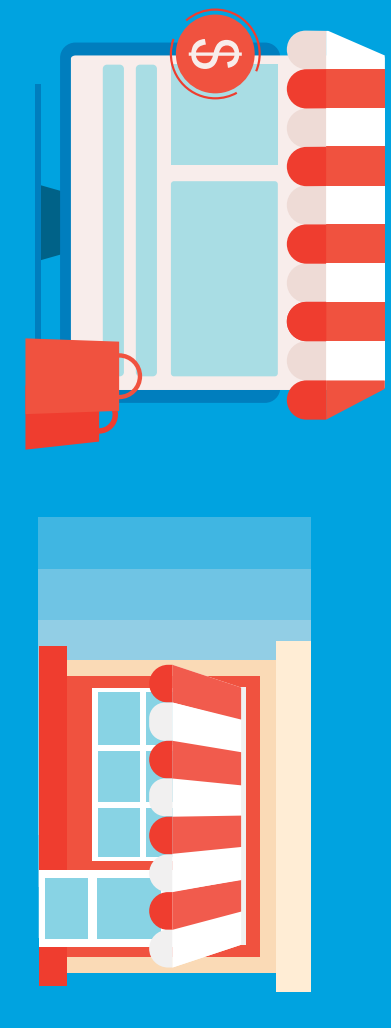


Why Buy From Me?



As the digital shopping age continues to boom, successful brick-and-mortar showrooms have learned to change their mindset to come out on top of the competition.

BY MARK OKUN

The anxious chatter started some time ago when showrooms faced another challenge to their viability and existence. Then came the June '18 market and the nervous buzz of the unknown reached a crescendo: some questioned fairness, while others offered ideas and recommendations on how to navigate today's turbulent waters.

This column will not delve too deeply into the "new digital" economy; there is so much information to glean about it that I feel it would be a waste of your time to re-read all the well-worn statements, comments, and business tips that many of us can recite from memory. Instead, I'd like to focus on the segment of the sales process that will be, in my opinion, the game changer for lighting showrooms — or any business that has face-to-face

contact with their clients.

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced that the estimate of U.S. retail e-commerce sales for the first quarter of 2018 changes were \$123.7 billion, an increase of 39 percent (±0.7%) from the fourth quarter of 2017.

THIS IS ONLY A TEST

If you are unsure regarding your preparedness to grow in the online world, this short test can help determine if your business is vulnerable to the ongoing growth of the digital revolution.

- Is it a chore to shop with you?
- Is the primary mission of your showroom to trade boxes for dollars?
- Is your showroom staff vibrant and exciting and with all of your products carefully curated?

The perfect score is: no, no, yes. Being deficient in one of these areas will not cause an immediate closure, but when left unattended the results of the drip, drip, drip of complacency will rear up aggressively, more so than ever before in the history of commerce.

The non-sleeping AI (Artificial Intelligence) that all digital commerce is built around competes head to head with showroom and sales team members 24/7. This past June at the AI expo in Amsterdam, the conversation that dominated the show was about the inclusion of Emotional Intelligence or Emotional Quotient (EI/EQ) into AI. The collective thought is that it is time for the machines to become emotionally intelligent.

If you're not familiar with EQ, the three components are explained simply by author and inspirational speaker Maslin Kipp: "You need emotional awareness: How do I want to feel? You need emotional intelligence: how do I produce that feeling? And you need emotional fitness doing it."

EI: PEOPLE VS. MACHINE

Emotional intelligence once only belonged to humans; now it has been synthesized into an algorithm that is being applied to all types of business activities. For lighting showrooms, AI is forcing us to embrace and enhance the skills that cannot be replicated by machines — the ability to use empathy, persuasion, and the understanding of how to present to the four various social styles.

Empathy: The way to provide the level of service clients seek today when they walk into a showroom is through understanding.

In selling, empathy means having the skill set to understand how clients feel about their shopping experience. Shifting the sales mindset from the process alone to include insight will give you the ability to be a more significant influence on the clients' decision-making process by offering the correct solutions for them.

To create a genuine and authentic connection with customers, validate their expressed emotional struggles. A relationship can only occur when a salesperson is present in the moment. The way we demonstrate presence is by slowing down the sales process and focusing on the goal of understanding the customer. This authentic desire to help your clients becomes an emotional telegraph

that is silently telling them that what they feel is important is also important to you.

We may think the only goal the client has is to get lighting; after all, why else would they have come in? Yet, if that were the case, they would have bought the lights online during the discovery phase of their shopping experience. They are in the showroom for a specific reason. Perhaps it's to find a certain color or size verification. Or it might be they are more comfortable buying from a local source known for professional service. No matter the reason, your store needs to become a true showroom that offers "high-touch" experiences that extend from the displays to human-to-human interaction or else the customer will leave with little or no intent on purchasing from you. Empathy is one of the reasons why people will buy from you.

EMOTIONAL PERSUASION

We know if we want to succeed in business — and life — we must have the ability to persuade others to accept an idea or recommendation we make. In the typical sales interaction, the salesperson will provide rational arguments — known as features and benefits — to persuade the client to purchase an item. While this is a good tactic for a product demonstration, it does little to convince the customer to buy.

There are a few key actions that salespeople must embrace to be able to persuade clients emotionally and successfully. Whether you are a showroom owner, manager, or salesperson, before you can persuade and influence others, you must be personally committed to the process. Without that, the process is doomed.

Selling is described as the ability to transfer emotion. That being the case, to be a positive influencer, projecting optimistic energy is a requirement. This is done by creating an image in your mind of the positive outcome you want. When a "can do" attitude is projected, it is associated with being optimistic — and that is the power the client will feel if you share it.

You have certainly experienced that feeling when interacting with a person; you felt intuitively that they were going to guide you properly and had your best interests at heart. The way we make the client feel important is by consciously and sincerely listening to them. This one activity, when mastered, will always provide the client with a feeling of importance.

"When you show deep empathy toward others, their defensive energy goes down, and positive energy replaces it. That's when you can get more creative in solving problems."

— Stephen Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*

AS SEEN IN
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“People may hear your words, but they feel your attitude.”

—John C. Maxwell, author and speaker on leadership

ADAPTIVE SELLING

Albert Einstein said, “The measure of intelligence is the ability to change.” For today’s sales climate, I am altering his famous quote to, “The measure of sales success is the ability to adapt to your client.”

This statement applies well when thinking about the four social styles of clients. Each determines the style in which clients will communicate, the method that they use to process the information they have been given, and the order of importance that the information must be presented to them in order for them to make a buying decision.

While the names associated with the various social styles can change, the style itself does not. They are commonly known as: Analytical, Driver, Amiable, and Expressive. By discovering clients’ social styles, you will be able to communicate in the way they prefer.

The first step is to understand your own social style. Once you know which group you fall into, you can learn to modify your behavior and presentation to a client’s style based on similarities and differences.

Social styles can be broken down into a blend of two dimensions: assertiveness (dominance) and responsiveness (sociability). Assertiveness is when the client strongly expresses their opinion and takes control of the situation and others around them. Communication is fast-paced and they make statements of fact. Responsiveness involves emotional words and expressions; the client outwardly expresses happiness and is slow to make decisions.

The purpose of understanding and communicating to each social style is to build trust. Trust is both an emotional and logical action and the most

important attribute a salesperson can foster in a customer.

When building trust at the start of a sales conversation with one of these social styles, following some guidelines will give you a firm foundation. At the beginning, do not talk too fast or too much — and don’t sound robotic. Determine the pace and cadence of the client; listen intently and stay away from salesy questions. Maintain good eye contact and don’t avert your gaze when the client looks at or speaks to you. By the same token, do not bore holes into the client with an unbreaking stare. As the conversation continues, the client will provide you with all you need to learn about their social style; modify your actions to best present to them.

Another key point: Not every social style works well with another without conscious effort and the desire to do so. For example, the Analytical person has style conflicts with the Expressive, and the Driver has conflicts with the Amiable. In short, the fast-paced communication style of the Driver is frustrated by the slow-paced style of the Amiable. It doesn’t matter which style belongs to the salesperson or the client; it takes a firm resolve and responsive versatility to work with an opposing social style.

We have only scratched the surface in defining the reasons “why” a client buys from you. The full list is extensive and requires a commitment to the personal development that it will take to be successful. Winning over clients is a 360-degree experience provided by the showroom, from pre-awareness marketing to post-sale follow up. Each step must be choreographed in a way that always presents the answer to the question, “Why buy from me?”

As always, happy selling!



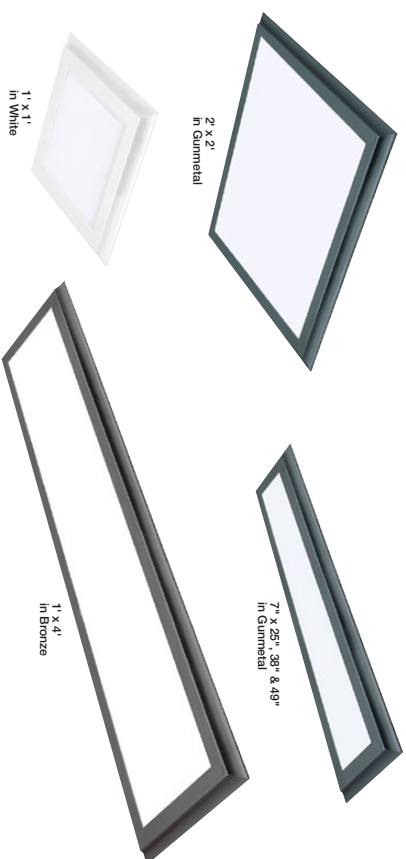
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