how, or they're afraid, or they think it's evil, or they don't think their products are worth the money, or or or...

Simple fact: If you don't sell something, you're going to be broke and miserable and have skinny kids.

I can't "fix" whatever fears you may have about selling. And if you think it's evil, you've got a whole other set of problems. (*Tell your grocer how evil he is next time you hit the checkout counter.*) I can help with some of the other challenges people face in sales, though.

Understand: This isn't a full-blown sales training course. That's much more than you can cover in a short report like this. However, what you'll find here will go a long way to helping you to sell a lot more. And it will show you one of the things that so many people talk about, but never actually explain: How to create an effective sales process for your online business.

Let's get started.

"Why You're Not Selling"

- alternatively titled -

"If You're Doing Okay, You're Not Selling Well"

I'm going to tell you a little secret: Even if you have a product out there online, there's better than a 90% chance you have no clue what you're doing at selling.

Seriously. Among the people I've met or spoken to, and the sales pages I've seen online, well over 90% demonstrate so little understanding of sales that it's almost embarrassing.

Yes, some of them are making money. A few are making really good money, because they hired someone who understands sales to handle their processes. But most are just ... well ... bad.

Really bad.

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Want an example?

<http://www.dime-days.com/wpseo/>

That's the link to the WordPress SEO videos that I posted here a week or so ago. I bought the rights to that product and did very little to change the copy. Fixed some spelling errors, basically.

(Yes, I've been planning this issue for a while.)

Given the targeted nature of the thing and the quality of the content, that product should have converted at somewhere between 8 and 15%. Maybe higher, if it came with a written instruction manual, rather than just videos.

It rolled in at a whopping 1.6%.

That example shows a couple of things you need to understand. The first being that, if a product is focused enough and meets the desires of a market, there will be some people who'll buy no matter how bad the sales copy.

The product is the thing.

The second thing is that feature-based copy sucks.

Forgive the yelling, but ...

FEATURES DON'T SELL!

I'll try not to shout any more in this issue, but I make no promises.

....

Benefits sell.

There have been so many articles and arguments about what is a feature and what is a benefit that it might seem silly to try and distill it down to a scant 13 words, but here you go. A replay of "Myers' Marketing Maxim," first stated in this rag 3 years ago:

**Benefits exist in the head and the heart.
Everything else is a feature.**

Benefits are - let me emphasize this - *ALL* emotionally based.

No exceptions.

Ignore that fact at your financial peril.

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Before we go on, let's look at some other reasons that so many people suck at selling.

One very common reason is that the person believes there's something wrong with selling. They think it's a manipulative process, designed to take advantage of people by tugging at their emotions.

That particular belief was first introduced to the world via the southern exit of a northbound bull.

It keeps itself alive by feeding on the feeling of righteousness it creates in the believer. "It's just not fair to reach out and take control of someone's mind like that!"

Speaking for copywriters everywhere...

**"When the hell did we acquire that kind of power,
and why didn't anyone tell us?!"**

To be sure, there are some very powerful things a really well trained copywriter can do with words. Some of them can be used in ways they shouldn't. But, in the end, we don't make the decisions.

The customer does.

The problem here is that the people employing this perspective have a badly flawed assumption underlying their conclusions: The idea that a buying decision is a binary choice.

From a sloppy seller's perspective, that's true. But not from the buyer's. They have tons of choices about how they use their resources. As a salesman, you aren't just competing for the Yes/No decision, or even against other products in the same category.

You're competing with every possible option the prospect has.

That's why even the very best sales process fails miserably when faced with random traffic. The product being offered doesn't even start near the top of the prospect's priority list. All the NLP tricks and "Mass Control" techniques and verbal slickery are close to useless when dealing with someone who just doesn't care about what you've got.

Barring impulse purchases, you're really competing for a narrower range of choices, which already includes gaining the benefits you're offering.

The higher those benefits are on the prospect's list, and the closer your product is to matching the way they're comfortable gaining those benefits, the better the chance you have of making the sale.

That's why an effective sales process (remember that phrase) always includes a means of targeting your market to people who already want the benefits you offer.

If you can sharpen their awareness of the desire for those benefits, and follow it up with a legitimate way to achieve them, how is that a Bad Thing?

Selling isn't evil. It's how people become aware of a lot of things that get them a lot of what they want.

Pestering people about things when you have no idea whether they want them or not? I don't know that I'd say it's evil, but it's certainly rude. Very inefficient, too.

Funny how giving people what they want is both more polite and more profitable, innit?

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I ran into a real-world example of the above principle recently.

I signed up for a newsletter (not marketing based), and the page that came up after the subscription asked me what part of the topic was most interesting to me. It had three options. I picked one and was presented with a well-written endorsement for a relevant product, and a link to check it out for myself.

I got the lady's phone number and called her to see how that was working. Turns out that she's making 2.5 times as much on commissions since she switched from a "one ad fits all" approach to the one I saw.

More than double the profits, from the same number of visitors. All she did to get that was ask a simple question.

A very basic form of sales process, but an effective one.

Find the want, THEN fill it.

Which brings up one of the really big reasons so many people can't sell their products: They're offering something no-one wants badly enough to pass something else up to get it.

If that's you, change products.

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Here's another one: Confusion about what people really want from your product.

Fact: Very few people buy lottery tickets expecting to win.

They buy lottery tickets because, to them, the *chance* of winning symbolizes hope.

"A dollar and a dream."

One of the great marketing slogans of our time. The guy who wrote that really understood his prospects.

Pure genius.

What does your product really symbolize to your prospects?

Emphasizing the wrong benefit can be as jarring as hitting a sour note. Hit the right notes, in the right key, and the prospect experiences a symphony of delightful expectation.

Tune your message, or people will tune you out.

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Yet another major cause of sales suckage: Copycatting.

This happens when people think selling is a function of "techniques." They see someone do a thing, assume (often wrongly) that it works, and then try to do the same thing.

Worse, they try to do it better, which usually just means "with a bigger hammer."

If you don't understand the context of the usage, you're almost guaranteed to get a clumsy imitation at best. You're as likely to reduce your response as not.

Using inappropriate techniques is one of the biggest reasons for people viewing your messages as manipulative. You're trying to evoke a feeling that doesn't exist, or that doesn't fit the prospect's sense of the message's context.

Whiff.

"Steeeee-RIKE!"

Interestingly, the people who do this are also the ones who, after three weeks of reading forums, are sure they know what marketing is all about. They blithely analyze "technique," usually assuming the worst, and preach their certainties to anyone who'll listen.

They're determined to prove to the world just how smart they aren't.

And they succeed.

But they don't sell.

....

There are others, but these are the "Biggies."

Despite them, a lot of the people involved end up making enough money to keep going. After all, even the worst salesletter will find a few acorns.

If you really want great conversion rates, you need to understand selling.

The first thing to remember: It's about people in a process.

Good salespeople understand the process. Great salespeople understand how real people experience that process. That's the context I referred to earlier.

And this is where Jeff Walker's product launch fits in. (It's over, so relax. There's no pitch coming for it.)

This is why I practically demanded that you watch what he was doing, and pay attention to your own reactions to his approach. In the salesletter for the product, Jeff described what most people do as "hope marketing." They drive traffic to a direct response letter and hope their visitors buy.

The reason Jeff's formula creates one market-busting day after another is simple: It creates a process that's focused on people with an existing interest, and driven by a deep understanding of how people make buying decisions.

It combines technique and psychology in ways that are built to do one thing before all others:

Find the want, and THEN fill it.

In the process (there's that word again), it sharpens the person's desire for the promised benefits, and delivers a legitimate way for the prospect to gain those benefits.

It does this using a number of different systems that are designed to fit with multiple learning styles.

It is the best sales process in use online to date.

Seemed like a good idea at the time.

Why did I tell you to be aware of your own reactions?

Simple. In many ways, you are no different than your prospects. We all have the same needs, wants and desires. We just have different ways of satisfying them.

Paying attention to your own reactions and responses to a given approach will make you more alert to the emotional impact of the words you use with others. It will evolve an awareness of how those choices will be perceived and received.

It will help you to develop a stronger sense of empathy.

There is no faster or surer way to develop the emotional understanding that makes a good salesperson than through empathy. It makes learning the psychology and techniques of sales much easier. And it tends to short-circuit any leanings toward shady behavior.

Unless, of course, you're one of the disturbing percentage of people who fall into the category of sociopath.

For those folks, I recommend taking up high attrition rate activities.

Maybe following polar bears with a pooper-scooper.

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I'll get more into this next issue. In the mean time, if you want to learn some specific steps to kick your online sales up, check out Paul Hancox' latest book, "The 10% Conversion Rate."

<http://www.talkbiz.com/r/10percent.php?page=337>

In it, Paul tells you how to develop and refine your own sales process, with a lot of tips and shortcuts that he's learned over his decade-plus experience in selling online.

Serious sales mojo.

For those that have been around a few months, you'll remember Paul as the author of "Small Changes, Big Profits." That's the one I believe should be required reading for anyone who wants to sell anything online. (<http://www.talkbizhq.com/bigprofits>)

This one will help you sell MORE of anything. Quite possibly a lot more.

Grab a copy of "The 10% Conversion Rate," at:

<http://www.talkbiz.com/r/10percent.php?page=337>

Until next issue. Same Bat-time, Same Bat-channel...

Enjoy!

"Interesting Results"

A lot of you picked up a copy of "The 10% Conversion Rate" after the last issue. More of you, obviously, did not. It would be very unusual to see a majority of any group this size buy any single product.

There are some very interesting things to note about the people who didn't order it yet.

Specifically, how they went about NOT ordering.

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First, I should mention... the sales letter is converting at above 10%, which isn't surprising. What might be surprising is that it's doing so despite the fact that I pulled two very important parts of the process from the letter.

I'll get into what they are in a later issue. I'll tell you why I did it right now.

An effective sales process consists of steps. Very few of those steps are necessary, in the sense that sales stop completely without them. Most are additive. Each one, when properly implemented, increases sales. If one of those is missing, you'll still sell. You'll just sell less.

That's important to understand, if for no other reason than to know that you don't have to revamp your entire sales system all at once to begin to see improvements.

A lot of people are hesitant to start making changes to their business out of concern that they won't have the time to do them all.

Good news: You don't have to do them all. One little thing at a time can add to your sales. And that just fuels the desire to add further changes and test more things.

Nothing breeds like success.

....

One of the reasons so many people don't work on improving their sales process is that they don't understand how to do it. That's what I'm going to cover today, by way of an example you're directly involved in. The process you've been looking at for the past few emails.

You're going to have the benefit of seeing it through my eyes and your own.

Nothing beats that for learning at the gut level.

Onward.

The first thing you need to do is measure the results of each step (which is easily done with common tracking systems) and look at what you can do to improve the numbers.

For instance, (rounding very slightly, for ease of example):

60% of the people who went to the sales letter clicked through to the order page.

Of that 60%, 1/3 clicked the payment link.

Of those, 40% did not complete the order.

The first stat seems fine, until you look at the next one.

What happened here is that a lot of people hit the letter and scrolled immediately to the order page link to find out the price. Some of those people went back and read the letter once they knew it wasn't out of their price range. Others saw the "budget-busting" sticker price and bailed.

Okay. I'm half kidding on that last one. But only half.

It never fails to amaze me how many people wouldn't spend \$50 once to make an extra \$500 a month. Or even \$5000.

On the flip side, that's what creates the edge for the people who will. So, no complaints from my side of things.

....

Based on the number who returned to read the description, and the number who left the site, it seems to be about an even split. That means that 30% of the people who hit the sales page didn't think the potential for significant improvements in their conversion rates was worth \$30. Or they didn't think anything this inexpensive could deliver. Or they didn't have \$30 to spend. Or maybe they just hate PayPal.

The last two are easily ignored. They're going to be a tiny minority of the people in this market, and there's not much you can do if they just don't have the money.

The first one is ridiculous. No-one really believes that it's not worth \$30 – or even \$300 - to improve their conversion rates the way this book suggests is possible. Which means it's more likely that they don't believe a product at this price can deliver.

Or perhaps they didn't quite grasp that getting such increases are what the book explains. Ah. Now **that** is believable.

That can be helped by testing different headlines, to ensure that the maximum number of people get a clear understanding of the basic proposition of the offer before they scroll to find the price.

The "deliver at this price" question can be settled by testing an increase in the price. *(That will probably happen after this series is over anyway. Subscriber discounts are never permanent.)*

Testing. Always testing.

Or should I say counting?

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Know your numbers. The numbers tell you what the real people reading your copy are doing. And that gives you hints at what they're thinking, which tells you where to make adjustments.

This stuff is way easier than you'd think, listening to the testing gurus rattle on about sample size and confidence intervals. Those things are important, but not important enough to let it scare you off of testing altogether.

Here's testing in a nutshell:

Count.

Change or add or remove something.

Count again.

More or less?

More? Keep it.

Less? Go back to the original and try something else.

Easy, yes?

....

For the 40% of people who clicked the payment link and didn't complete the order, there are two main possibilities:

They didn't have a PayPal account and thought they couldn't pay without it, or....

They just weren't sure they were doing the right thing. Maybe they weren't comfortable with the security, or they weren't convinced it was worth the money.

A fair chunk of those people will have been among the ones who scrolled immediately to find the price and almost ordered. The changes suggested earlier will help with their concerns.

Some of it will be because they skimmed, rather than reading the letter thoroughly. The fix for that is more engaging copy. (That's a huge topic for another time.)

For some, it will be specific concerns or questions that weren't addressed properly. (That's

covered pretty thoroughly in the book.)

For some, it might be your personal credibility. Unless you're the author of the product, you handle that mostly through accessibility - easy contact information - and a strong guarantee.

You test one thing at a time, and keep at it until you get a mix that produces better results.

Again, nothing complicated or difficult here.

One step at a time.

....

For the folks who might not be aware that they can order without having a PayPal account, your job is really easy. You put a link near the order button, along with some text that says something like:

Secure Payments handled through PayPal.
[Don't have a PayPal account? [Click here.](#)]

If they click on the "Don't have a PayPal account?" link, they go to a page that explains that they can order using a credit card, just like everywhere else, by looking for the following text, and clicking on the word "Continue":

Don't have a PayPal account?
Use your credit card or bank account (where available).
[Continue](#)

I'll be adding that after this series is done. (Until then, you folks are the only ones seeing that letter, and you already know about it now, right? ;)

Don't neglect little things like that. In one campaign that I ran, adding a page like I just described tripled my conversion rate. It has never reduced it.

Obviously I can't guarantee what will happen with your tests, but the potential in it is certainly worth the tiny effort, yah?

....

There are other parts of the process that can be measured. How many of the emails I sent got delivered? What percentage of those people clicked through to the page? How many successfully downloaded the product?

If there had been a back end offer, how many looked at it? How many ordered?

Etc.

A one anda two anda tree...

Just count.

One thing that a lot of people assume will hurt your conversion rate is that extra page between the sales letter and the payment step. We're constantly being told that things have to be as simple as possible, with as few steps as possible.

Listening to that advice could be a very expensive mistake.

In this market, it's VERY common for people to skip immediately to the price. Having the price on the order page, along with a summary of the offer, very likely resulted in some folks ordering who wouldn't have bothered reading the whole letter.

You have to test this stuff, folks.

For those of you new to the idea, testing just means, "Try it and see if it works."

....

In the next issue, I'm going to get into something that will probably irritate some of the old guard copywriters and salespeople. Until they finish reading it, anyway.

Basically, the traditional AIDA formula is obsolete. Depend on it too much and you're going to be throwing money away. A lot of it. I'll explain the new formula. (*The pros already know it, intuitively, but don't seem to have put a name to it.*)

I call it A.D.D. It's exactly what you think. And a whole lot more.

In the issue after that, we'll get into the specific systems that form the framework for your process.

I'm not going to kid you. You can use all of this without buying "The 10% Conversion Rate." Do it right, and it could help your sales significantly.

Put it together with the stuff Paul Hancox covers in the book, and you're likely to see much bigger improvements.

Yes, "could" and "likely." You know the drill. I can't guarantee you specific results. No-one can.

I **can** guarantee you that if you get the book, use the ideas, and don't see results, it won't cost you anything but the time to test them out.

Get the details here:

<http://www.talkbiz.com/r/10percent.php?page=337>

And don't miss the next issue.

The Death of a Salespitch

Yes, we're still talking about selling.

Last time, we talked about testing. That issue seems to have helped quite a few people get a better grasp on how the process works. Obviously it was a basic lesson, but it gave the important points.

The biggest take-away from that issue is that you can benefit a lot from even basic testing. You don't need to get heavily into statistical theory to make yourself a lot more money with it.

Before that, we got into a few of the most important reasons some people (most, actually) don't sell as much of their product as they should.

Now we get into the fun stuff. This is where I aggravate a lot of sales coaches and copywriters. At least for the first part of the issue. I suspect most of them will agree with me by the time we're done.

If not, well... That's a problem, but it's not MY problem.

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Like the past few issues, this ties directly into what Paul Hancox talks about in his book, "The 10% Conversion Rate." And, just like the last few issues, it will work without you having to buy the book.

Having the book will just help you get a lot more out of it, just like this issue will help you get more out of the book. They're intended to work together.

That's the thing with processes. The more pieces you get right, the better the end result.

I intend to make sure you have as many of the pieces as possible.

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Let's start by dipping our toes into the pungent waters of commercial heresy.

If you've been in sales for any time, you're familiar with the traditional formula for a sales process. It's represented by a mnemonic acronym: AIDA.

The acronym stands for Attention, Interest, Desire and Action. Those are the supposed steps to successful selling.

Stick a fork in it.

AIDA's deceased. It's pushing up the daisies. It's rung down the curtain and joined the choir invisibile.

This is an EX formula!

....

In order to learn the lesson properly, it's best if we acquaint you with the victim.

The process this unfortunate acronym stood for was simple. In order to make the sale, you had to do four things, in order:

Get the prospect's ATTENTION.

Capture or create INTEREST on the part of the prospect.

Build that interest into a strong DESIRE. Get them to take ACTION on that desire.

Sounds good, right? I mean, it's simple enough, and it really doesn't tell the whole story, but it's good as a memory aid, right?

Ummm.... No.

Not any more.

The formula is deeply flawed as it relates to selling in today's world. Using it is one of the reasons so many people consider a 1 or 2% conversion rate to be acceptable for most products.

This formula is the root of a large chunk of the sales "pitches" you see, even now.

It's also why so many folks hate salespeople.

Including a lot of salesfolk.

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Here's the problem: The steps are out of order, broken up in an unnatural fashion, and lead to all manner of rude and unpleasant behavior.

For starters, the idea that you must get someone's attention before you have their interest simply isn't anything like as effective as it might once have been. Trying to create interest on the part of another person leads to all sorts of pushy and manipulative tactics.

There's also the schism between interest and desire. There are a lot of things a person can be interested in, but not desire enough to take action to get them. Or even want them.

Attempting to steer random strangers through this process is the root cause of interruptive behaviors like cold-call telemarketing, unsolicited fax ads, door-to-door sales, and spam.

Yeah. AIDA leads to spam. That should be enough reason to toss it on history's dung heap.

"But wait... There's more!"

The examples above are the most blatant demonstrations of the process, taken literally and in its simplest form. In less interruptive forms, AIDA influences other forms of advertising in some not-so-obvious, but still negative, ways.

Consider TV commercials. Unlike the forms above, these pay for the content they appear with. They're not "evil," but they're often rendered far less productive than they might have been without the assumptions and tendencies created by studying and applying that old chestnut.

Why do you think, for example, commercials are so much louder than the programs during which they appear? Gotta get that old attention, right? And using the volume control is easy.

Same with many of the "Crazy Eddie" type radio commercials. You're going to listen whether you're interested or not.

Or so they think.

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Here's another example. One that will be logically less clear, but should be intuitively obvious to anyone but the person sending the wrong letter.

A person gets two offers in their postal mailbox. What most people call "junk mail." One is a pre-approved credit card offer and the other a flyer promoting a chain of campgrounds.

Which are they most likely to be annoyed by? Which will they probably open with interest?

In most cases, the pre-approved credit card offer will be more annoying, because it usually appears without you having any interest in it or having done anything to prompt it. And, if you know how these things work, it is just another reminder of how easy it is for people to get information on your private business these days.

On the flip side, if you got a flyer promoting camp sites, there's a very high probability that you are an active camper. That's too narrow an interest to be sending printed mail with stamps on it to every person in a city.

Unless you do your "camping" in a shack in Montana, it's probably not something you mind strangers knowing.

There's little chance that flyer will annoy you, and a very high degree of likelihood that you'll open it.

The first letter is classic AIDA in action.

Or should that be, "inaction?"

AIDA isn't just rude and annoying. It's expensive.

It requires that you target large chunks of people with your ad, in the belief that enough of them will be tempted by your dazzling creative (that's marketing-speak for "ad content") that you'll be able to move them along the process.

This used to require huge ad budgets. Now all it requires is cable TV.

At this point, there's so much broadcast and cable inventory that air time is available for a fraction of what it once cost. The major networks during popular shows are still relatively expensive, but that doesn't need to stop you. After all, cable stations re-run Law and Order close to 24 hours a day.

This lowers the bar for ad standards and targeting, which means people are seeing more and more bad ads for products in which they're less and less interested.

Then there's the Internet. Again, more places to run ads, so more and more obscure products are featured. And web-based advertising is impacting the price of ads on TV.

Blogs are diluting the market for air time on talk radio.

Email and web-based ads are competing with newspapers for customers.

We have more mediums for advertising, and the prices to reach the customers in those mediums is dropping. The bar is lowered further. The growth of affiliate and CPA programs is creating even more pressure.

More places with more ads of less interest.

Random interruptive advertising has become a social disease. One that does serious damage to our ability to concentrate.

Fortunately, we're becoming immune.

Fortunately for us as consumers, anyway. As businesses, the jury's still out on the whole "Good thing, bad thing" question.

If your marketing department still believes in AIDA, the verdict is in.

Death by lethal inattention.

The problem: ADD.

Attention deficit disorder.

Not only are we becoming immune to most interruptive advertising, we've got more demands for our attention from non-commercial sources than ever before. We carry devices that make us available to anyone and everyone, any time and everywhere.

When I asked you whether you preferred email or the web for this newsletter, I got some interesting (although not surprising) answers. The number of people who said they preferred it on the web so they didn't get distracted by incoming emails was about the same as the number of people who preferred email because they get too easily distracted on the web.

A huge chunk of the world's population has lost a huge chunk of their ability to resist distraction.

Advertising is, for the most part, the last thing that will tap into our already strained pool of mental resources.

There are, as always, exceptions.

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One of the exceptions is the impulse purchase.

You know what I mean. You're standing in line at the grocer's and you see something cool in one of the displays. So, you buy it. Why? It looks cool, or you got a taste for candy, or... whatever.

The key here is that the price is low enough that you don't have to justify the expense in your mind.

You act on a sudden... Impulse.

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There's a huge lesson there for salespeople.

The lesson is explained by what I suggest as a new formula for your sales process.

The answer: ADD.

Attention -> Distinction -> Decision.

The key here is to focus on getting the attention of people who already want the benefits you're offering, and are looking in the same general place as your product to achieve those benefits.

This is called "targeted advertising." Doing it in a way that beats the other kind of ADD and advertising immunity is the trick.

It's a hell of a trick, too. Do it wrong and you'll feel just like the magician who dropped the card he was trying to palm.

Do it right, and the results are indistinguishable from magic.

Better if you learn to do it right.

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The first thing you need to recognize is that there are ads to which none of us is immune. Those are ads for things we already want, and which somehow reinforce our visions of ourselves.

We'll see those clearly, if the clutter isn't too great.

Consider the avid camper mentioned earlier. They probably visit camping web sites, read outdoor living magazines, and watch wildlife programs on TV. Their definitions of themselves involve activities related to the outdoors.

If the ads are properly targeted, they'll watch them with great interest, even though they'll probably say they hate commercials or never read advertising.

Why? Aren't they lying if they say that?

No. No. No.

They really aren't watching TV commercials or reading advertisements.

They're shopping.

....

Shopping.

Think about that. If you're shopping for something, don't you tend to try and talk yourself into buying it? Even if it's window shopping, you'll try. Until some pushy salesperson comes along and tries to slick-talk you into something more expensive.

You already have an active interest. They don't need to do anything but stay out of the way until you have questions.

If they're really good, they can use that to get you looking at something that will do more of what you want, or do it more like you want it done. But they'll defer to you for the decision.

That's a proper upsell.

If you buy it, you get more of what you want, and you're happy.

If you don't buy it, you're more comfortable with the value you're getting for what you're spending. You feel like you've shopped intelligently, and you're still happy.

All they have to do is present the offer in a way that leaves the decision entirely in your hands.

Besides... If they ever thought it was anywhere else, they're deluded. And, to paraphrase Judge Ziglar...

Deluded salespeople have skinny kids.

....

Mind you, there's nothing new in the idea of looking for people who are already interested in what you're selling. The slight change is focusing on finding people who want the benefits you offer and want them in a way that's at least similar to the way yours delivers them.

The BIG change is what happens when you take this formula as a whole and apply it to each step of the process you develop. It requires a change in focus that can really crank up your response and conversion rates.

You see, you have to keep in mind while planning your advertising that you're going to the next step:

Distinction.

....

This step has only one purpose: To demonstrate to your already interested prospect what makes your product different from, and superior to, other options they might choose to attain the benefits they're seeking.

You need to distinguish your product from the competition.

You need to illustrate distinct advantages they'll gain from your product that they can't get, or can't get as well, from other roads to the same goal.

This serves not only to focus an existing interest on your product, but to, as Hancox describes it in this book, "close the exits." By answering concerns as a by-product of comparison, you make the advantages the center of attention, and eliminate potential objections without their ever coming to the fore.

This is an excellent way to create compelling copy without using pushy or manipulative tactics or highlighting objections yourself.

The specifics of making the necessary distinctions will be based on the product and competition, so we won't get into those much. They'll be obvious to any copywriter or marketer while working on the process.

Well, they should be.

If they're not, you haven't done your homework.

The second 'D' stands for Decision.

This isn't always as simple or direct as "asking for the order." The decision process is a matter of closing the gap between interest and commitment. That's a function of a number of things.

If you've distinguished your product properly for a prospect who's already interested, you're a good chunk of the way there.

At the same time, you need to sharpen the prospect's desire for the product, by reminding them of the pain it will remove, the pleasure it will bring, or both.

Note that it's important that these factors be real. You can sell using fear of possible problems but, unless there's a real likelihood of those problems occurring, you're setting yourself and your customers up for a battle. And if they realize that you're playing on pure fear, they're going to give you what you deserve.

A scornful "No!"

....

Assuming you've created a strong position for your product and sharpened the desire for it, the next step is to make sure they know that buying the product will bring about a desirable result.

You need to make the price acceptable.

You need to remove the risk, while simultaneously emphasizing the benefits. That contrast, if it's clearly understood and felt by the prospect, is the big key.

You can do this all in a short span, or stretch it out over a number of phases, all with an opportunity to order at the end of each phase.

One important thing to test here is which of the main benefits (or combinations of benefits) to emphasize for maximum conversions. Another is IF testimonials help at this stage, and if so, which ones help the most. You'll see, after enough tests, that some testimonials can actually bring up objections that can hurt your results.

Understand: This doesn't have to happen at one particular point in the sales process. You can present a "close," and follow up later with another segment of content that offers a different call to action. If you've watched any of the well-planned launches, you know that nearly every step is a close, with the only thing held back being the actual order mechanism.

The effectiveness of this is clear when you hear about 35-page sales letters generating hundreds of thousands of dollars in orders in less time than anyone but a speed-reader could get through that much copy.

Withholding the order mechanism is fine for a big launch, but it doesn't have to be part of your regular process. You can give them as many opportunities to order as you do reasons to buy.

That's especially important in an extended online process, which can often be automated in ways that the prospect will find useful. Just keep offering useful benefits and let them lead themselves to the order. Pushing isn't anywhere near as effective as it once was, and it wasn't ever really that effective.

Paraphrasing yet another old salesman's line:

Close easy, close often.

....

ADD.

It's a mnemonic for a different way of thinking about your sales process. And a reminder of just how dangerous it is to try and manufacture interest in an age when people's attention is twisted and yanked in as many directions by as many distractions as exist today.

If you learn to think along these lines, and apply this formula in your marketing efforts, you'll quickly get the "feel" for why and how this is so dramatically different than good old AIDA.

It looks very similar. The ingredients are quite alike.

The results?

Not even close to the same.

Look at your current marketing from this new perspective. See if you don't notice stumbling blocks that exist in your current process, and ways you can improve it to increase your results.

I think you'll be quite pleasantly surprised.

The Elements of an Effective Sales Process

In the last issue, I outlined the ADD formula as a set of organizing principles for a sales process. Please understand, that's not a process by itself. It's shorthand for the things you need to do.

Before we go any further, let's define the term:

Sales process: The sequence of planned steps leading from your prospect's exposure to your first message to their decision regarding your desired action.

Did I just make things more confusing?

Fear not. We can fix that.

....

First, keep in mind that this is a sequence. You need to do certain things in a specific order. That's where the ADD formula comes in. I'll expand on that a bit later, but keep that in mind.

You need to plan the sales process so that your sequence pulls the prospect from one step to the next. This takes a certain understanding of what the prospect is thinking, and what their real concerns and desires are. If you address those properly, you significantly improve your chances of getting the desired result.

The desired action can be anything. It can be as simple as reading your next message or subscribing to your list, all the way to spending money on your offering or buying your back end product.

And yes, there can be multiple processes in each sales process.

For example, you may have a process for getting people to sign up for a list or request information on your product. That will require a specific ordered sequence for best results.

You may have a process for getting folks who don't subscribe to take a look at your sales materials.

You may have a separate process for getting people who sign up for a list to place an order.

You may have a process that's very short, in the sense that your prospects see a lead generation piece and go to a sales letter, where they either buy or leave.

You may take the above system and add an opportunity in the sales copy for them to sign up, thus branching it, to allow for people who've reached various stages of their buying process to take the steps they're most comfortable with at the moment.

Every desired action is preceded by a process. Some are very simple, others may be more intricate. You need to keep the basic formula in mind as you develop each one.

If you do that, the whole thing gets a lot easier than I just made it sound.

Really.

Just watch.

....

A few issues back, I mentioned that I had removed a significant piece of the sales process that Paul Hancox had developed for his book, "The 10% Conversion Rate." Despite that, the conversions were running better than 10% on that product.

The main part of the process that I removed was the opportunity for people to sign up for an autoresponder sequence detailing more of what they'd learn in the book.

There were a couple of reasons I removed that. The first is simple: I knew I was going to be providing you with useful information on the product, and you're already subscribed. Since I planned to make that information useful even for folks who didn't buy the book, there was no need for a separate list.

The second isn't as obvious. You see, the way Paul had the page set up, signing up for the list would have taken you to a "Welcome page." It would have moved you off the original sales letter.

That breaks the first process, which loses some of the momentum achieved to that point.

One of the key factors in any sales process is to maintain your momentum. That means keeping the attention of the interested prospect for as long as they want to learn more.

Don't chase them away and make them start over later.

....

In an environment where prospects were coming from lead generation ads or affiliate recommendations (a subset of lead-generation), I wouldn't want people to leave the page just because they'd subscribed.

Instead, I'd have used a script that puts the "Welcome message" on the original page, in the same box that contained the opt-in form. I would have then encouraged them to continue reading.

This does a couple of things that help. First, it lets the folks who wanted the free info get it, including those who are already well disposed toward ordering. Some of those people will order in the same visit, in which case a good follow-up sequence will help them get more from the product. It will also help to reduce refunds.

The second thing is less obvious. Some folks will sign up, knowing they're not going to buy right then, but will continue reading the sales letter anyway. Those people will better understand the material in the follow-up sequence, which will increase response rates from those emails.

Either way, you're maintaining the feeling of relevance and continuity your prospect experiences. You're giving them as much information as they want at the time, without any pressure or uncomfortable overload.

These steps help to focus their interest, and to make it easier for you to distinguish your product from your competition without activating their sales resistance by being pushy.

It leaves them the feeling (and the reality) of being shopping, rather than being sold.

I know. It sounds like I'm avoiding selling. If you think that, you missed the last issue. Go back and re-read it.

You're selling all the time. This choice of steps lets them fit their buying process into your selling process.

Despite what you may have heard, it's entirely possible to be strongly proactive without being (or looking) pushy.

....

The changes I made to the process are based on something very simple.

It's the mindset that focuses you on the user experience, and keeping it within their current interests, while always moving forward. If they sign up, they're moving forward in at least one way. If they don't, but they keep reading, they're moving forward in another way. Either way, they're closer to taking the desired action.

Planned steps.

The only way it fails is if they bail.

Gonna happen for some percentage of the people who look at your message. Usually a big percentage

Your goal is to make that number smaller.

Step. Step. Step.

....

There's a psychology to each step they take. I call it "vowel movement."

(Hey, I'm a guy. We make jokes like that.)

Remember the way you learned your vowels in grade school? Same formula, with a slight adjustment. They need to go through A, E, I, O, U... and sometimes Why.

In that order.

The letters represent:

Attention
Engagement
Involvement
Ownership
Usage

... and sometimes explaining why.

Easy to remember that way, yes?

....

Attention has already been mostly covered. The thing you need to keep in mind for purposes of this part is that attention, like any other license, expires if not regularly renewed.

Each step in the process has to maintain or expand the prospect's level of interest. From there, you need to engage them, getting them to picture the possibilities of your product for improving their situation.

To the degree that you can evoke emotions that encourage them to keep reading, you've engaged them. This is largely a function of getting them to imagine already having the benefits.

Involvement happens when they go from being engaged to taking the next step. This can be as small as continuing to read your sales copy to something bigger, like going from an email to a video, or filling out a survey or asking for more details. Or placing an order.

Ownership is the feeling that the next step is the natural thing to do, and that they want to do it. It involves a positive expectation regarding that step.

Note that it is possible to push someone from involvement to taking the next step without a feeling of ownership, but that usually creates some resistance in the prospect's mind. It can be done in small ways, if the person has developed a sense of trust in you, but anything more than that will usually result in fewer people taking your desired action.

This is the biggest source of sales resistance other than lack of interest or an active feeling of distrust or dislike for the seller.

If too many people who were otherwise interested say you're being pushy, this is where you made your mistake.

Remember: It's perfectly natural for people to resist something they don't want to do. There's something unnatural about someone actively resisting something they want, and it's usually the result of discomfort created by an outside force.

In this case, that would be you.

Usage occurs when your prospect begins extracting benefits from having taken the preceding step. Those can be in the form of more information, a subscription to an e-course, the purchase of the product, or any other step in your sequence.

A, E, I, O, and then U.

Vowel movement.

....

But... WHY?

Why did they (or should they) take that last step?

This is where features come in. They're the logical support that people need to justify taking the desired course of action. But they're not the only things that can be used to answer the question "Why?"

Remember: Benefits are emotional in nature. Features are everything else. They're the measurable delivery system for benefits.

Example: You sell a product that relieves gas. The features are the way it does the job, and the job itself. The benefits include prevention of pain and embarrassment.

Features, in this case, just make the promised benefits possible/believable. In the example of a gas reliever, there are two possible explanations/justifications that might be required.

The first is to the user of the product. That depends on their perception of the relative strength of the benefits versus the cost of the product. That's all they need.

The second is to those associated with the user of the product. In this case, the benefits are exactly the same. Features are, to those people, irrelevant.

Given the relatively low cost of such products, there's usually not a lot of justification involved.

I think we can all agree, that's a good thing.

....

How about something involving a different kind of gas? Say, a hybrid car for your family.

For you, the primary benefits might be the feeling of belonging that goes with environmental responsibility, a sense of moral superiority, the desire to spend the savings on other things, a fear of waste, or any number of other expected emotional outcomes.

(That is, by the way, another excellent definition of benefits: Expected emotional outcomes.)

You might want/have to use features to justify the expense to someone else. Those features

could be cost savings, reduced emissions, additional safety mechanisms or something else.

The only way the "Why?" works for the person to whom you're explaining is if the features mentioned invoke perceived emotional benefits for them which outweigh the cost.

The "Why?" benefits may be the same for the other person, or they may be entirely different. What matters isn't which ones are higher in whose priorities, but that each person who needs to okay the decision finds the balance in favor of making the purchase.

Here's something you must understand when selling:

"Cost" is almost never figured in dollars and cents.
It's figured in terms of other choices that are excluded.

It's important to recognize this. "We don't have and can't get the money" isn't a priority decision. It's a statement of possibility. If it's true, no amount of honest salesmanship is going to overcome that.

Very few people object to spending money simply because it's spending money. They object because of the options spending that money precludes.

Spend whatever time you need to spend to understand this properly:

It's only really the money
when there really isn't the money.

....

That's important for a number of reasons. The one we're most interested in for purposes of this discussion is the psychological difference between a choice and a decision.

Most people move on choices and hesitate on decisions.

Logically, they're the same thing. Emotionally, they're very different. A decision is often looked at as an unpleasant thing we have to do. A choice is usually seen as moving toward the better of multiple options.

Put another way, a choice feels like exercising a preference. A decision often feels like excluding one or more options.

This is one of the more subtle benefits of making a distinction between your product and the other options. It tends to create a mindset of choosing - of shopping - that doesn't bring up feelings of decision resistance.

The more you make it feel like shopping, the easier it will be for your prospect to make a comfortable decision to buy.

It's necessary to understand those psychological factors to construct an effective process. Now, let's get into the nuts and bolts of one process layout.

As we do, keep in mind that the required process for any given product may be slightly different than what I'm outlining here. This will serve as a good base from which to start testing, and will usually be quite satisfactory by itself.

With that in mind, let's look at a basic outline of a process. The individual steps will be described only briefly. Anything in-depth would make this too long for even two issues of the newsletter.

Also, don't make the common mistake of thinking this is a formula for a sales letter. While a good sales letter will do most of these things, there's more to good copy than just these steps.

When you learn how to write effective ad copy, you'll understand how to fit each of the appropriate things into your lead generation and sales pieces.

Here we go...

....

Attention: Getting the attention of people who already want the benefits you're offering, and are looking in the same general place as your product to achieve those benefits.

This is broken down into a number of steps. These are:

Define your prospect: You should do this before you even start creating your product. Most people don't, so don't beat yourself up or worry about it if you haven't yet.

You want to create specific profiles for each group of people who have a high degree of likelihood to want the benefits your product offers, and who are looking for it in a way that's similar to the way you deliver it.

What do they want? Who are they? Are they largely in one specific profession, or group of professions? What are they used to paying for the type of solution you offer? How do they prefer to get it? What age group, gender, etc? What related interests are common to large numbers of them?

Don't limit yourself too narrowly while working through this process. You may find that there are more groups that contain significant numbers of likely prospects than you might have originally thought.

Often, you'll find that multiple groups can be added simply by focusing your "first contact" pieces - the ones used to generate leads and traffic - to each group individually.

....

Locate your prospect: To do this, start by listing the things your prospects are likely to do online. Define their actions, and then use the search engines to find the people, forums, news sites and other places they go online. The more closely related your product (or first contact

piece) is to the topic covered at each site, the better a pool of prospects you're likely to find.

Research your prospect: Double check your assumptions. Find out if there are important things your product doesn't cover that your prospects want covered. What problems do they have that you address? That you don't address? How can you improve your product to fix any gaps in demand?

Quite often this will be no more complicated than adding a bit of text to the book or a few features to the software. These "missing links" can be the difference between a big seller and a big flop.

Also, look at the language they use when discussing the problems you address. There are some things you want to watch very closely. The first is the specific choice of words most commonly used, especially the "pain" words.

The second is which aspects of the problem to be fixed or benefit to be gained is the most powerful emotionally. It doesn't matter how good your gas relief product is at removing discomfort if their big goal is avoiding embarrassment.

You'll want to hit all the notes for them, but focus your main emphasis on the things your prospects consider most pressing.

Speak to them about their concerns, in their language. Which brings up the next phase.

....

Speak to your prospect: Use what you've learned up to this point to create your sales and information pieces. Whether they're videos, emails, interviews, blog posts, a simple direct sales letter, a follow-up sequence... Whatever.

Map it out. Know where they'll enter each stage of the process, and what level of interest they're likely to have at each point. How much effort and commitment did it take them to get to that stage? Are they mildly interested, already engaged or actively involved?

Do they see themselves owning it? If so, how easy is it for them to buy? If not, but they're involved, what branches can you add to let them move further through the process toward that stage?

There's an art to this last part. You want to have enough options for them to keep moving forward, but not so many that they get confused or use them as excuses to put off a decision.

As a rule of thumb, you want the majority of branching options to occur early in the process. You definitely don't want a lot of distractions in the close. For most processes, that's about two thirds of the way through the sales copy itself.

If they signed up for a follow-up sequence before going to the letter, and get more emails after putting off the decision, that's fine. You don't want to leave that as a door for them to exit through by putting an opt-in form late in your sales copy.

Use the appropriate traffic techniques to get your message in front of your prospects. Measure the results, and look for ways to improve, based on feedback. That happens when...

....

Your prospect answers: They do this by responding to your first contact pieces. Whether it's clicking through to an article or video, commenting on your blog, answering a survey, sending your questions, reading your sales letter, or ordering your product. Any action they take is an answer.

If they take no action, the answer is "no." In that case, look at whether the problem is your sales materials or your choice of media/markets. Make adjustments and keep measuring.

Watch where they join the process, and where they leave it. Refine each step to make it more effective in getting people to move to the next step.

If you look at the process development cycle this way, you'll find that it's a lot less intimidating. I know some people whose process development system is doing a survey and asking people what they want, and then continuing to ask questions until their prospects have developed the entire process for them.

If you're good at surveys and can generate a small, but consistent, flow of traffic, you can use nothing but questions to get all the answers you need fairly quickly.

One note on that: Don't include options for them to choose that you're unable or unwilling to give them if they ask.

An important thing to remember is that you don't have to stick with whatever process you develop at first. You can add things, remove them, make changes or toss out the whole thing and start over.

Whatever you do, get people reading. Make some sales while you collect feedback.

You cannot create an effective process without a way for people to buy!

....

Explain your benefit proposition: Immediately after getting them to take that first step and give you their attention, you need to start explaining the benefits you offer.

What's in it for them?

The traditional direct response system for this is a sales letter. Everything takes place in a small number of steps, quickly leading to a yes or no choice. This is still effective, and especially so in markets where your prospects are educated on your product type. Still, it's not nearly as effective as a process that lets people choose their own way of making the decision.

It's going to seem counter-intuitive to the traditional direct response marketer, since they're usually taught that the more options you give people, the less likely they are to buy.

That's true, as far as it goes. You really only want to give people two options at a time, other than leaving and ignoring you. These are called positive options, as they move the prospect forward in the process. When this happens...

....

Your prospect asks for more: You may have an opt-in form in the sales letter. That's two positive options: Sign-up and/or buy.

Signing up allows you to present other options in future contacts. Your list is the means to present additional branches for your process, as needed. Or, if you provide ongoing content, a means to introduce people to the first stages of other processes for other products.

You can also give a "forced sequence" option. This is common enough. An example: You offer a video on your topic. When someone finishes viewing the video, you might ask them to sign up for other videos and, after they do that, take them automatically to the sales letter or to some other part of your process.

Basically, this turns one step into two.

You could change what they see when they sign up. You might take them to a thank you page that has a survey, or that offers them a choice between two or three related links, all moving toward some relevant decision.

This last is an especially effective technique for affiliate marketers.

At every point in this part of the process, you take the input from your prospect and feed it back, offering them more benefits, to increase the depth of engagement and involvement.

Once they've taken the step to asking for more information, you move to the next major phase of the formula.

....

Distinction: Demonstrating to your already interested prospect what makes your product different from, and superior to, other options they might choose to attain the benefits they're seeking.

Note that you can, and often should, start to mix your efforts at distinction in soon after they take the first step of involvement.

These phases can overlap at the edges.

....

Define the need: How you go about this depends on the nature of your product and the educational level of your market.

If your prospects have a problem without knowing the cause, you may need to explain to them where the problem arises. If they know the causes and potential solutions, you simply remind

them and explain why your product is the best thing to help them solve it.

Note: For purposes of this article, I'm lumping actual problems and unfulfilled desires into the same category.

Explain the problems and priorities: At this point, you get into more detail on the problems, including things they may not have considered.

An excellent technique in this stage is to point out the order of importance. Here's where knowing what they really find most painful is useful. You might be surprised to find out how few of your competitors actually know what those priorities are, as your prospects see them.

Remind them of the pain. Make it real and current for them. At this point, you want to get them actively feeling the need to fix the problem.

....

List the alternatives: This one gives some people the heebie-jeebies. Some folks believe that mentioning your competitors' products by name amounts to advertising for them.

If you have a really clear advantage over your competition, and can explain that well, it's not going to be as big a problem as you might think. This is especially true in a market where the audience is well educated about their options.

If you're not sure, or just not comfortable with naming your competitors' products, stick with pointing out that some products have certain limitations that yours doesn't.

The key here is to show how those limitations have a specific effect that makes them less valuable/effective than your product.

Keep in mind that you need to be objective on the limitations, and discuss the effect they have from the perspective of your potential customers. You may think that some shortfall is a big deal but, if your prospects don't, you probably don't want to hammer on it too hard.

It's useful to keep in mind that this differentiation can occur over a number of messages, in various formats. It's often seen as a bit overkill to hammer on too many differences all at one time. These can be sprinkled throughout the process, where they're relevant to the context.

....

Summarize the differences: At this point, you want to briefly sum up the advantages your product offers over the competition, while emphasizing the positive benefits those advantages deliver.

---> Do Not Focus On Negatives. <---

Don't bash the competition. That's not productive, it focuses your prospect on negatives, and makes you look petty. None of those things are going to work to your advantage.

Your summary should concentrate on the positives, and give the comparison an almost "by

the way" feel.

But what about places where you may not hold up so well? That's for the next part.

....

Bridge existing gaps: This one's not as clear cut as some of the others.

As you look at your competition, you may well see areas in which their products are stronger than yours. You can deal with these in a number of ways.

The first is to simply ignore them. If they're not big issues for your customers, they won't affect sales much, if at all.

If they're bigger deals for the customer, you must address them. The most effective way to do that is to correct the deficiency. Once you do that, it's ceases to be a concern.

Another way to deal with this is to add something to your product that closes that gap, or renders it a non-issue. This can be in the form of additional software, a technique that makes the missing part irrelevant by using a different approach, extra information that e powerful ones, etc.

If the difference is really substantial, it may be because you've designed your product to be a lower cost, easier to use introduction to the market. If so, point that out, along with the benefits that provides, like ease of use, rapid deployment, or suitability for specific environments.

Sometimes, doing that means limiting your appeal to a smaller share of the market. That's a better approach than trying to go head-to-head with a superior product in the same price range, especially in a well-informed market.

You want to objectively tip the balance of benefits offered toward your product, so it becomes the obvious choice.

If you aren't sure you're being objective, get the opinions of informed people in your market.

Don't kid yourself about this stuff. You can't fool your prospects, at least not for long.

This area (distinction) is where you establish value, in order to avoid price resistance. It's also where you do most of what Paul Hancox calls "closing the doors."

This is a subtle thing. Again, you want to keep it focused on the positive aspects of your product and the benefits they deliver. And you don't want to get heavy-handed with it.

If it looks like you're bashing the competition, or bragging pointlessly, you're going to trigger your prospect's defense mechanisms.

That's rarely a good thing.

Something to keep in mind... With many consumer products, the direct competition might be irrelevant. The competition you need to consider in those cases is, as always, the complete range of options they could choose instead of your product.

For those situations, the distinction you need to make is primarily benefit-focused. You need to directly compare how their life will be with your product as opposed to without it.

Now for the last stage...

....

Decision: Either accepting or rejecting your request that they take the desired action.

This is the thing people generally tend to jump to too quickly. That's understandable, since it's where they see their payoff. It becomes a problem if you're more concerned about your payoff than establishing the value in the customer's mind.

If you hear too many people saying that you're just after their money, this is probably why.

Mind you, there's no way to sell anything without hearing a few people say that. There are people who use that as an argument for things that have nothing to do with you.

If you hear it more than you should, go back and look at your process. Figure out where you skipped steps in your rush to get a decision.

Just be careful that you don't make the process too long for the decision you're asking them to make. It's as easy to oversell as it is to undersell.

20-page sales letters for a \$10 product, for example, are overselling.

Describing a 60-page book as "massive" (I got an email today that used that exact bit of hype) is overselling.

Don't overdo it.

....

Describe any bonuses or special terms: This part is obvious. Make sure they know everything they're getting. For bonuses, state the features, emphasize the benefits those features provide, and go on. Don't spend much time in differentiating them from others unless that's a big factor in your market.

....

Summarize the benefits: You want to hit the "high notes" here. Point out the major benefits in brief detail, and just touch on the secondary benefits as a reminder. Focus on the single overriding benefit throughout this stage.

Understand, every product has a single main benefit to which all the features contribute. In the case of automation software, for example, it might be "more money with less work." That can also be described as, "More time for the things that matter." A secondary benefit might be, "Freedom from boring routine tasks."

Throughout your process, you want to define what that main benefit is, and create a context so that they know what you mean when you use the phrase you chose to describe it.

Tie everything back into that main benefit.

....

Solidify the distinctions: If you know they're going to be making comparisons, a quick summary of what's better about your product should be incorporated into the benefit summary.

If it's not necessary to do direct comparisons, you may want to make a quick example of why buying your product is a better use of their money than something else in a similar vein.

....

Re-establish the value: This is usually just a quick statement that calls the whole benefit proposition into focus.

If you're not a skilled writer, you may want to skip this step. Doing it wrong can do more harm than good, as it can sound defensive. If you've done things well up to this point, it's not a critical a step.

The best way to do this right is to create a picture in their mind that evokes all the emotional benefits at one time.

You don't tell them the value so much as help them experience it in their imaginations.

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State the price: Okay. This one is obvious.

Be sure, while doing this, that you also state what they'll get, along with any unusual terms or conditions. Things like delays in shipment, recurring billing, etc.

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State the guarantee: Also obvious. The only time you want to emphasize this more than usual is if you have an unusual guarantee.

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Get them started: Ask them to order.

Don't make this step flowery. My favorite way to do this is simply to tell them that they should get started today.

Look, if they made it to the end of your process, there's a pretty good chance they want what you're offering. They already know it, so starting to sell at this point is just asking them to go back to the first step. It brings up all the things they were concerned about in the first place,

and undoes a lot of what you've accomplished. Whatever words you choose, make them short. Don't belabor the point.

Get them started.

....

Reaffirm the decision: This occurs AFTER they order.

You want to make sure you remind them of the great things they've got coming as a result of having made their choice. (Not decision. Choice.) Some pointers on what they should do first, for fastest results, is an excellent way to do this without looking like you're being defensive.

Another is to deliver the first installment of your...

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"Stick" system: This is a sequence of unadvertised bonuses or benefits. delivered over time. This adds to the conviction that they've made a good choice, without you ever needing to say it.

This can be as grand as some huge bonus, or as simple as additional tips and pointers, specially designed to get them to get the product in their hands and use it.

Remember that most people who buy information or software never get around to using it. If your product falls into that sort of category, you want to make sure they do something with it. That reduces refunds, which is nice, but it has a more significant effect. It delivers the benefits you promised, which leads to real loyalty and a greater likelihood they'll buy from you again in the future.

That's why they call it a "stick" system.

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That's it. As you can see, looking at it as a whole system before you've built your first process can seem a bit daunting. Look at each piece individually, though, and it's simple.

I had considered doing a separate issue talking about what tools are available and what to use for each step, but it occurred to me... That's not necessary. Any tool can be used for any part of the process. The key is to sequence things so that your prospects get the right parts in the right order.

You'll notice that the most comprehensive sales processes online have lots of options for branching, while offline processes tend (or seem) to be very linear.

The key element that gives you that flexibility online is the use of email. That, more than anything else, is where the truth of the comment "The money is in the list" comes from.

The "back end" sales process is just another branch.

Sort of "Rinse and repeat" for salesmen.

It's easy to get carried away. You don't need to do this in enormous detail if you're looking for a \$10 or \$20 sale.

You may find it useful to add some of the steps once you have a solid back-end offer in place, but even then it may not be in your best interests if your offer is perceived as an impulse purchase. You'll have to test and see what brings in the best overall results.

You may find that some steps don't seem to apply to your product or in your market. In some cases, that may even be true. If you get that idea, again, I suggest testing it both ways.

The goal of this article is to show you the process of building a process. To enable you to develop your own, and fit it to your products in a way that gives you the best results.

Don't toss this aside and forget it. There's a ton of money in applying what you've just read.

As I mentioned in the beginning, this will work even better if you apply it along with the techniques in Paul Hancox's "The 10% Conversion Rate." A solid process is the key to that result.

Get a copy of Paul's book, read it, and see how much clearer things become for you.

You can get that here: <http://www.talkbiz.com/r/10percent.php?page=337>

I recommend that one highly

Read. Use. Profit.

Enjoy!

Paul Myers
paul@talkbiz.com

PS: See the next page for some very useful resources...

Recommended Resources

Note: The examples and numbers given for these resources are a description of the potential of the systems they reveal, not a guarantee of specific results. Some people will do better than the descriptions, some will not do as well, and some will get no results at all. The results you get will depend on a lot of factors that are beyond anyone's ability to predict. The biggest factors are your market and how you implement the things you learn.

Remember: No-one can guarantee you specific results, or even any results at all. Anyone who does is lying. What I can guarantee is that, if you don't get results from using these techniques, you'll get your money back, any time in the first 8 weeks. No hassles, no questions asked.

Obviously, I recommend subscribing to **TalkBiz News**. Granted, I'm biased in the matter.

The 4 articles that make up this report are pretty typical of what you get in the newsletter. They're not always as long as these, but I try to keep them as useful. (*And sometimes they can be really funny.*) You'll also get product reviews and recommendations, pointers to useful resources, and my world famous rants and ramblings.

As a bonus for subscribing (which is free, in case I forgot to mention that), you get a copy of my 112-page book, "Need to Know." This book shows you the thinking, techniques and strategies behind the biggest online successes. More importantly, it shows you how to apply them to your own business. No fluff here, folks. This is the good stuff.

Sign up here: <http://www.talkbiz.com/?page=337>

"The Secrets of a 10% Conversion Rate" : I mentioned this one throughout the articles that make up this report. In this book, Paul Hancox translates the extremely effective processes used by major offline businesses to close as much as 40% of their sales calls, on high ticket products like home improvements, into a system you can apply to your online selling.

Years ago, it used to be thought that 1-2% was about as good as you'd do with a sales process online. That has been disproven so many times now that no-one really believes it. Conversion rates of 6%, 10% and even 20% are common enough that they've become targets, rather than miracles. Paul's book shows one approach to reaching those goals.

You can get it here: <http://www.talkbiz.com/r/10percent.php?page=337>

"Small Changes, Big Profits" : Another book by Paul Hancox. This one explains how even tiny changes in your sales copy or other parts of your process can create enormous increases in your profits. You need to look at this yourself. **It is one of very few books that I consider "must read" material for anyone doing business online.** It's just that important, and the potential is just that big.

Get that here: <http://www.talkbiz.com/r/bigprofits.php?page=337>

“The TalkBiz Resource Directory” : This one is packed with free and very low-cost resources, and can save you hundreds, even thousands, of dollars on the tools you need to do business online. I'm talking professional level software that's almost all offered at no cost by the creators of the programs. No pirated stuff here.

Get that one here: <http://www.tbrx.com/directory/resource.zip>

This next one isn't exactly a resource...

If you found this report useful - [Buy me a beer](#).

Now, get started. Use what you learned in this report, and make a whole bunch more money!

And don't forget to have some fun in the process.

Paul
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