

AS SEEN IN
enLIGHTenment
MAGAZINE
JANUARY 2017

CREATING THE HUMAN TO HUMAN EXPERIENCE



The way people buy things has shifted dramatically, which requires a tsunami of adjustments for lighting showrooms.

BY MARK OKUN

The most obvious result of these changes has been the decrease of walk-in traffic by clients who are in the discovery phase of their buying journey. Many of the people who once walked into showrooms – or any other retailers for that matter – to see new styles or finishes have started the discovery part of their purchase at home, typically on a mobile device. And yes, think phone first, then tablet/iPad.

While there is a diminishing group of customers who have not yet adapted to the digital world, that number is getting smaller. As a society, we are

solidly on the downhill side of the “Late Majority” segment of the “Technology Adoption Lifecycle” regarding our use of the smartphone and tablet. Very soon, only the final group of adopters – known as the “Laggards” – will be left.

With the increased access to information these devices provide, we are still human beings, who are, by nature, social creatures. However, in sales the digital age has created a two-dimensional reality focused on transparency – and this has resulted in an experience that is less than a human-to-human exchange with clients, and there is

no escaping it. This is also an opportunity brick-and-mortar retailers need to exploit.

GOING BACK IN TIME

Back in the 20th Century (i.e. the dark days before the digital revolution), everyone in sales was benefited by what is called *Information Asymmetry*. This describes the occurrence in a selling situation when one party has more or better information than the other, which can create an imbalance of power between the client and the salesperson.

Today, that has all changed; salespeople and business owners are no longer the gatekeepers to industry-accurate information. It is out there for everyone to find if they want to. That means the amount of product-specific knowledge you share will vary with clients based on their comfort level with the Internet.

The out-of-date character of the “typical salesperson” is diminishing, and it will soon be gone forever, left only to movies and memories. There is now a need to adapt our old selling methods to ones that will benefit both our clients and our showrooms. Being human in your interactions is now more important than ever.

THE CUSTOMER IS IN CONTROL

If you have been a student of professional sales, you have heard of “the sales process.” Well, the process that was taught for decades has died, and it will not be back.

Clients’ immediate access to information has convoluted their buying journey. With up to 65 percent of the journey being done digitally, this has placed the initial introduction of products and other aspects of the “Top of the Funnel” processes under their control.

The discovery phase of shopping has been impacted the most. Clients no longer need to drive to a store to discover the options they have in lighting fixtures. There is no reason to interact with a salesperson to find out the details of an item, much of that is now provided via online product descriptions and reviews.

“Laggards” still represent a portion of the consumers we interact with at the top of the funnel and knowing how to work with them is still important for now.

A Majority of the Customers’ Buying Journey is Complete Before They Talk to a Salesperson

THE NEW ROLE OF THE MODERN SALESPERSON

This shift in control has been created by the digitally informed customer and has reshaped the role of today’s salesperson, setting higher standards of performance and professionalism. Long gone is the manipulative part of the process. Let me be clear: The sales skills of questioning, listening, problem-solving, and providing options are still critical talents that must be learned, practiced, and used.

Along with the sales process and having a good personality, modern salespeople must possess the needed human-to-human skills in their tool belt if they want to continue to succeed in the market. This means there is a need for you to learn an additional set of core competencies.

The successful 21st Century salesperson will have morphed into a “consultant” and “guide” for the client, which is a very different role than sales trainees were taught in the past.

You must learn who your various customers are by focusing on the different personas who enter your business. Each client interaction will need to be tailored specifically to that person.

The interactions you have with people must be focused entirely on them and the outcome they want that fulfills their particular needs.

As IMAP pricing aspires to level the playing field between online sellers and brick-and-mortar retailers, you need to create a sales team that can –

Each client interaction will need to be tailored specifically to that person



AS SEEN IN
enLIGHTenment
MAGAZINE
JANUARY 2017

and, more importantly, is willing to – master the skills required to deliver the value of a human-to-human interaction. Doing this correctly creates loyalty for both the salesperson and the store.

NEW SKILLS TO ACQUIRE

➔ **STORYTELLER**

When communicating with people in a human-to-human way, the power of “Storytelling” is valuable. “Stories” are an emotional journey that affects your customer and are memorable.

The basics are easy to grasp. When creating your story, four segments must be included: Character (Hero or Villain), Conflict, Solution, and Result.

The hero is a person who, like the customer, is facing a similar problem. When your customer can relate to the hero’s journey, they mentally go along for the ride with them and will want the same or a different result (based on the conflict).

Your stories must relate the experience the customer had or did not have, while only giving a minor role to you, your store, and your product. When a

story is fashioned well, you (as the guide) have the map the customer needs, and they will know it.

Examples of stories could be the myths about LED lamps, lead-time disappointments, or a lighting remodel that increased a home’s value. The material you need for these stories comes from your real-life, day-to-day interactions with clients.

➔ **DIGITAL SKILLS**

It might seem odd to include “Digital Skills” as part of an article on human-to-human selling, but the Internet allows customers to check out which company (or person) is the best fit for their needs before they ever get into their cars.

In my mind, it is no longer a question whether to be active in social media or not. The real question is: When will it become an essential part of your sales department’s job description? No matter what a staff member’s current digital skill level is, becoming proficient with social media should be a professional development goal for 2017 and beyond.

Having a strong command of digital skills



It might seem odd to include “Digital Skills” as part of an article on human-to-human selling, but the Internet allows customers to check out which company (or person) is the best fit for their needs before they ever get into their cars.

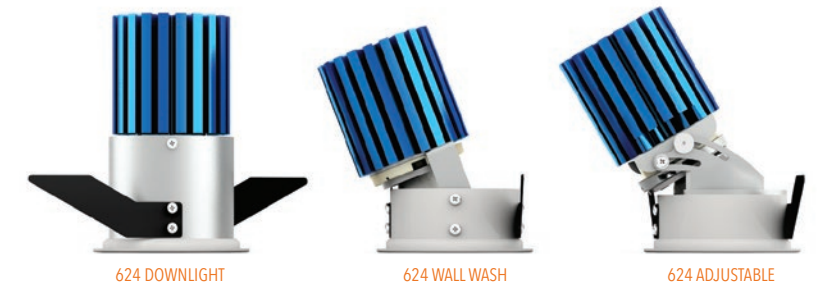


ALPHA2
2" LED DOWNLIGHT

The ABC's of lighting design...

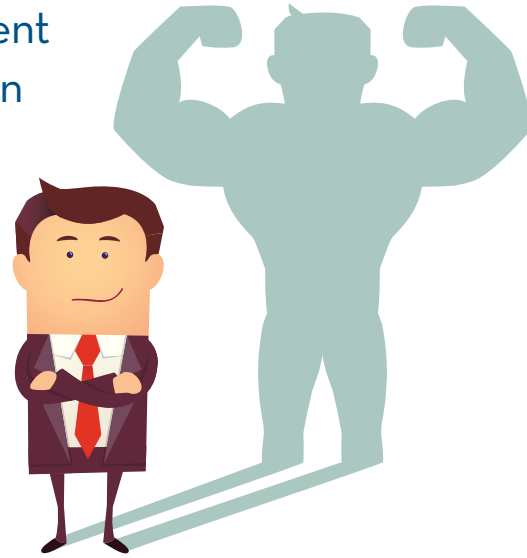
Alphabet lighting offers cutting edge LED technology and controls for any environment.

- Round or Square
- Cutting edge LED and controls technology
- 2, 3, 4 and 6"
- Multiple trim finishes
- WET, Title 24 compliant, Energy star pending



AS SEEN IN
enLIGHTenment
MAGAZINE
JANUARY 2017

Being confident is the lynchpin to being a successful salesperson.



provides you with a level of accessibility for the engagement and transparency that your customer or prospect is looking for.

➡CONFIDENCE

Being confident is the lynchpin to being a successful salesperson. Having confidence in yourself, your company, and your product will come out in everything you do. This is an important skill you can develop.

A few ways to increase your confidence is by keeping track of your accomplishments. By listing your results, you will have a history of the barriers that you encountered and overcome. You can refer to these journal entries when self-doubt creeps in or when the naysayers are getting to you.

When you see yourself as confident, you will be confident. On the flip side, if you lack confidence, that message will also be sent to the customer loud and clear.

➡FLEXIBILITY

As sales professionals, we must increase our flexibility. Now, this doesn't mean you're working on yoga poses, but focused on your communication flexibility. Adapting your personal style to better match the client's style has many significant benefits for both of you. The power of being flexible comes from emphasizing the similarities in your communication styles and those of your customer while downplaying the differences.

This is a deliberate adjustment to the way you

communicate and helps to reduce "style bias." This is not manipulation (being nice for a personal gain) or conformity (withholding your point of view). Communication style bias happens when the salesperson and customer have different – and sometimes opposite – ways of communicating. A failure to connect with a client – with both the customer and the sales associate misinterpreting what the other wants or is doing – will often result in lost sales and missed opportunities to build relationships.

FINDING THE RIGHT LIGHT

In the end, it is all about selling the proper lighting solution to your customers. Even when they come into your showroom armed with their online education, they are at the test-and-trial phase of their buying journey. I call this the brick-and-mortar advantage since it's at this point where you can make an impression by discovering their needs and the results they want to achieve. It's the fuel for your selling engine.

It is all about putting people first in this human-to-human process. With so many outlets where customers can purchase lighting, you are the most powerful influence in assisting these clients to buy their products from you.

Will you do what it takes to help them buy from you and your company?

WHAT IT TAKES

More than ever, the interest you develop in your customer and their needs, the more interest they will have in you – and this directly impacts your sales. Hone those digital skills that will most effect your job. Know how to use your preferred digital device and join the proper social networks, even if it is for work only.

BE PART OF AN ENGAGED TEAM

This article is written with a focus on salespeople and their management, but it is the entire team in a store that makes the shoppers' experience memorable, whether that's good or bad. Each member of your team must be willing to participate in creating an exceptional experience.

The goal is to wow your buyer at every touchpoint. It's not easy: Modifying your staff's behaviors takes work, hard work, and different work to become the experience customers want and expect today. ❖



Mark Okun is Business Contributor to enLIGHTenment Magazine and President of Mark Okun Consulting & Performance Group. He has more than 30 years of hands-on retail experience training and coaching sales associates in the lighting and furniture industries. Mark@bravo-businessmedia.com



Light Your Life

Grammercy Chandelier



INDOOR



OUTDOOR



EXTRAORDINARY

LIVEX[®]
LIGHTING

46 Clyde Road, Somerset, NJ 08873, USA
sales@livexlighting.com

Tel: 800-761-8056
www.livexlighting.com

Fax: 800-688-6934

