



**Developing People > Advancing Business**



*Thoughts about selling from one of Great  
Britain's most successful salesmen.*

## BUYER MOTIVATION

WHITE PAPER

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©Alfred Tack, *How to Succeed in Selling*

Cedar Press: 1975

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2009

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## BUYER MOTIVATION

To be certain that his offer has the right appeal a salesperson must understand the reasons behind a buying decision — what motivates a buyer. Is it price — quality — confidence in a supplier? It could be any or all of these reasons, and selling would be easier if buying motives could be isolated as simply.

To understand motives it is easier to begin with fundamentals. Here are reasons, taken from biographies and autobiographies, that have motivated humans to explore:

Explorer A: 1. *Main Motive:* To discover rare plant specimens

2. To discover physiological and psychological limits
3. To test endurance

Explorer B: 1. *Main Motive:* To win applause by conquering the unconquerable.

2. To discover one's self

Explorer C: 1. *Main Motive:* To contest previous theories about the origin of a tribe of people

2. To write a book

Explorer D: 1. *Main Motive:* For self-enjoyment

2. To make a film for television so that others might share the enjoyment

Explorer E: 1. *Main Motive:* To get away from a humdrum existence

2. To prove to family and friends that they are different from others
3. To seek a quiet existence
4. Revulsion against overcrowded modern cities
5. To find out whether Robinson Crusoe could exist under modern conditions on an uninhabited island

On the face of it, the main objective of Explorer A was to seek rare plant specimens, but perhaps what finally convinced this explorer to take financial and physical risks was the need to test limits — to discover physiological and psychological limits.



Explorer E yearned to get away from a humdrum existence, but this explorer was also motivated by a need to achieve some inner peace in the security of life on an island, and to be unique among other humans.

The lessons to be learned from these examples of motivation are these :

1. There is usually a main motive and subsidiary motives behind every human action.
2. A motive which influences one person may not apply to another, although both may have dual objectives.

These facets of human behavior, accepted by most anthropologists, psychologists, and scientists, have a direct application to decision-makers.

1. Buyers, while usually having a main buying motive, are also swayed by subsidiary motives.
2. Buyers employed by different companies may buy the same product from the same supplier, but for different reasons.

### *Underlying Motives in Buying Decisions*

One salesperson may have a price advantage, another an efficiency advantage, a third a design promotion scheme or packaging advantage over competitors, but each may lose orders by thinking in terms only of motivating a buyer because of the one potential advantage. While buyers might appear to be mainly interested in design, they could also be motivated by

security (e.g. heavy advertising, regular deliveries, a three-year guarantee). The salesperson having efficiency as an advantage might not appreciate that the buyer could be influenced through fear (the shop stewards might not approve of the high-speed efficiency of the equipment). And the salesperson who drives home the price advantage may not realize that the profit from repeat business that the customer is obtaining because of the ready demand for a competitor's product motivates the buyer more than an immediate gain.

Each of these salespeople may well be able to cope with the buyer's need for security, fear, or increased profitability through repeat business, but overlook the need for emphasizing these motives.

You may well now ask the questions:

*But if people are motivated to act in different ways to reach a similar objective, how can I know which main motivator to use in my sales offer? Also, how do I discover subsidiary motivations?*

Regular calling will enable you to learn the motivators applying to individual buyers. You also learn by observation, by asking the buyers questions, and by listening to and assessing their replies. But you should include in your sales offer all the prime and subsidiary motivators applicable to your merchandise, product, or service. If a product or service has a different application for different buyers, it is perfectly feasible to use selective motivators.



*The salesperson's objective must always be to try to include in the sales offer the motivational force or forces which will impel the buyer to buy.*

Buying Motives

A rational motive is one which is the result of reasoning: it stems from that part of the brain which is the powerhouse of rational thinking, the higher cortex. Emotion stems from a lower part of the brain; yet continually, the higher order of mental reasoning is superseded by the lower order of emotional response. Over and over again, human emotions take precedence over reason.

Rationally, the late Edward, Duke of Windsor, should not have given up his throne to marry a divorced woman. Emotionally, he could do no other than live with the woman he loved.

Rationally, an employee should keep calm when faced with a situation which could lead to dismissal. Emotionally, many employees actually precipitate that dismissal by losing their temper.

What is all this about? you may ask. *Love of a woman — getting the sack — what help is that to an industrial salesman?*

Recall this fact :

*Every known action has a motive behind it-and all buyers, men and women, are human beings, with human frailties.*

When a managing director insists that a friend or client visit his factory to see a new piece of machinery, or a modern conveyor belt system, or a new computer, his main object is not to impress with the instant statistics of the computer, or the fact that 10,000 knobs a second pass on to another phase in production instead of the previous 7,000 knobs. He shows his wares as a stamp collector shows an album. He is proud of his purchase — therefore, pride could have played a part when the initial order was placed.

Although it may be rare for sentiment to play a part in all forms of buying, it can apply. When buyers purchase consumer goods from suppliers because they have done so for twenty-five years, it may be because these suppliers have always provided a fine service. But sentiment can play its part, otherwise other suppliers would be tried from time to time. A buyer will sometimes say, "I've seen that firm grow over twenty-five years. I knew his father very well."

A salesperson should be aware of sentiment as a buying reason, if only to work out ways of overcoming it and getting a share of that buyer's business.

It was emotional buying which took precedence during the Buy British (or buy American, or other national "buy" drives) drive some years ago — sentiment for the home country was played upon. When salespeople say, "We are a local firm and can give you quick service," they are indirectly attempting to motivate a buyer by a sentimental appeal. No salesperson should ever say, "You ought to buy from us because we are a local firm." That is not playing on sentiment, but on charity or guilt.

One of the strongest of all emotional appeals is the *approval of others*. That pat on the back can mean as much to the owner of a small shop as it does to a professional buyer or a managing director. Every buyer delights in hearing:

*I like the display*

*You bought well*

*That new fork-lift truck is first-class*

*What a difference the new shelving has made*

*You're moving the goods off the shelves faster than any of our other branches*

*You were very wise to change to leasing*

The professional salesperson knows that, again and again, emotion plays a part in motivating a buyer to buy. Rover cars in the 1960s took full page advertisements in many papers to stress the safety factor of their cars. Heading the advertisement was a picture of a mother with her two children. The caption read: *Three important reasons why you should consider a Rover 2000 for your holiday*. The copy then began: *If you've got a wife and kids you must put safety at the top of your list*. Half-way down the page was a sub-caption: *And twenty-three reasons more*. The twenty-three safety factors were then listed.

Few readers would study them carefully, but every reader got the message: If I love my family I must buy a Rover.

Rationally, all Rovers needed in the advertisement was to state one after the other the twenty-three safety

factors, and that should have been sufficient to motivate many potential buyers. But Rovers made their main appeal an emotional one.

### *Classification of Buying Motives*

<i>Rational</i>	<i>Emotional</i>
gain or saving of money	satisfaction of pride
satisfaction of caution	pleasure
benefit to health	sentimental reasons
protection and security	fear
utility value	envy
	approval of others
	social achievement
	to feel important

Here is a more specific classification of rational motives applicable to most salesmen :

**Profit:** direct gain of money; return from investment; cost reduction; increased output; less absenteeism; quicker selling lines

**Efficiency:** overall performance; it is faster; easier to handle; less risk of breakdown; less complicated; more powerful; quieter in operation; performs to finer limits

**Protection and Security:** confidence in supplier; guaranteed standards; guaranteed deliveries; elimination of risk to employees; good after-sales service; wards off competition; heavily backed by advertising

**Appearance:** good design; compact; modern in its concept; wide color range; appealing packaging

**Durability:** long life; less maintenance; withstands rough usage; less risk of breakdowns; higher levels of customer satisfaction

**Utility:** saving in time; labor; effort more convenient to use; easier to handle

**Health:** better working conditions; reduces strain; better environment; benefit to employees (company

cafeteria, food, air conditioning, lighting, etc.); health; value to customers

Because of his understanding of buyers' motivation, a salesperson is able to build a strong sales offer — one that will appeal to the widest range of buyers.

### *Problem-Solving Motivators*

When buyers have a problem they have worries, and *no one* likes worries. When a salesperson is told of a problem, he or she should give high priority to customers' interests provided they know the advice they may give will be within the company's policy.

When buyers receive a stream of complaints because a component part keeps breaking down, they become worried. If the buyer's R&D department cannot solve that problem, they probably lie awake at night thinking about it. When the experts try test after test, yet breakdowns still occur, it can be with real relief that they hear from salespeople that their company might be able to help.

This may seem unusual in industry, but it happens time and time again. If that salespeople solves the problem is IN. The salesperson has given the buyers PROTECTION and SECURITY. The sales person has also benefited the buyer's HEALTH. That buyer in the future, will always given the salesperson a warm welcome and orders if possible.

When the managing director is complaining bitterly of rising costs, or showing concern at low output, this leader will listen intently to the salesperson who can help to solve problems.

It could be a new machine is required, but because of its size a new factory layout would be needed. The salesperson of the machine could, perhaps, help to solve the layout problem as well (Motivation, PROFIT).

Or it might be that delivery costs are getting out of hand that could be solved by a well-qualified salesperson selling a specialized delivery service. Perhaps there is a cash problem — liquidity. The salesperson selling a leasing service — equipment, plant, cars — could help solve this problem by proving

how capital can be used more efficiently (Motivation, EFFICIENCY).

All salesperson must remind themselves continually that a prime motivator is helping a buyer to solve problems. There are other quite dissimilar problems that buyers have to deal with, and that salespeople can help them to resolve.

Professional salespeople know that they are not only in direct competition with competitors, but also with the day-to-day demands made upon buys — demands from associates and employees.

No company, however large, can afford to buy everything offered to it: more luxurious offices, a head office in the center of town, private executive aircraft, a larger employee cafeteria, more sophisticated computers, bigger cars for salespeople, an exhibition yacht . . . And no managing director can agree to all the demands made upon him or her by the various departments in the organization.

A managing director has to withstand this type of pressure continually. Research and development may want new testing equipment, the production manager cannot do without new paint spraying booths, the production manager must have that new, expensive, all-purpose piece of machinery, the dispatch manager wants more trucks, while the warehouse manager wants extra space built on to the warehouse. The Public Relations Officer, conscious of the company image, wants a landscape gardener to lay out the tract of land in front of the factory, the financial director needs a highly sophisticated accounting system, and on the factory floor the cleaner wants new brooms and the cafeteria manager needs more cutlery..

Salespeople calling on that company have to compete for the firm's cash. They have to make that managing director (or the procurement officer) give their product or service priority over the accounting machine, the garden layout, the paint-spraying booths . . .

How, then, can salespeople use their knowledge of motivators to persuade a buyer to give their product or service this priority?

The answer is: by creating a *want* in the mind of the buyer.

## Creating Wants

There are specific areas in which salespeople can create the right atmosphere for a buyer to want the merchandise, products or services they are offering. Even a specifying authority — architect consulting engineer, welfare officer — will only make a decision when he or she wants to favor one supplier instead of another.

Understanding motivational forces allows salespeople to create a desire to buy by appealing to a buyer's wants. And what we all want when we buy are benefits to ourselves, our families, or our company; and if we are retailers, we want benefits to our customers.

There is no one point in a sale when desire is created, any more than there is one time only when confidence is established. Salespeople are always building confidence in themselves and their company — and every time they show a buyer a benefit, they should be creating a want. Salespeople who build benefits after benefits are professionals, and they get more than their share of the business.

While most minds are influenced by emotional motivators, all benefits are based on rational motivators.

Understanding motivational forces allows salespeople to concentrate on the main benefits that appeal to a particular buyer.

Buyer A is mainly motivated by profitability

Buyer B is mainly motivated by security

Buyer C is mainly motivated by efficiency



Salesperson Jones will show Buyer A the benefit of profitability to be derived from the product or service and will bring these benefits up (quick turnover — high demand) again and again; while Salesperson Brown, selling to Buyer B will concentrate on proving the benefits of regular deliveries: a twenty-four hour

service — standards guaranteed. Salesperson White, selling to Buyer C, demonstrates that the efficiency of the product must benefit the buyer's production line.

Professional salespeople, while concentrating on the main benefits offered by their product or service will, however, never overlook all the subsidiary benefits. It is often these subsidiary benefits that will finally motivate a buyer to buy.

Salespeople also create *wants* by talking in terms of what a product *does* rather than what it *is*.

Do you buy a mattress because the salesperson tells you that "there is cushioning of fleece on one side of the mattress and white cotton felt on the other..."? Or do you buy because the professional salesperson has told you that "With this mattress you will feel extra warm in the winter and cool in the summer..."?

Does a buyer buy because the salesperson, steeped in technicalities says, "This melamine-formaldehyde resin, when used in a mixture with alkyd resins, gives a much faster heat cure than what a urea-formaldehyde resin is used along. The outstanding characteristics that urea resins supply to films are further enhanced with melamine resins, that are then resistant to various chemical re-agents and maintain durability and color retention to heat and light..."?

Or does the buyer buy because the professional salesperson has said, "The melamine-formaldehyde resin is used with alkyd resins, so that you will be able to produce a porcelain-like appearance, resistant to abrasions and heat..."?

Does a buyer buy because a salesperson says, "Our new pack is made of double strength Riebelene and to open i you only have to press a small plastic button..."? Or does the buyer buy because the salesperson says, "Your customers will keep coming back for more, because the Riebelene pack means a negligible risk of spillage — no more mopping up — and housekeepers will no longer scrape their hands trying to open the pack"?

Buyers buy for the latter reasons — those given by the professional salesperson who always translates technicalities into direct benefits to the buyer and the company.

### *Motivation by Filling Needs and Stimulating Wants*

In every industry there are basic needs catered for by a host of suppliers — raw materials component parts, standard tools, packaging supplies — every kind of merchandise — consumer goods and consumer durables. These needs could be counted by the hundreds in some factories, by the thousands in others, by the dozens in shops and stores. Suppliers of basic needs are usually in a highly competitive market. Every week buyers will see salespeople eager to tell the buyers why they should buy from them instead of their current suppliers: disinfectants or ball bearings, cleaning materials or switchgear, overalls for staff or electric motors, soaps or detergents, dresses and coats...

When motivates buyers to change suppliers or agree to a change in the specification of the product they are buying regularly from one of their suppliers? They will only change their mind if they gain additional benefits from switching to a new supplier or agreeing to changes in specification.

To change the minds of buyers, salespeople must, therefore, turn a basic need into a want — a want for the salesperson's product or service. As the main buying benefit is usually already obtainable from the present supplier, the salesperson who is competing to fill a basic need must be sure of selling every subsidiary benefit offered by his or her product. One of these could be the motivator to change a basic need into a want for the product.

### *Unrecognized or Real Needs*

An unrecognized need, usually referred to as the real need, is sometimes obvious, sometimes not. For example, before domestic refrigerators were on the market, although block ice was often used to keep food cool, in the majority of households food was kept in cellars or food safes, or was placed in bowls of water. As far as the people of those times were concerned, their need was being filled. The food was just that shade cooler, lasted just that little bit

longer than if it were left in an outside warmer atmosphere so these simple methods filled the need. When, eventually, household refrigerators were marketed, which filled the real need, there was a great

deal of resistance to buying. Housewives believed that except perhaps in very hot weather, they had no food deterioration problems, and were content with their food safes, etc. Salespeople who sold refrigerators then had a very difficult job persuading people to want a refrigerator, because the housewives did not recognize their real *need*.

The recognizing of real needs is not confined to householders; skilled buyers, brilliant managing directors, heads of production units, often do not recognize their real needs. Photocopying/printer machines are now looked upon by most businesses as essential office equipment — yet when they were first launched on the market they met with extreme resistance. It was not until salespeople employed by the Rank Xerox organization were able to create the want by showing the real need that photocopying made headway. Nowadays, as new photocopiers/printers come on to the market, salespeople have to find those extra benefits to enable them to compete with the market leaders.

A managing director may believe that his or her basic need is satisfied by an file cabinet system — a system that has grown over the years, entailing the use of many filing cabinets and causing overcrowding. "We'll have to move," says the office manager. "Yes," agrees the managing director, "I think it is coming to that."

But the managing director's real need could be for an electronic system installation. Such an installation would save a great deal of space and, retrieval taking only seconds, would enable staff who have constantly to search the files for information to be better employed. The filing cabinets could be disposed of and there would be an improved service both to customers and salesmen.



The *need* being unrecognized, a salesperson selling electronic document storage systems would have to emphasize these — and other benefits — until the *want* was created.

Often, in the retail trade, there is an unrecognized need for better quality and higher-priced products, but the retailer is obsessed with the belief that in his district no one will pay the higher price of the quality goods.

Retailers and wholesalers often have to be persuaded that they do not need more of X at \$5 but should stock Y at \$5 + and create new business for themselves.

Here is an example from Nu-aire Contracts Ltd, a company within our own group, which saw that a whole dimension in building design could be opened up if a certain product were made available. The building industry did not, at first, recognize the need.

British building regulations state that a toilet/ bathroom must either be provided with a window that can be opened or with a mechanical extractor system that changes the air in the room a specified number of times in the hour. Also, various local recommendations specify that the fan system serving these internal rooms must be of the standby type, so that should the fan fail, the reserve fan automatically takes over.

All these rules are designed to protect the health of tenants and are strictly enforced by both the public health inspector and the building inspectorate.

Up until about 1967 the need for ventilation had been met by special fans designed to serve internal restrooms. They were limited to sizes suitable for a number of rooms linked together by a common duct system, and therefore the only occasions on which internal restrooms were used were in fairly high-rise buildings. Because of this situation, low- and medium-rise buildings were not designed with internal restrooms. On the other hand, there were quite obvious pressures on the building industry to bring these rooms into the internal core of the construction. These reasons were:

1. Lack of suitable building land and its cost made narrow-frontage dwellings attractive to the developers and architects.

2. The grouping together of all services in the central core reduced costs.

Nu-Aire Contracts Ltd recognized a need, and designed a range of small units suitable for ventilating individual internal restrooms. They satisfied the various standards, were inexpensive, and most important, they could be selected and detailed by the architect without help from specialized service engineers.

After the real need was explained by Nu-Aire salesperson, the demand was created. These units subsequently directly influenced architecture in this country, so that today, internal restrooms are a feature of dwellings, from low- to high-rise types; but in spite of the uniqueness of these units, Nu-Aire salespeople, time and time again, had to make the *need* for the units recognized, and then create the *want*.

## BUYER MOTIVATION

To summarize, here are the steps to an appreciation of buyer motivation:

1. There is a motive behind every human action.
2. There is always a prime motivate and subsidiary motive. The salesperson, while concentrating on the prime motive, must ever overlook the subsidiary motives.
3. Different buyers buy similar equipment, but often for different reasons. Selective motives should be used when applicable.
4. There are rational and emotional buying motives, and the importance of emotional motives must never be underrated.
5. The salesperson's objective must always be to try to include in his or her sales offer the motivational force or forces that will impel the buyer to buy.
6. Buyers first fulfill *basic needs*, but often do not *recognize* their real *needs*.
7. Benefits should be "personalized."
8. A salesperson turns *needs* into *wants* by proving benefits to the buyers and their company.



## BENEFITS

Understanding buyer motivation means appreciating why and how they arrive at their decisions — why a buyer has a fear of change. And most important, it enables a salesperson to progress an interview this means that while he or she is actually selling they will know — not by intuition but by sheer logic — how a buyer will react to claims, statements, offers; and the underlying thoughts of the buyer when objections are raised.

*The professional salesperson also knows that it is benefits derived from a knowledge of buyer motivation that act as a stimulus, and develop a want in the mind of the buyer.*

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