How Well Do You Really Understand What’s Going On Inside Your Buyer’s Head?

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Blog entry

Have you ever had a client, after completing the engagement, tell you something along these lines...

"We could have done this without paying you all that money."

You may have heard another version of the same phrase from self-help gurus and motivational speakers.

Even Napoleon Hill’s famous phrase...

“Whatever the mind can conceive, man can achieve.”

Nevertheless, he was so poor throughout his whole life that at one point his wife and kids deserted him because they thought he was hopeless at putting food on the table.

And after his assignment from Andrew Carnegie, the only reason why he didn’t die of starvation was that W. Clement Stone hired him as a sales trainer.

Obviously he couldn’t achieve everything that his mind could conceive.

There is one thing doing what you do and another is to add some art, a certain je ne sais quoi to it to make it truly outstanding.

Something that Mozart had to rise above Salieri, although Salieri worked very hard to keep Mozart in the shadows and away from the attention of Emperor Joseph II. Mozart was an eccentric genius, whereas Salieri was a conformist court composer.

Or something that Tesla had to rise above Edison, although Edison left no stone unturned to discredit Tesla’s work. Once, Edison promised to pay Tesla $1 million if he solves a problem on Edison’s DC generator. Tesla solved the problem, and then asked for the money. Edison laughed him out of his office...

“Tesla, you don’t understand our American humour.”

Or think of Barbara McClintock a biologist, who discovered that the DNA helix was an intelligent entity that can program and re-program itself based on information.

Her findings were so radical that both academia and the medical profession ignored it. And although she received a Nobel Prize in 1983, a large percentage of her peers still regard her findings as suspicious.

Barbara climbed inside the human body to discover what makes it work so precisely.

And this is why we have to...

Crawl Deep Inside Our Perfect Clients’ Heads And Hearts

There are lots of reasons why your buyers don’t buy. And here there is a distinction.

A buyer may buy, but not from you. Or a buyer may not buy at all. Either he can figure out how to do the work in-house or he may decide that the work doesn’t have to be done at all.

What happens to many consultants is that they bombard buyers with solutions and proposals without fully understanding what buyers may or may not buy.
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What IT sellers have to understand is that buyers, before buying anything at all, try to solve their problems in-house. This is why educational materials are so bottom-achingingly successful and effective in lead generation and lead nurturing.

We know that teachers in general have pretty high respect (well, I know, I know. But in general), so if you come across as an empathetic teacher, as opposed to as a hard-nosed huckster, you can sell much more at much higher prices.

The problem is that many consulting firms live hand to mouth (seemingly high gross revenue with very high operating costs), so they don’t have the patience to wait until buyers go through their sales funnels at their own paces. They use all sorts of methods of various ethical levels to prod buyers to decision-making.

And, yes, they make their decisions. But even if those buyers become clients, they are seriously sub-par clients. They pay less than they should and, very often, the terms and conditions are highly disadvantageous to sellers in order to appease buyers into the sale.

So, the key is to understand what’s going on inside buyers’ heads, and then following their paces of decision-making.

Or, even better, you can slow down buyers’ paces.

Why?

I use fishing as an example.

Many years ago when I was learning to fish, I learnt from people who used very delicate equipment because they enjoyed the sportsmanship in fishing and they wanted to give the fish plenty of opportunities to unhook themselves. We used very thin lines with very low breaking points and very small hooks.

And we lost lots of fish. Once or twice the line snapped, but usually the fish just shook themselves off the hook.

But it was a real proud moment to hook and net a nice big fish.

And this is how I see client acquisition.

I like using delicate equipment, so buyers have lots of opportunities to “unhook” themselves. This is a screening process.

It screens out buyers unless they are seriously pre-interested, pre-motivated, pre-qualified, and pre-disposed to give me money and pay attention to my advice.

And good luck to buyers who “unhook” themselves.

Buyers unhook themselves for different reasons. In my case I’ve had buyers who’ve unhooked themselves from working with me because I speak with an accent, I don’t have an MBA, I love heavy metal music, I wear black clothes and because I’m bald. And of course, some other both known and unknown reasons, including lots of psychological reasons.

If I remind the buyer of the guy who stalked his teenage daughter, I’m hosed.

If the buyer is a hard-core kinaesthetic and I’m auditory, then I’m toast.
Well, who cares really? I’ve always respected their decisions and have never tried to sweet-talk them into working with me.

Also, I don’t want to step out of my own character to match and mirror a buyer. Well, I’m not a good chameleon. Besides my eyes don’t rotate 360 degrees and my tongue can’t accelerate at 41 g\(^1\). I suppose, as I’m getting older, my tongue is getting slower too.

Anyway...

My slow client onboarding process allows me to discover what’s happening inside buyers ‘heads and that makes life a tad easier for me.

At least I do my best to make sure that my client onboarding process answers most of the questions that are buzzing inside buyers’ heads.

It allows me to check if a specific buyer...

1. Has similar values to mine.
2. He is a value hunter as opposed to a bargain hunter.
3. Regards me as hired brain (respected expert) as opposed to hired brawn (fungible vendor).
4. She is a real buyer as opposed to a self-important flunky.
5. He has a long-term strategic view as opposed to a short-term tactical view.
6. She is focused on outputs (objectives) as opposed to inputs (checked tasks and number of working hours).

As I’m getting the answers to my questions, I can match them against the criteria in my Perfect Client Profile. And if I don’t like the gap between my profile and the buyer, then the buyer is gone faster than a speeding bullet.

And now we’ve arrived at...

**Buyers’ Subconscious List of Requirements**

When you sit down with buyers, they already have pretty well-formed requirements in their heads. Well, requirements about what they want and questions about how you can help them to get things done.

Buyers also know that they have to consult with other subject matter experts to make final decisions. And this is why it’s even more important to give clear and precise answers to your buyers’ subconscious questions.

And now let’s look at some of those questions in no particular order...

- How well does this seller understand our business?
- How well does this seller understand our unique situation, challenges and opportunities?

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\(^1\) In comparison, when a dragster car accelerates from 0 to 160 km/h in 0.86 seconds, that’s 5.3 g. Trained fighter pilots, wearing g suits, can sustain up to 9g without loss of consciousness.
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- How much do I care about the improvements your service can bring offers to our company?
- Check, check, check. Is my hype-o-meter properly tuned in?
- How personally fulfilling would this new improvement be to me?
- How much of a distraction could this project become for me?
- How well do I understand how quickly/slowly we could produce results through this project?
- How well do I understand the seller’s subject matter area, so I can avoid getting fleeced?
- How confident am I in my ability to choose the right firm in the seller’s industry?
- How much do I know about this type of service that your industry sells?
- How much am I aware of the magnitude of the consequences if we don’t do this project right now?
- How do I know whether this service is real or just some cloverleaf-covered hype and bullshit?
- How well do I know the seller’s particular services?
- How fully do I understand the seller’s industrial practices?
- How can I recognised when I’m about to get screwed over? Do I know the red flags?
- Do I know what to ask this seller?
- Can I expect to receive praise recognition promotion, pay- and/or status increase if we pull this off?
- What can be the wrath of my peers and the company if we fail with this project?
- Do I have sufficient attention to dedicate to this project/opportunity?
- Do I have all the resources (Time, Energy, Money) I need to pull this off?
- How confident I am that this opportunity is going to bring us a massive pay-off?
- How comforting is it to me that this seller is already doing this for others like me?
- How happy am I for having the ultimate control over this project.

So What To Do Now?

Now you know some of the questions and concerns buzzing around inside your buyers’ heads. Now you can start preparing for them.

Earlier we talked about the Nobel Prize winner biologist, Barbara McClintock. She climbed into the human body to make some amazing discoveries.

How can you climb inside your target market’s world where you can find really vital pieces of information that can help you to distinguish your services from that of the competition?
Can you become so absorbed in your target market that you can anticipate their concerns?
The better you can anticipate these concerns, the better you get rewarded for your services.
Yes, theoretically anyone could do this, but will they?
No.
It’s far too fiddly and time-consuming.
But the better you understand what’s going on inside your buyers’ heads, the better you can
match your sales message to their expectations.
This is where your unique selling proposition (USP) comes into the equation.
The problem is that it takes some serious time and effort to develop a good USP, so many of
your competitors don’t even bother. They are too busy selling on price.
Just imagine this...
What if your firm were the most trusted and respected consultancy for your specific target
market, and while your competitors use armies of peddlers to chase after and harass the
marketplace with their idiotic sales pitches through manual labour cold prospecting grunt work,
you could build trust and develop magnetic attraction with your target market by better
understanding the ways your buyers think, and in turn, to become the default go-to expert in your
niche for the services your firm sells?
Think about this baby.
Can you justify investing some time and energy to work on this?
Hopefully.
With victory on high...

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http://www.di-squad.com/

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Consulting Retainer Engagement Toolkit.
Mastering the Proposal Process
Dynamic Duo Mentor Programme.