

Shorten The Sales Cycle: Why Our Brains Buy--Turn Prospects Into Customers With This Brain-Based Process

Did you know that 57-70% of buying decisions are made **before** the sales process actually begins?

What if your prospect has already chosen your competitor—and they don't even know it yet?

We like to think we are highly rational beings, but in fact we're not. Once we understand this we can stop trying to change the emotions *through* the intellect because it doesn't work.

So what does this mean? That we are highly emotional beings controlled by the subconscious programming that is implanted deep inside of us. It means that our prized intellects that we have honed at the top universities on the planet control only a tiny amount of what goes on in our daily lives.

“Same As” Trumps Sales Resistance Every Time

For a prospect to purchase from you they must overcome sales resistance. The fastest way to do this is to give them the experience of “same as.” When the most [primal part of the brain](#) codes you as similar to it, then it can be open to the messages you are offering. Miss this opportunity and the brain goes on red alert.

There is a highly effective brain-based methodology to pre-condition prospects. Here are the 4 key steps and how they work:

1. Help the brain become ready to buy.

Prospects engage with companies--or their brands--on three levels (1) instinctual, (2) emotional, and (3) logical. The degree to which a brand satisfies these “three brains” is the degree to which we have an affinity for it—and want to consume its products and services.

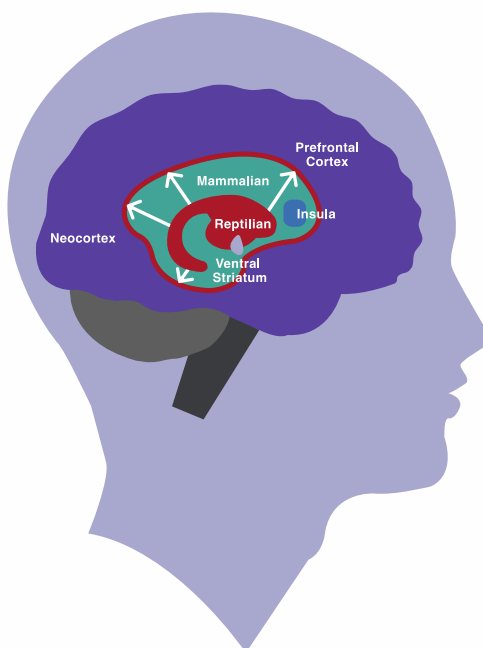
The instinctual, or reptilian. brain is the oldest and most primitive part of the brain. It controls balance, temperature regulation, and breathing. It acts out of instinct and is primarily a stimulus-response machine with survival as its focus. Consider it your physical safety center.

Layered on top of it is the emotional, or mammalian, brain, which controls and expresses emotion, short term memory, and the body's response to danger. This is where the fight/flight/freeze response is. Its primary focus is also survival, though it is also the seat of anger, frustration, happiness, and love. Consider it your emotional safety center.

Last is the logical part of the brain, the prefrontal cortex within the neo-cortex. This enables us to plan, innovate, solve complex problems, assess choices, think abstract thoughts, have visionary ideas. It allows us to measure the quality of our experience, to compare it to an abstract ideal, and to yearn for change. Consider it your visionary and problem-solving center.

When we are in stress or deeply emotionally we often drop into what I call the "Critter State"—a combo of the reptilian and mammalian brain--where we don't have access to all parts of our brain and thus are reactive, in fight/flight/freeze, or are running safety programs. This is where we act on impulse without choice. This is where we: buy the pricey pair of designer jeans to look more attractive, select the software vendor that makes us feel safe, wear logos to show who we are. And the vast majority of the time we'll later regret these purchases—because we often felt manipulated in making them.

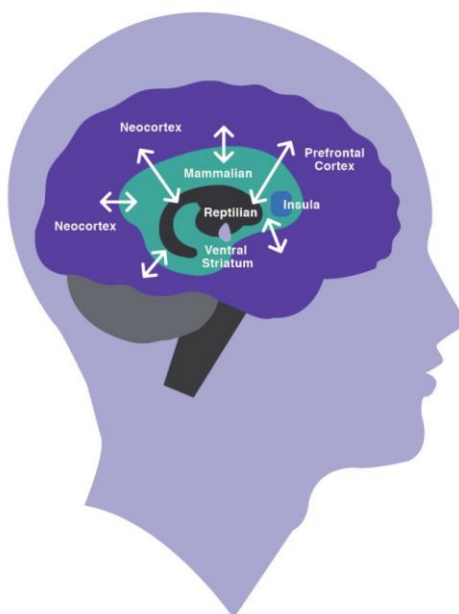
The Critter State Has Limited Access



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What we want is to fulfill the instinctual and emotional brains of our prospects, and a/so appeal to their logical brain. We want them to feel we understand them, are the same as them, and provide a satisfying logical experience to help them have a fulfilling purchase experience.

The Smart State Has Full Access



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For example, one of our clients was recently promoting a webinar to healthcare prospects. On it they promised to cover:

1. **Crucial and controversial** new legislation (instinctual and logical)
2. To ensure participants would **know how** to make the best choices (emotional and logical)
3. So they could **build trust** with their community (emotional and instinctual)

The webinar had record attendance, and the sales demand that was generated reached record highs. Throughout it our client reinforced the participant's deepest subterranean and subconscious needs—which I'll get to in a moment—as well.

If we don't learn to communicate with the reptilian and mammalian brains of prospects we will perpetually waste time, energy, effort, money. And *not* get the results that we want.

2. Find out what they *crave*.

Maslow was right—beneath it all we crave [safety, belonging, mattering](#) in differing degrees. In the context of your product, what does your customer crave? Will your product make them feel more safe? Help them feel more connected to others? Help them gain status/appreciation/visibility/admiration from others?

Once you know this your marketing and sales messages can reinforce how you meet the prospect's deep-seated needs. And when you connect their subconscious desires with your product, your customer have a far more fulfilling experience of you- -and you'll see your sales soar.

Here are some examples of how you can provide each:

- Safety:** Service level agreements, refund policies, guarantees of any type. Messaging: testimonials and other messages that stress how you came through for the customer with high ROI.
- Belonging:** Online community and physical events/conferences/annual meetings, memberships, what it means to be a member of the tribe and what's meaningful about it. Messaging: testimonials and other messages that stress the community, how you're a partner and not a vendor.
- Mattering:** Customer case studies/celebration/appreciation/rewards, loyalty/retention programs, customer satisfaction surveys. Messaging: Testimonials and other messages that stress how well-cared-for a customer felt, how you went out of your way, how generous you are and the high level of service you provide.

Start using the 2 steps listed above and let me know how it goes. In my next blog I'll add steps 3 and 4 to crank up your sales performance even more powerfully.

3. Speak their language.

In the 1970's Leslie Cameron-Bandler discovered 60 meta programs--or lenses--through which humans experience the world. The advertising industry has been using meta programs ever since—to sell us products we both do and don't actually want or need, as well as to compel us to purchase faster and in greater quantities. It's time to bring meta programs out of the psych labs.

Here's [how they work](#), and the top 4 that you must know now:

Meta Programs enable us to deeply step into the prospect's world. They allow us to access a part of the subconscious mind that is often unavailable in general social transactions—and often get staggering results in short order. When we train sales teams on Meta Programs in selling scenarios, they close sales up to 50% faster. When we work with marketing teams, their messages resonate with prospects more deeply and faster—up to 301% more effective. Also, demand generation increases by up to 237%. Why? Speaking in a prospect's meta programs enables us to rapidly [build trust](#) and profoundly increase the experience of “same as”—since we are truly speaking their language.

Toward-Away

	Toward	Away
Description/motivations	Motivated to achieve goals; to move forward; get what they want.	Motivated to solve problems and avoid risk taking/pain.
Influential words	“Get,” “attain,” “achieve,” and synonyms of these.	“Avoid,” “prevent,” “assess,” “consider,” and synonyms of these.
Often found in	CEO, sales, business development, software development, design.	Accounting, operations, risk management, non-litigation legal roles.

Decoder Question: Ask, “What do you want in your work [or something else important to them]?” Keep asking questions like “What else is important?” Notice what descriptor words they use.

Options-Procedures

	Options	Procedures
Description	Motivated by choice, possibility, variety; will give you a list of criteria they want.	Motivated by following a proven and reliable process; will lay out a step-by-step process or need one provided for them.

	Options	Procedures
Influential words	"Variety," "choice," "possibility," and synonyms of these.	"The right way," "series of steps," "reliable process," and synonyms of these.
Often found in	All roles, though they often gravitate toward anything with "design," "development," or similar words in the title that indicate there is room to operate differently. Options people love to create processes for <i>other</i> people to follow.	All roles, though they often gravitate toward accounting, manufacturing, legal, engineering, and other process-driven fields.

Decoder Question: Ask, "Why did you choose your current work/job/car?" An Options person will respond with his criteria or features (for a car: "It gets great gas mileage, it's black, and it's fast.") A Procedures person will respond with a story following a process with the car at the end ("Well, it's a funny thing. My old car was breaking down all the time and my aunt Sue was visiting and . . .").

General-Specific

	General	Specific
Description/motivations	Motivated to summarize and think at a high level. Looking at the forest.	Motivated by details and sequences. Knows how many trees the forest contains, how many leaves each tree has, and the variation of their bark.
Influential words	"Overview," "the big picture," "in general," "the point is," and synonyms of these. Start with setting frame or context.	"Specifically," "exactly," "precisely," and synonyms of these. Start at detail level and build to conclusion.
Often found in	CEO and all leadership roles, market / strategy development roles.	Engineering, legal, accounting, operations, market research roles.

Decoding: Ask questions like "How do you solve problems?"; "How was your weekend" Notice which influential words they use, and if they start with specific details or with an

overall summary statement.

Active-Reflective

	Active	Reflective
Description/motivations	Motivated to take action immediately, charge ahead.	Motivated to analyze, wait, and react when appropriate.
Influential words	“Get it done,” “now,” “don’t wait,” and synonyms of these.	“Consider,” “could,” “understand,” “think about,” and synonyms of these.
Often found in	Sales and other customer facing/initiating roles.	Research, analysis, customer service, service.

Decoding: Ask questions such as “How do you solve problems at work?”; “How do you discover opportunities or challenges?”; “How do you learn new things?” Listen for sentence structure as well as their use of influential words.

What are the meta programs of your prospect? See my book [SmartTribes](#) for a detailed explanation of how to use these powerful tools.

4. Craft the customer experience.

Our buying decisions are crafted by emotional experience and habit. Prospects make decisions about both the quality of their interactions and buying decisions by associating positive themes with the brand experience. When we first have an experience with a brand we create a memory. If we have additional experiences with the brand, new memories are added and the experience is reshaped or reinforced--whether positive or negative. Emotional and instinctual marketing messages reinforce the brand experience more powerfully than logical messages.

So our job is to consistently reinforce positive brand attitudes. We can train the brain of the prospect by providing repetitive, positive cues about it... the quality of its online community, the ease of use of its products, the “thank you” at the end of customer support call--they all add up. Every experience with a brand, large or small needs to reinforce the positive mental constructs the individual has with the brand.

When we implement the above process with our clients—and it requires patience to nail it--the results are remarkable. Let me know how they work for you.