



## **Are Buyers Liars?**

# **How to Get Buyers to Buy and Improve Your Sales Forecast (Part II of II)**

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## **Buying Processes versus Sales Processes**

Once you have achieved a truly trustful relationship with your buyer, you will get the permission to help your buyer make a buying decision. In order to do this effectively and efficiently, you must gain an understanding of buying decision processes.

Think of yourself when you buy anything beyond satisfying your daily needs. For example, if you want to buy a new dining table for your home.

In our workshops we typically ask three to four people to describe the way they buy. We ask them about their criteria for buying such rather ordinary things. We ask them where they buy such items. We ask them if anyone else is directly or indirectly involved in the buying decision. We ask them about what they expect from the sales person. And we ask them if the way they buy such an item today is different from the way they bought the same item some years ago.

Ask yourself those same questions if you would buy a dining table. Perhaps ask some of your friends or colleagues as well. What you will notice is that buying processes for the very same item can vary tremendously from person to person and from time to time.

Obviously, the most successful sales process is one which matches largely with any buying process. Unfortunately, most sellers are trained to follow a certain sales process which may or may not match with a person's buying process. Using traditional sales approaches, the seller who employs a selling process which matches with the most probable buying process in his industry will be the most successful one. However, even those 'successful' sellers typically reach only a 20-30% lead-conversion-rate, i.e. they lose 70-80% of the available business.

The Stop Selling! approach is based on the premise that a seller must continuously adjust his selling process in order to match as closely as possible with the buyer's preferred buying process. That means the seller must give up the comfort of a more or less fixed selling process. Since we can never really know what the buying process of a

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buyer is at any given time, the seller must develop a high level of sensitivity towards the buyer in order to minimize the risk of 'losing' him.

### **Accelerate the Buying Decision by Coaching Your Buyer**

We can't truly know how buyers buy. In fact, most buyers don't even know in advance exactly how they are going to buy. This is not a problem but an opportunity. What the seller can meaningfully do is to coach the buyer through his/her buying decision.

What does coaching mean?

Unlike consulting where you analyze your buyer's needs and then recommend the best possible solution you (!) have, coaching means you work from the belief that you don't know if you have a truly good solution for your buyer. Instead, through active listening and effective questioning, you help the buyer line up all necessary criteria to render a buying decision possible. Only answers to questions related to the seller's products, services and performance are actually required by the seller. On the other hand, many of the answers to the questions a coaching sales person asks are irrelevant for the seller but crucial for the buyer.

For example, in the case of the dining table, it is important for the seller to know the buyer's design preferences whereas only the buyer really needs to know if the spouse must be involved in the buying decision. In many cases the buyer is left alone to line up all necessary criteria for a buying decision; hence, the buyer often undergoes a time-consuming trial-and-error process. A savvy seller doesn't leave this process unmanaged; a savvy seller pro-actively supports the buyer in his discovery.

The seller knows at a very early stage if there is anything meaningful he can offer to the buyer, thus minimizing the risk of wasting time or what we have come to describe as misleads. As a consequence, the buyer reaches a buying decision more quickly.

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## **The Invisible Decision Maker**

In many buying situations, the seller doesn't have direct access to the ultimate decision maker or to third parties who influence the buying decision. In order to maximize the chance of getting the business once you have worked out a good solution for the buyer, it is necessary to coach the buyer in dealing with these third parties. In such situations it is indispensable to discuss with your buyer the potential reactions and preferences of these influencers and how to best deal with any objections they might have.

Ideally, the seller gets the buyer to involve these third parties – directly or indirectly – right from the beginning to reduce if not avoid the occurrence of any objections.

## **Conclusion**

Progress-U's Stop Selling! approach accelerates your business by:

- Creating a truly trustful relationship between buyer and seller using the NATOO mindset (c.f. Part I of this article)
- Continuously adjusting the sales process to the buyer's current buying process
- Coaching the buyer through his buying decision process including the consideration of third parties involved

As a consequence, the quality of sales forecasts will improve considerably.

So when will you Stop Selling! and instead help your buyers buy?

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Charlie Lang is an Executive Coach and Trainer who founded Progress-U Limited in 2002. His mission is to achieve a positive change of the image of sales. He is a passionate and professional Executive Coach, Mentor Coach, Trainer, Public Speaker and Author of articles related to leadership, change management and innovative sales.

In 2004, he initiated the Master Coach Alliance ( see <http://www.master-coach-alliance.com> ) in Hong Kong, a network of professional Life, Business and Corporate Coaches. End of 2004, he started authoring the book "The Groupness Factor" ( see <http://www.progressu.com.hk/Groupness-book.htm> ) which got published in August 2005.

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