

Zero Resistance

The science and secrets of selling more
by eliminating skepticism and mistrust

Harry Mills

Praise for Zero Resistance

"Zero Resistance is one of those rare sales books that breaks new ground. Mills takes us through a new way to think about selling that is both compelling and brilliantly conceived. If you're selling anything for a living, just grab this book and read it."

Michael W. McLaughlin

Author, *Winning the Professional Services Sale*

Publisher: *Management Consulting News*

"Harry Mills demystifies and solves the challenge of selling in the age of Google. A must read for CEO's, sales leaders and all front line sales staff"

Alistair Davis

CEO and Managing Director, Toyota New Zealand

"Zero Resistance is a very practical guide on the art and science of persuasion. Harry balances rigor and accessibility to provide anyone who influences or sells to clients with valuable tools they can deploy within minutes of reading."

Richard Stewart

Corporate Value Partner, PricewaterhouseCoopers

Author, *Strategic Value: Value Analysis as a Business Weapon*

"There are dozens of good books available on sales. Zero Resistance is one of the best. You will never look at selling the same way once you've read this book. It's a book for thinkers."

Geoffrey Moss

Author, *Persuasive Ways & Getting Your Ideas Across*

"Zero Resistance will become the new bible for how to sell to the value-sensitive customer. Read it before your competitors do."

Gary White

CEO

Presentation Pro

"Harry Mills has transformed B2B sales from a dark art into a sophisticated science. Discover the secrets of self-persuasion. Embrace Aha! thinking. Then watch your sales soar."

David Parmenter

Author, *Key Performance Indicators: Developing, Implementing, and Using Winning KPIs*

"If you want to understand what switches our buying brains from no to yes, you must read this book. A game changing book that will revolutionize the way we influence and generate value for clients."

Michael Guggenheimer
Managing Director,
Hillcross Financial Services & AMP Financial Planning

"A ground-breaking book that shows us how to sell in the digital age where buyers believe they have all the information and choices they need to buy, without even talking to a salesperson. If you earn your living from sales, Zero Resistance is a must read."

Paul D. Carroll
Vice President,
Lexus Asia-Pacific



Zero
Resistance



Zero Resistance

The science and secrets of selling more
by eliminating skepticism and mistrust

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The New Formula for Sales Success

For the first time in the history of selling, buyers hold the trump cards. Google-driven technologies have armed buyers with anytime, anywhere access to the choices and information they need to call the shots.

The century-old tell-and-sell persuasive packages of sales tools and techniques, even when dressed up as consultative selling, no longer work. When buyers hold the power and knowledge they *resist attempts* at direct persuasion. As a result, sales productivity is plummeting.

A 2014 survey of global sales performance by Accenture concludes: "sales processes and systems are at breaking point...An entirely new approach to sales is needed."¹

The irresistible power of self-persuasion

The good news is, psychologists who study influence have discovered a form of influence that's more potent than the many forms of direct persuasion sellers still cling to. This new, more powerful form of influence is called self-persuasion.

When a seller uses self-persuasion techniques and tools they help their clients find their own reasons for buying. Influencers who use self-persuasion succeed by *eliminating buyer resistance*. The reason is simple. Customers don't argue with their own reasons.

In their 2013 book, *Hidden Persuasion* the authors three Scandinavian researchers compare the impact of multiple persuasion techniques. They call self-persuasion "the holy grail of persuasion" and rated it five out of five for effectiveness.²

Zero Resistance is the first book to show sellers how to sell more by using the power of self-persuasion to dissolve and eliminate buyer resistance.

The power of Aha! Insights

While self-persuasion is the key to engaging and winning the trust of today's skeptical customers, sellers still have to prove they can deliver superior value to what their buyer can access on Google.

Since research published by the Corporate Executive Board in 2009, most sales leaders have known the best sellers use insights to help their customers discover unexpected sources of value. The problem is no one has been able to teach whole sales forces how to repeatedly discover and deliver value-multiplying insights.

Zero Resistance solves this challenge by reinventing the sales process. The new Aha! sales process embeds the power of self-persuasion and the discovery of value multiplying Aha! insights into one easy to master, continuous, seamless process.

The Aha! sales Success Formula



The end result is game-changing and paradigm busting. Sales forces who learn to eliminate resistance and adopt the Aha! sales process boost their revenue 23% to 55% in the year following training.¹



About the Author

Harry Mills is the founder and CEO of the Aha! Advantage an international consulting and training firm. For the past 27 years, the Aha! Advantage and its legacy firm, the Mills Group has been helping a mix of blue chip clients grow their sales and clinch big deals.

Corporate clients include: GE Money, IBM, Ericsson, Oracle, BMW, AMP, Toyota, Lexus, Rio Tinto, Unilever, PWC, Deloitte, Ernst & Young, KPMG, ING and the ANZ Banking Group.

Harry has built his reputation by translating the latest research of social psychologists, behavioural economists and neuroscientists who study persuasion into practical, cutting-edge insights and books.

Harry is the subject matter expert for persuasion for the Harvard's Business Review's flagship Manage/Mentor program that goes out to 6.5 million managers.

He is the author of 14 acclaimed books on sales, motivation, persuasion, business development and negotiating that have been translated into 18 languages.

His book *The Rainmaker's Toolkit, How to Find, Keep and Grow Profitable Clients* was selected by *CEO Advisor* as one of its top ten U.S. Business books in 2004 and described as the "new bible in professional services".

An accomplished deal maker, Harry has authored three books on negotiation including *The StreetSmart Negotiator. How to Outwit, Outmaneuver and Outlast Your Opponents*.

Harry is a regular keynote speaker at international conferences and is often interviewed on radio and television business programs.

Business Books by Harry Mills

- *Negotiate: The Seven Step Master Plan*, Gower, 1992.
- *The Mental Edge*, Simon & Schuster, 1994.
- *Just Do It*, MG Press, 1994.
- *Sales Secrets*, MG Press, 1995.
- *Be Positive*, MG Press, 1995.
- *Leadership*, MG Press, 1996.
- *The Deal Makers' Handbook*, MG Press, 1998.
- *Artful Persuasion: How to Command Attention, Change Minds and Influence People*, Amacom, 2000.
- *The Rainmakers Toolkit: Power Strategies for Finding, Keeping and Growing Profitable Clients*, Amacom, 2004.
- *The StreetSmart Negotiator: How to Outwit, Outmaneuver and Outlast Your Opponents*, Amacom, 2005.
- *PowerPoints! How to Design and Deliver Presentations That Sizzle and Sell*, Amacom, 2007.
- *Secret SAUCE: How to pack your messages with persuasive punch*
- *Trigger Points: The ten triggers that unconsciously switch our brains from no to yes*

To ARia GRace
the girl with the smiley face

Contents

- 1 Reinventing Sales:
why and how we need to change the way we sell
- 2 Leading with Aha!
the motivating power of value-multiplying insights
- 3 The New Science of Sales Success:
the proven power of self-persuasion
- 4 The Aha! Storyboard:
reinventing the sales process
- 5 If You Can't Measure it, You Can't Improve it:
metrics, motivation and peak performance
- 6 Sales is Not About Selling:
it's about helping clients succeed
- 7 From LALAs to HAHAs:
moving the mediocre middle
- 8 The Gorilla in the Room:
overcoming buyer inertia and decision paralysis
- 9 Secret SAUCE:
how to pack your messages with persuasive punch

Notes

Index

Acknowledgments





CHAPTER ONE

Reinventing sales:
why and how we need
to change the way we sell

There are just two ways you can sell

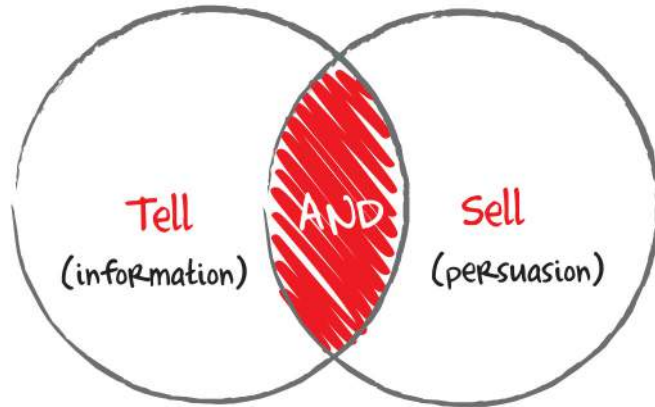
Believe it or not, there are just two ways to sell. You can use a form of direct persuasion to convince clients why they need to buy. Or you can use a form of self-persuasion to help clients convince themselves.



Improbable as it seems, few sellers have ever heard of or been trained in self-persuasion. For more than 100 years, sellers have been unconsciously trained in a form of direct persuasion called tell-and-sell.

The tell-and-sell persuasion model consists of two interacting elements. First, there is a tell or information element. Second, there is a sell or persuasion element. In the tell element, the seller uses product or service information to explain what they can provide. In the sell element the seller uses their persuasion skills to spell out the benefits of buying their solution and close the sale if appropriate.

The Elements of Direct Persuasion



The father of modern selling

Modern selling based on tell-and-sell was invented by the founder of the National Cash Register Company (NCR), John Henry Patterson. Patterson, who is today called the Father of Professional Selling, took all the tips of his most successful salespeople and turned them into a 450 word canned presentation called the *NCR Primer*.

The Primer divided a sale into four steps: approach, proposition, demonstration and close. Sales soared because "for the first time ever, [salespeople] had a consistent presentation that covered all the features and benefits of their products." Salespeople who failed to memorize the Primer were fired.¹

The Primer was followed by the *Book of Arguments*. This manual was the first ever systematic approach to handling customer objections.²

Patterson knew his sales techniques would generate customer resistance so his salespeople were taught to modify their pitches according to the type of customer and the nature of the objection.

Patterson's business legacy was huge. Salespeople who Patterson trained and went on to found their own corporations include Thomas Watson Sr. (IBM) and William Burroughs I (Burroughs).

The sales training industry took off in the late 1920's after the publication of E.K Strong's *The Psychology of Selling*. Strong argued selling was not an innate ability but skills that could be practiced and mastered.³

While Strong introduced new techniques, such as open and closed questioning, the model remained tell and sell.

For the next 50 years the changes made to sales training were small and incremental. Then in the 1970's, a group of researchers led by Neil Rackham began to question whether "the techniques and skills that worked in small sales were different from those that worked in larger and more complex ones." Their thinking resulted in new forms of key account management and also marked the beginnings of a movement which we now call consultative selling.⁴

Consultative selling shifted the focus of sales conversations from features to needs, from products to solutions and from one-off deals towards long-term relationships.

The missionaries who preached the consultative selling faith believed they were making understanding clients more important than persuading them. But broken down to its bare

bones, consultative selling as practiced was little more than a sophisticated, more seductive form of Patterson's tell-and-sell.⁵

Regardless what they were told in their company training rooms, consultative trained sellers still believed they had to convince clients why they needed to buy. To put it bluntly, you can wrap up an old fish in a piece of paper called change, but it's still going to stink.

The death of tell-and-sell

In the pre-Google economy, when a buyer wanted to find out more about a product, they usually had to talk to a salesperson. And when the salesperson finished their tell side of the sales conversation, buyers expected to listen to a sell.

No longer! Today's technologies are empowering buyers with the information and choices they need to buy, in many cases, without having to talk to a salesperson. If buyers do talk to a salesperson it's often after they have worked out their precise needs and priorities.

Customers are increasingly using their Google-driven technologies to become more knowledgeable and price-driven. Research done for Google found that in 2010, shoppers accessed 5.3 sources of information before making a purchase. In 2011, shoppers accessed 10.4 sources of information – yes, that number really did double in one year.⁶

Consumers' confidence in online reviews is increasing. In 2012, seventy percent of consumers surveyed online by Nielson indicated they trust online reviews – an increase of fifteen percent in four years.⁷

In mid-2012, smartphone penetration reached more than 50 percent of American consumers. Customers now shop with a smartphone in hand so they can check and compare prices. It's called show-rooming.⁸

Mark Ellwood, the author of *Bargain Fever: How to Shop in a Discounted World* says “We are heading for a world when a sale is going to be more normal than full price. Retailers sold 40 to 45 percent of their inventory at some kind of promotional price in 2011. Ten years ago, they sold just 15 to 20 percent of stock that way.”⁹

Selling in retail or the Business to Consumer (B2C) will never be the same again. Read this description of a female car buyer shopping for a Lexus sedan.

Here is her opening statement to the vehicle salesperson.

“I want to drive the Lexus 250h with the touring package, the 2.4 litre engine, dual-zone climate control and tan leather with seat warmers. I have seen the specs and read the reviews online, I know the MSRP is \$37,125 but your real invoice price is \$33,686.”

The customer here started her car-buying journey with a search for “mid-priced sedans.”

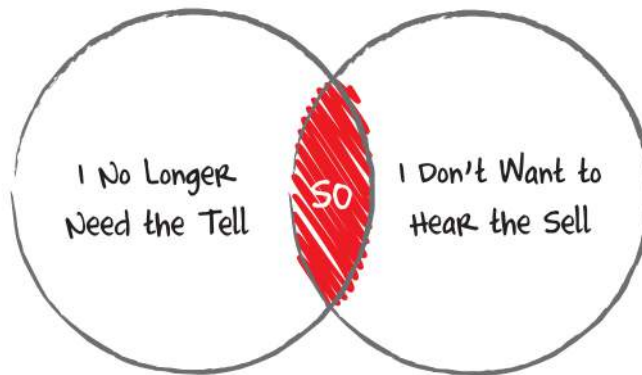
She saw ads from seven other brands, stories from Motortrend.com and Ridelust.com and a lot more. Later she switched to searches like “ratings for Lexus 250” and found reviews from AOL Autos, Epinions, Cars.com and several other sources.

Then she went to the Lexus official site to check paint and interior colors and other options.¹⁰

The Lexus customer arrived at the dealership in no mood to listen to a salesperson-led tell, let alone tolerate the sell. She knew what she wanted. And she had all the information she needed to extract a tough bargain. As a result, the Lexus salesperson became little more than a suited order taker.

When customers no longer need help with the tell, they no longer want to hear the sell.

Buying in a Google driven world



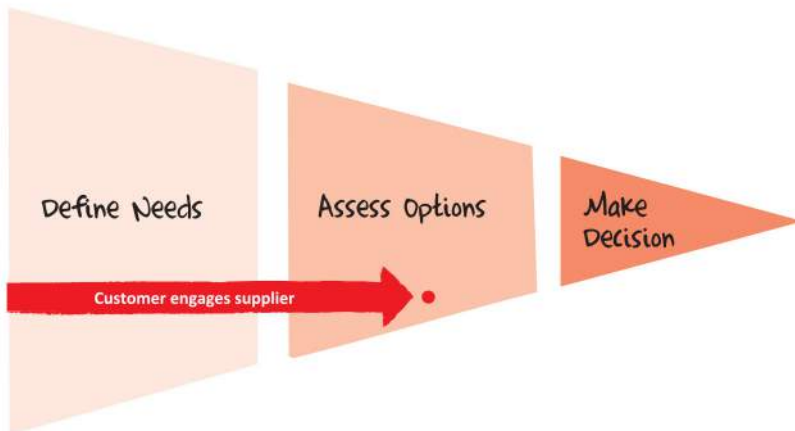
Selling business to business

In the business to business (B2B) market, the Google-driven changes are equally profound and far reaching. Once, B2B buyers would consult suppliers at the beginning of their decision making process. No longer! Today's empowered, informed and entitled buyers are not talking to suppliers until after they have determined their needs and prioritized their requirements.

A 2011 survey carried out by the Corporate Executive Board on 1,400 B2B customers found buyers are on average, 57 percent through their purchase process before they bother to contact a supplier. The same survey found "suppliers today account for less than one-half of all the information that buyers use to aid their purchase decisions".¹¹

Instead of using the salesperson as the prime source of information in pre-Google times, companies are using increasingly skilled procurement teams and purchasing consultants to define the solution they need.

*B2B Customers are 57% Through Their
Purchase Process Before They Contact Suppliers¹²*



Adapted from: CEB Survey of 1,400 B2B customers, 2011

Remarkably there are still senior executives mostly in traditional industries who don't fully appreciate how much online information is available to their buyers.

Beth Comstock is senior vice president and chief marketing officer of General Electric. GE makes everything from light bulbs to jet engines.

Here is what Beth says GE has come to realize.

"Maybe if you make locomotives or the software that automates production lines you think:

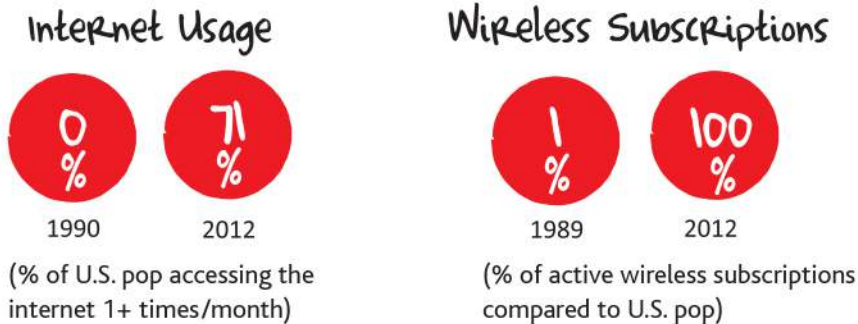
Why should I have videos or web content there? Who's going to use that? But one day we did YouTube searches for just these kinds of things. And up came hundreds of videos, including videos from our competitors on things like intelligent thinking for production line automation. It was a great eye opener.

*I think we could have entered any topic and found the same thing. We've seen enough data to know that C-level executives do their own research before they even meet with potential suppliers. Whether you're buying a new refrigerator or a jet engine, you want to do your homework in advance."*¹³

The buyer now calls the shots

For the first time in history, ultimate purchasing power rests with the buyer. The business environment that allowed tell-and-sell to reign unchallenged for over 100 years, no longer exists. Today's anytime, anywhere customers are empowered, informed and demanding. Today in the U.S. there are as many wireless subscriptions as there are people. Companies that don't adapt to this new reality will go the way of the floppy disk.

Google is Now Everywhere¹⁴



Source: Deloitte's Center for the Edge, *The Big Shift*, 2013

Marketers (and salespeople) are becoming less influential

When customers "base their decisions on reviews from other users, Web accessed expert opinions, price comparison apps and other technologies, everything changes." according to Stanford professor Itamar Simonson and bestselling author Emanuel Rosen in their book *Absolute Value: What Really Influences Customers in the Age of (Nearly) Perfect Information*. In our Google-driven world, the influence marketers and salespeople have over customer decisions is rapidly diminishing.¹⁵

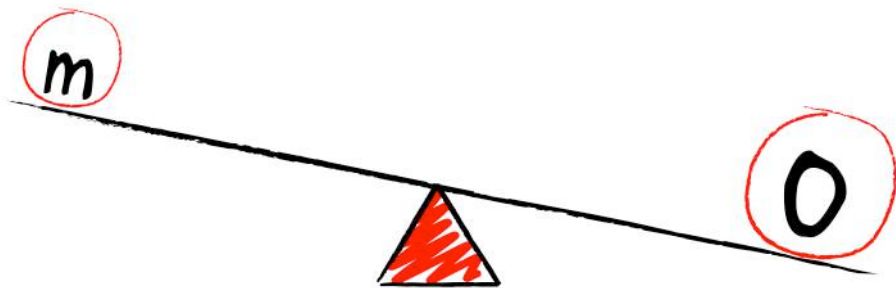
Simonson and Rosen write customers are influenced by two sources of information which they label M and O. M is shorthand for the information buyers get from marketing information sources. O is shorthand for the information buyers get from other sources. In a Google-driven world buyers decisions are being increasingly influenced by O.¹⁶

Buyers increase their use of O when:

1. The buying decision is important
2. The buying decision involves increased risk and uncertainty

Why? Because customers trust O sources more than M sources.¹⁷

M and O Influence Continuum¹⁸



Information from marketers

Branding

Advertising

Product/service information

Information from other sources

Influential friends and colleagues

Reviews from end users, consumers

Third party reports

Expert advisers

Sales productivity is falling

In a market where buyers call the shots, sales executives everywhere are increasingly struggling to meet their revenue and profitability goals.

"CEO's are investing more than ever in their salesforces, but results aren't improving" reports Lynette Ryals, professor of strategic sales and account management at the U.K's Cranfield School of Management and Iain Davies, a lecturer at the University of Bath.

A Ryals and Davies study of 800 business development managers, account managers, and telesales people from a cross section of U.K. blue chip companies' published in a 2010, Harvard Business Review paints a bleak picture of selling in a choice saturated, Google-driven world:

Only

9.1%

of sales meetings result in a sale.

Just

1 out

of 250

salespeople exceed their targets.

\$1,760

of profit per sale is needed just to cover the cost of failed sales meetings, assuming that the meeting cost, on average, \$160¹⁹.

Salesforces with these levels of productivity are unsustainable.

"An entirely new approach to sales is needed"

Global consulting firm Accenture's 2014 global review of sales performance, *Powering Profitable Sales Growth* declared: "sales productivity is falling". The survey conducted in collaboration with CSO insights a leading research and benchmarking organization found reps achieving quota dropped 9 percent in 2014. And that came after sales quotas had been lowered in the previous year.

The fall in productivity came after Gartner Group reported sales organizations had invested over \$30 billion in the previous 3 years on CRM and related technologies. It is little wonder Accenture found that investments in new technologies were "not producing the results many Chief Sales Officers (CSOs) expected."

Accenture's analysts found "sales processes and systems are at breaking point". Their conclusion: "*an entirely new approach to sales is needed*".²⁰

The proven power of self-persuasion

Fortunately for sellers and companies, there is a much more powerful way to influence customers than tell-and-sell. It's called self-persuasion. Instead of trying to convince a customer why they need to buy, you help customers convince themselves.

For over 60 years social scientists who study influence have been researching the power of self-persuasion.

During the Second World War, Kurt Lewin one of the modern pioneers of applied psychology, carried out a remarkable experiment that demonstrated the superiority of self-persuasion over direct persuasion.

When it comes to animal meats we are highly selective. Many Americans only eat the skeletal muscle of cattle, chicken, pigs and some fish. Other parts like kidneys, hearts, eyes, brains, and guts are thrown away, or end up as pet food.

This was the problem that faced a committee on food habits set up by the US government during World War Two to overcome the shortages of popular high-protein foods. How could they overcome the traditional American's aversion of eating intestinal meats?

To solve the problem they called on the brilliant social psychologist Kurt Lewin who devised an ingenious program to get Americans to persuade themselves to eat intestinal meats.

To demonstrate the effectiveness of participatory, self-generated persuasion, Lewin set up a simple experiment with two groups of housewives.

Half of the housewives were lectured on the advantages of eating intestinal meats and what that meant for the U.S. war effort. Recipes were handed out and the lecture finished with an enthusiastic testimonial from a fellow housewife on how her family loved the taste of intestinal meats. Think of this as a classic tell-and-sell presentation.

The other housewives spent their time in a group discussion persuading themselves. A group leader began the discussion with a brief talk on the problem of maintaining the nation's health during wartime.

The leader then asked the group how they thought “housewives like themselves could be persuaded to participate in the intestinal program.” The group discussion covered the same issues as the lecture but proved much more effective.

The results: a mere three percent of housewives, who heard the lecture, served intestines to their families.

In stark contrast, 32 percent who had engaged in the self-persuasion went on to feed their families intestinal meats.

Self-persuasion was nearly 11 times – yes 11 times – as effective as direct persuasion or tell-and-sell.²¹

Lewin’s research led me to hunt for similar scientific studies on the power of self-persuasion related to sales and negotiation. At times it was frustrating. Social scientists seem to delight in writing jargon-infested prose and labelling their sometimes breakthrough research with obscure titles. Would you believe, one of the more remarkable pieces of research featured in Chapter 3 is titled Self-Relevant Scenarios as Mediators of Likelihood, Estimates and Compliance: Does Imagining Make it So?²²

Chapter 3 draws on these scientific studies to prove that in a sales environment, self-persuasion is at least twice as powerful as direct persuasion.

Elliot Aronson

No social scientist has contributed more to our understanding of self-persuasion than Elliot Aronson. He is listed among the 100 most eminent psychologists of the twentieth century. In 1999, Aronson received an award for Distinguished Scientific Contributions from the American Psychological Association.

In his acceptance address, *The Power of Self-Persuasion*, Aronson reviewed his lifetime of work which included over 100 experiments on aspects of self-persuasion.

Aronson concluded:

"Self-persuasion is almost always a more powerful form of persuasion (deeper, longer lasting) than... being directly persuaded by another person."

"Self-persuasion is more powerful no matter how clever, convincing, expert or trustworthy that other person might be..."

[Self-persuasion is more powerful] "because in direct persuasion the audience is constantly aware they have been persuaded by another."

"Where self-persuasion occurs people are convinced that the motivation has come from within."²³

Tell and prescribe

When I first read Aronson's assertion that "self-persuasion is more powerful no matter how clever, convincing, expert or trustworthy that other person might be..." I was skeptical.

What about doctors I queried? When it comes to trusted advisors doctors rate high on most polls that rate honesty and ethics. A number of our professional service clients would give their eye teeth to have the trust that comes from being a medical doctor. Then I stumbled across a horrifying World Health Organization (WHO) statistic. In developed countries 50% of patients with chronic illness do not take medications as prescribed.²⁴

There are a host of environmental reasons why patients fail to take their medication. But part of the reason is doctors unwittingly use a form of tell-and-sell. I call it "tell-and-prescribe". While most doctors are excellent at spelling out the medical reasons and risks for taking your pills, they rarely take the time to explore your personal reservations or help you to discover your own reasons for changing.

Patients today commonly second-guess their doctor by Googling their symptoms before they even go to their doctor. After patients receive their prescription, they then use Google to validate the diagnosis and check out the prescription for side effects.

Lessons from E.R.

Self-persuasion is so powerful it succeeds in situations where tell-and-sell strategies fail miserably.

Dr. Michael Pantalon is a psychologist at the Yale University School of Medicine and

an expert on motivation and the psychology of influence. Emergency Room doctors approached Pantalon to develop a simple process that would help them convince the drunks who were turning up repeatedly in their Emergency Rooms to seek help.

The challenge was made tougher by the fact the E.R. doctors had just 7 minutes to convince an inebriated patient to accept help.

Pantalon developed a six step process built around six “why” questions. The powerful sequence of probing “why” questions helped the drunks find their own reasons and motivation for wanting to stop drinking.

Pantalon’s approach was so successful the E.R. doctors were able to reduce drinking among their alcohol impaired patients by nearly fifty percent.

Pantalon’s Instant Influence program is now standard practice in emergency rooms and major trauma units across the U.S.A. Medical residents nationwide are also required to learn it. Such is the motivational power of self-persuasion.²⁵

How to eliminate buyer Resistance

Self-persuasion is fundamentally more powerful than direct persuasion essentially because of the way it reduces resistance. Resistance is a fundamental part of persuasion. Where there is no resistance there is no need to persuade.²¹

Essentially, there are two ways you can deal with buyer resistance:

1. You can try to overcome resistance by strengthening your proposal using direct persuasion.
2. You can reduce or eliminate resistance with self-persuasion.

Eliminating Resistance with Self-Persuasion





When sellers fail to convince or motivate a buyer they reach a stalemate. To overcome this impasse, influencers trained in direct persuasion typically try to strengthen their case by adding extra more compelling points.

In contrast, when an influencer uses a form of self-persuasion resistance is reduced or eliminated. The reason is simple; buyers don't argue with their own reasons.

The superiority of self-persuasion over direct persuasion or tell-and-sell becomes apparent when you compare how we react to the two different forms of influence.

How We React to Different Forms of Influence

	 Direct Persuasion Convince clients why they need to buy	 Self-Persuasion Help clients convince themselves
Choice	You're telling me what to do	The choice is mine - I'm free to choose
Trust	I'm sceptical about other peoples motives	I trust my own reasons for changing
Motivation	I actively resist or defer decisions	I am motivated to say yes quicker and commit for longer

From tell-and-sell to discover-and-uncover

To recap: tell-and-sell no longer works. Ultimate power now rests with the buyer. Buyers resist when they are told what and how to buy.

To remain relevant, sellers must shift from direct persuasion or tell-and-sell to self-persuasion or discover-and-uncover.

In the next chapter, we'll look at how sellers can use Aha! insights and self-persuasion to become an indispensable part of their buyers decision making process – and in the process transform Google from an enemy into an ally.

The Aha! Future

	old World Tell-and-Sell	New World Discover-and-Uncover
Influence Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Direct persuasion: convince clients why they need to buy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Self persuasion: help clients convince themselves
Sales Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Tell and ask clients what they need.▪ Sell the benefits of buying from you.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Use Aha! insights to help clients discover new sources of added value.▪ Help clients uncover their own reasons for buying.



CHAPTER TWO

Leading with Aha!:
the motivating power
of value-multiplying insights

Ultimately, customers buy from the seller who offers the best value. Yet salespeople who are seen by buyers as value-multipliers are as rare as pink diamonds. A recent Forrester executive insight survey asked senior executives to rate salespeople.¹

Just
15% Of executive buyers felt their meetings with salespeople were valuable.

Just
15% Of executives felt salespeople articulate their solutions in terms of solving business problems.

Only
6% Of executives felt salespeople articulate their solutions in terms of solving business problems.

So what are the salespeople who fail to generate value doing so wrong? For a start, the vast majority continue to use a consultative selling or solution selling model that no longer works. According to McKinsey, for example, "Solutions Selling has been all the rage over the last five to ten years, yet 75 percent of the companies that attempt to offer solutions fail to return the cost of their investment."²

The consultative or solution sales process can be reduced to two steps.

Step one: build a great relationship. **Step two:** uncover your customers' needs and clinch the sale with a differentiated, tailored solution.

Consultative Selling's Value Formula



Consultative selling starts with the premise "build a relationship and the sale will follow". The problem with this assumption is today's time-starved clients will no longer invest time into a relationship in the hope it will later translate into value. Before today's customers will invest time into a relationship they first want the seller to demonstrate they can add value.³

The second assumption that consultative sellers make is that customers place high value on the differentiated, tailored, product-framed solutions they offer.

The Different and Desirable Test



For a product or service framed solution to stand apart from competitors it has to be both different and desirable. But when viewed through a buyer's eye, few suppliers are that different or, for that matter, that desirable. A recent survey of B2B customers by the Marketing Leadership Council found "only 14 percent of the so-called benefits claimed by companies were seen by customers as both unique (different) and beneficial (desirable.)"⁴

If buyers no longer value so called relationship-driven, customized, largely product-framed solutions, what do they value?

Above all, buyers value fresh insights that will help them make and save money or manage risk. Insights are Aha! I see! moments. "A great insight is like a refrigerator. The moment you look into it, a light comes on" says advertising guru Jeremy Bullmore.⁵

But valuable insights on their own are not enough to clinch a sale. Buyers also look for certainty and reassurance from a supplier that they can actually deliver what they promise. Risk averse buyers want to see a clear, direct line between what is promised and what is going to be delivered, and look for proof it will actually be delivered on time and in budget.

What 21st Century Customers Look For



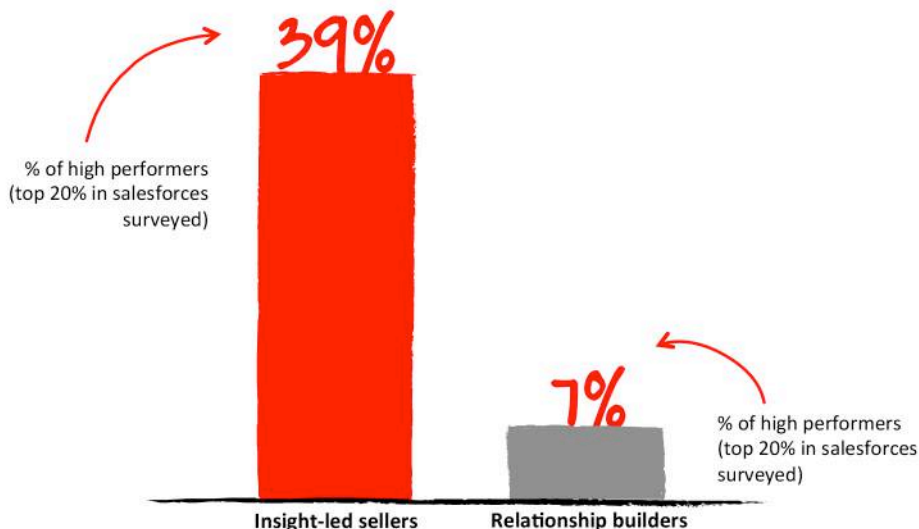
Compelling evidence demonstrating that buyers place high value on working with insight-led sellers comes from research conducted in 2009 by the respected Corporate Executive Board's sales arm, the Sales Executive Council.

In a large study of 6,000 reps from ninety companies across the globe, representing every major industry, geography and go-to-market model, the Sales Executive Council found insight-led salespeople (whom they call Challengers) dominated the top 20 percent of the sales forces they surveyed.

Of five sales profiles they identified, insight-led salespeople were, in their words, the "clear winners".⁶

39 percent of the “sales stars” (the top 20 percent of the salesforces surveyed) they identified were insight-led. By comparison, just 7 percent of the high performers were classic relationship builders who were skilled at building and nurturing strong personal and professional relationships.⁷

Nearly 40% of Sales Stars Are Insight-Led



Sales Executive Council Research

From ballpoints to lighters

The power of an insight comes from its remarkable ability to reframe the way we think and motivate us to take action. A business-changing example of the power of a simple insight to multiply value comes from BIC, the famous ballpoint pen makers.

Marcel Bich founded the BIC Corporation following World War II. For nearly thirty years BIC saw itself as a maker of low cost plastic ballpoint pens.

From the late 1940's until the early 1970's, BIC's management spent most of its time trying to find expansion opportunities in the low cost writing implements market.

Much of management's time was spent identifying incremental improvements such as multiplying the number of colors or pen designs that would expand their market. Business was good but BIC wanted to grow faster. But how?

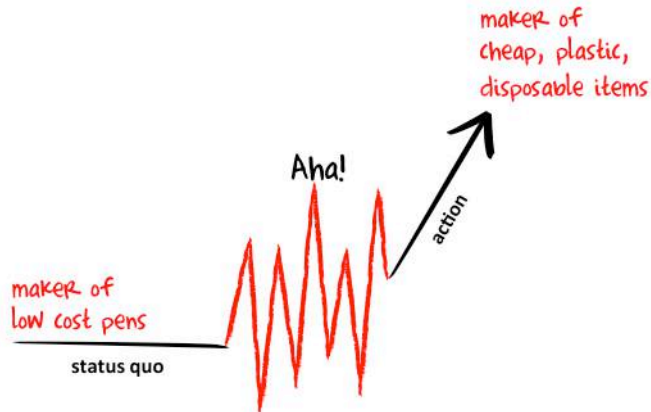
Then one day an executive proposed that the company should consider making lighters. Imagine the reaction; "That's not our business!" "We sell pens, not lighters!" "What do we know about lighters?"

The Aha! moment came when one executive challenged the assumption that BIC was a low cost pen manufacturer.

BIC, he declared should view itself as a "designer and maker of cheap, plastic, disposable items".

This simple Aha! value-multiplying flash of insight motivated BIC's leadership to reconceive their market. In 1973 BIC launched the first disposable lighter. Two years later it released a plastic disposable shaver. Eventually BIC became number one in the world for branded pocket lighters and the number two for one-piece shavers.⁸

BIC's Aha!



From brands to lovemarks

A powerfully communicated insight can turn a leading market player into a global leader in its category.

Kevin Roberts, the New York-based CEO Worldwide of Saatchi & Saatchi leads 6,000 creatives in 70 countries.

Roberts has always passionately believed in the power of emotions. His Aha! flash of insight came when it suddenly dawned on him that while reason leads to conclusions, emotion leads to action.

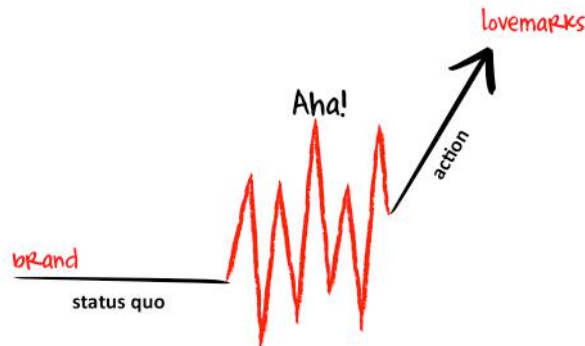
That Aha! moment convinced Roberts that emotion fuelled 'lovemarks' would come to replace 'brands'. Roberts reasoned, "if people love something rather than merely like it they would be loyal beyond reason, beyond price, beyond recession."

In 2005, Roberts wrote *Lovemarks: the future beyond brands* to widespread acclaim. In 2006 Saatchi & Saatchi won a \$430 million J.C. Penny contract because of the idea of lovemarks, invented and promoted by Roberts.

Under Roberts' lovemarks driven leadership, Saatchi & Saatchi transformed itself from being just an advertising agency into an ideas company.

In 2009 *Lovemarks* was named one of the ten Ideas of the Decade by *Advertising Age*. Saatchi & Saatchi now works with six out of the top ten and over half of the top 50 global advertisers.⁹

Kevin Robert's Aha!



From software as a product to software as a service

In 1999, 35 year old Marc Benioff founded salesforce.com in his San Francisco apartment. Benioff wanted to make customer relationship management software more affordable and accessible to more companies. His vision included a game-changing plan to use the internet as a platform to deliver business software as a service rather than as a product as it was currently sold.

Instead of paying exorbitant licensing fees and ongoing maintenance costs that the Siebels and SAPs charged, salesforce.com would host the CRM service on the internet and charge on a 'pay as you go' basis.

But in 2001 software as a service (SaaS) was seen by many potential customers as a risky way to buy software. Large competitors ridiculed Benioff and questioned the security and scalability of the SaaS model. In April 2001, Tom Siebel, CEO and founder of Siebel predicted salesforce.com would be out of business by 2002.

Most CEOs of tech start-ups would have responded to these virulent attacks by promoting salesforce.com's technical features. But Benioff kept passionately and continuously communicating the value of SaaS not only to cost-conscious technology buyers but also to flexibility seeking C-level executives.

Benioff knew customers were struggling to afford software and they desperately wanted a software solution that would adapt to their rapidly changing needs.

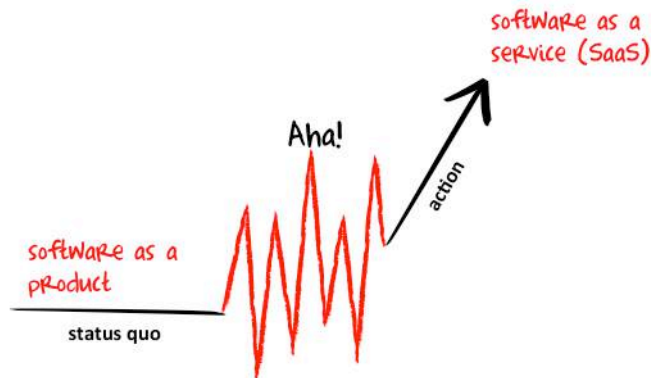
He told corporate leaders that with the explosion of mobile devices the SaaS model would allow their staff to access the business – anytime, anywhere – something that wasn't possible with the current centralized software delivery model.

It was these insights that eventually overcame business customers' skepticism about SaaS and salesforce.com.

Over the next seven years, salesforce.com's subscriber base grew 1,500 percent. It now serves over 100,000 customers. In 2013, salesforce.com reached annual revenue of \$3.5 billion, an increase of 35% from the prior year.²¹

Benioff is now regarded as one of the pioneers of cloud computing. In 2012, he was named as Businessperson of the Year by *Fortune*. Benioff is also recognized as a brilliant salesperson. *Business Week* calls him the Oprah of Silicon Valley.²²

Marc Benioff's Aha!



The first Aha!

Because of their motivating power, insights are often called Aha! or eureka moments.

Our first story of a eureka moment comes from ancient Greece. If you remember Archimedes, who lived in ancient Syracuse, was the Leonardo da Vinci of his day. He was a “master of thought”, a mathematician, scientist, and inventor.

His King, Hieron II suspected his royal crown maker had cheated him. He asked Archimedes to determine whether a recently commissioned gold crown had been cheapened by the addition of cheaper, inferior silver.

However there was a catch: Archimedes was not allowed to melt the crown or deface it in any manner. Although he was brilliant and knew as much as anyone about mathematical calculations and precious metals, he stalled.

His very life was on the line, but try as he might to examine the problem from all angles he failed to find an answer. The metal had been crafted into a series of leaves, and it wasn't clear to Archimedes the genius, quite how to measure the exact volume.

According to most reports he tried all sorts of answers. But none worked. Then he took a rest. Stepping into a full bath tub, he caused the water to spill over the edge. At that moment he froze.

He had his answer: the volume of water displaced from the tub was equal to the space his body took up. “Eureka!” he shouted, “I’ve found it!” Archimedes knew silver is lighter than

gold, so a block of silver equal in weight to a block of gold would be larger and therefore would displace more water. Therefore, a crown that was a mix of silver and gold would displace more water than one made of pure gold.

Archimedes calculations proved the goldsmith had indeed cheated the King.¹⁰

For Archimedes it was “utter euphoria”, he jumped out of the bath, and oblivious to the fact he had forgotten to dress, ran through the streets of Syracuse shouting “eureka!”

How the brain produces Aha! moments

In the 1990's, neuroscientists had begun using functional magnetic imaging or fMRI machines to scan the brain. fMRI is related to the ordinary MRI that your doctor uses except fMRI maps brain activities detecting changes in blood flow.

Since the mid 1990's Mark Beeman, a neuroscientist at Northwestern University, had been studying moments of insight. The problem was insights happened too fast for fMRI machines to detect.

So Mark Beeman teamed up with John Kounios at Drexel University, who was using EEG or electroencephalography to measure waves of electricity produced by the brain.

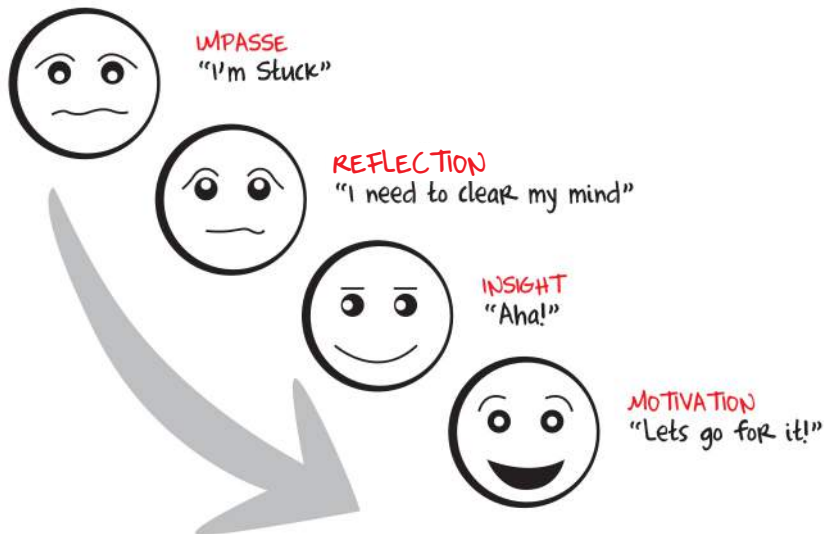
By using both fMRI and EEG, Beeman and Kounios were able to observe the mental shift that comes with an Aha! moment. Approximately 30 seconds before the answer emerges, there is a spike in gamma waves.

In 2004, Beeman and Kounios published the first brain pictures of an Aha! moment. The problem was that brain scans are extraordinarily difficult to interpret. Even skilled neuroscientists struggle.¹¹

Rock's four faces of insight

In 2006, Australian David Rock, an expert on the link between leadership and neuroscience, translated the brain research on insights into a series of pictures that actually showed what happened to someone's face before, during and after an insight.¹²

The Anatomy of an Aha! Moment



Face One: Impasse - When people first become aware of a problem or dilemma they look unhappy and perplexed. Our eyes might squint. We know we have a problem. We feel stuck.

Face Two: Reflection - When a person begins to reflect on the problem, their face changes. "Most people look up or slightly across and get a dazed look on their face. Their mouth might tense up as they think more deeply. Nearly everyone becomes very silent for a moment."¹³

Face Three: Insight - When we solve a problem, the flash of blinding energy we call an Aha! causes the face to light up. The answer seems obvious. We blurt out, "Aha! I see!" At the moment of insight the brain releases strong gamma-band waves. We experience an adrenaline high. The rush of energy is caused by the brain making new connections, forming a new mental map.

Face Four: Motivation - "When people are in the motivation phase," writes Rock, "their eyes are racing ahead, ready to take action"¹⁴

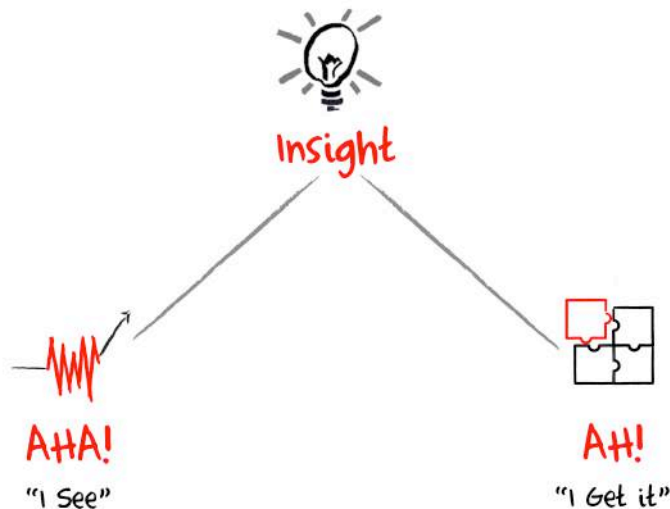
Rock's four faces of insights show aspiring Aha! led sellers what to look for on a prospect's face when they use an Aha! insight.

There are two types of insight

Not all insights are ground-breaking eureka moments where you experience a "dramatic feeling of sudden enlightenment that floods the mind when the right idea finally clicks into place"¹⁵. The famous physicist Stephen Hawkins compares these "eureka" moments to sex.

There is a second type of insight which comes from solving a problem by linear logic and reasoning. Katherine Ramsland, the author of *SNAP: Seizing your Aha! Moments*, calls these Ah! moments to distinguish them from Aha! insights. When you solve a problem by conscious disciplined reasoning, you experience the thrill and exhilarations that comes from discovering something new, fresh and valuable.¹⁶

The Two Types of Insight



Potatoes + fire = food

Here is a story that illustrates the differences between Aha! and Ah! moments.

Imagine you are a prehistoric man. Winter is closing in and you and your family are starving. You accidentally dig up some potatoes, which at first sight look edible. You take a bite but quickly spit it out in disgust. Frustrated, you chuck the potato into the nearby fire.

A few hours later, when the fire has turned to embers, you pick the potato up, feel that it has softened, and tentatively take another bite. It's delicious! For a few moments you stand there puzzled. How could something that was so tough and foul tasting become so tender and tasty?

Then a blinding Aha! flash of insight hits you. Potatoes plus fire equals food. You've discovered a valuable new food source. Your family will no longer starve.

In the spring, you come across a patch of squashes. These squashes look very similar to potatoes. Your analytic brain reasons, "If fire plus potatoes equals food, then maybe squashes plus fire will provide us with another source of food." That's an Ah! moment.¹⁷

Creative catalysts versus challengers

There are two different ways you can use insights to motivate customers to buy.

You can use a form of direct persuasion to directly challenge a customer's assumptions with provocative and "bold sales and teaching pitches". This is what the authors of the highly influential book, *The Challenger Sale* advocate.¹⁸

Alternatively, you can act as a creative catalyst and use self-persuasion techniques such as storytelling to help a customer convince themselves.

Challenging is a high risk strategy fraught with danger because buyers resist and push back when told what to do, regardless of the value contained in a pitch.

Moreover, creative catalysts come into their own in big sales environments where success comes from working with multiple decision makers over a long period and where repeat business and empathetic connections are critical to ongoing profitability.

Gloves on the boardroom table

A brilliant example of an Aha! guided discovery process that also demonstrates the seductive power of self-persuasion comes from John Stegner, a creative catalyst who worked as a manager for a U.S. billion dollar sized manufacturer.

Stegner believed his company was wasting millions of dollars through wasteful purchasing practices. He believed the potential savings were huge. "I thought we had an opportunity to drive down purchasing costs not by two per cent but by something in the order of \$1 billion over the next five years", said Stegner.

To capture these savings Stegner knew he would have to persuade his bosses that the savings were possible and a concerted effort across the firm was worthwhile. And herein lay the problem. Few of his bosses shared Stegner's views that their firms purchasing practices were riddled with inefficiencies.

To overcome his bosses' skepticism and complacency Stegner could have prepared a provocative, persuasive PowerPoint pitch supported by spreadsheets of credible data. That's what most managers in a similar position would have done.

But, instead of presenting a comprehensive business case for improving purchasing practices across the firm, Stegner focused his efforts on finding one vivid example of the company's poor purchasing habits that would highlight the bigger problem.

To do this, Stegner commissioned a summer student intern to investigate and calculate costs of purchasing a single item – work gloves. Work gloves were a clever choice because this was an item workers in all the companies' factories wore.

The intern discovered the factories were purchasing 424 – yes, four hundred and twenty four – different types of gloves from multiple suppliers, and all were separately negotiating their own prices. Prices for the exact same glove ranged from \$5 to \$17. Even Stegner was amazed by the findings.

Next, Stegner had the intern collect a sample of every one of the 424 different types of gloves and tag each one with the price paid.

Finally he asked the student to gather up all the gloves and pile them on the large expensive table in the company boardroom. Ready, Stegner now asked all the division presidents to come and visit his "glove shrine." Stegner recalled the scene.

"What they saw was a large expensive table, normally clean or with a few papers, now stacked high with gloves. Each of our executives stared at this display for a minute.

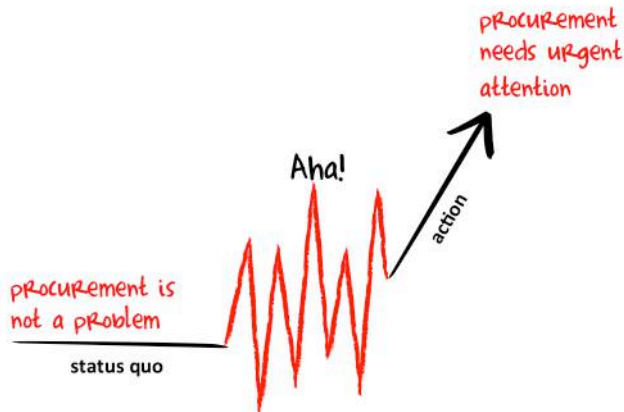
Then each said something like, "we really buy all these different kinds of gloves?" Well, as a matter of fact, yes we do. "Really?" Yes, really. Then they walked around the table.... They could see the prices. They looked at two gloves that seemed exactly alike, yet one was marked \$3.22 and the other \$10.55.

It's a rare event when these people don't have anything to say. But that day they just stood with their mouths gaping."

Each executive who visited that glove shrine experienced an Aha! - I see! moment. The glove exhibit was so powerful it became a travelling road show which visited dozens of plants.

As a result, says Stegner, we were given a mandate for change. People would say "we must act now", which of course we did and saved a great deal of money".¹⁹

John Stegner's Aha!



From grass to lucerne

Most success stories of provocatively challenging customers and taking them out of their comfort zone come when a customer knows the status quo is no longer an option.

Derick Moot is a professor at Lincoln University in the South Island of New Zealand

located at the edge of the world. Professor Moot is an expert on using Lucerne (or Alfalfa as it's called in North America) to improve farm profitability in areas stricken by drought.

In 1998 Doug Avery, a sheep farmer from one of the driest areas in New Zealand, turned up to one of Moot's seminars feeling burned out and bitter from years of drought.

In the 1980's and 1990's Doug had experienced a series of long, dry summers that had scorched the ground and left him feeling a failure. "It got so bad I used to hate going outside" says Doug, "I felt so ashamed at what I was looking at". Doug turned up at Moot's seminar believing his farm's fundamental problem was a shortage of water. Moot challenged that assumption.

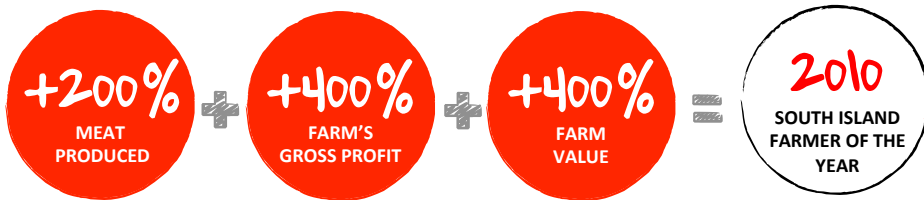
He pointed out Doug's farm had enough moisture to overcome the lack of rain. The problem was the moisture in drought times was beyond the reach of a pasture species such as grass.

If Doug used Lucerne, which sends a tap root nine to thirteen feet (three or four meters) into the soil, it could access the moisture.

This was the eureka moment for Doug. He saw he could drought-proof his property with Lucerne. "That one hour offered me light at the end of the tunnel", says Doug, "It was probably the most valuable hour of my life."

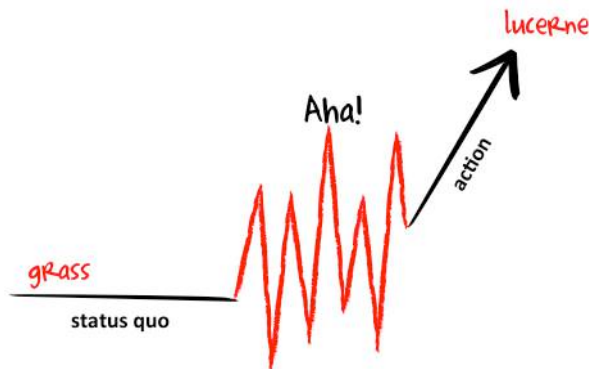
These days, around one third of Doug's 3,700 acre (1,500 hectare) property is planted in Lucerne, which, he says, is the key to sustainability for dry-land farmers. In the last ten years Doug has doubled both his farm area and its production. In 2010, Doug won the South Island Farmer of the Year Award.

Doug Avery's Bonvaree Farm Results 2002 - 2012



The drought breaker story reminds us of the importance of timing when delivering insights. When Doug Avery arrived at Derick Moot's workshop, he was desperate. The droughts that took him to the edge of despair forced him to look for alternatives. If "we hadn't had the severity of drought," Doug explains, "I would never have made the changes I made."²⁰

Doug Avery's Aha!



Insight-led selling must be driven from the top down

Companies can be seduced into thinking that insight-led selling is little more than a toolkit of Aha! producing techniques to be adopted and mastered. But for an insight-led sales team to truly flourish it helps enormously if Aha! thinking becomes part of a firm's DNA.

To help firms create a customer focused, insight-driven culture where inventive thinking flourishes, my firm takes clients through a three phase process.

During the first phase, we get the clients leadership team to define their customers vision statement. While most firms have a vision statement that focuses on what the firm aspires to become, few have a customer vision statement that addresses *what their customers want to become*.

In the second phase we help our clients collate all their strategic innovations in a portfolio which allows them to answer the question *what do we want our customers to become?*

Strategic innovations which answer the question 'what do we want our customers to become?' "makes both the business and its customers more valuable over time" writes MIT researcher and author Michael Schrage.²³

In the third and final phase, my firm helps clients create Aha! sales playbooks that give the salesforce the tools and guidance they need to answer the question *how do we use insights to help our customers become what we want them to be?*

Building an Aha! Driven Culture



Customer vision statement

What does our customer want to be?



Strategic innovations portfolio

What do we want our customers to become?



Aha! sales playbook

How can we use our insights to help our customers to be what we want them to become?

The Princess Initiative

When Disney executive Andy Mooney attended a Disney on Ice show in Phoenix in 2000, he couldn't help but notice the numbers of little girls in the crowd who were dressed up in home-made costumes of Disney characters.

As the former head of Nike's global apparel division, Mooney had never seen a sight like this before. So, when he asked the question '*what do little girls want to be?*' the answer was there right in front of him. *Little girls want to become princesses.*

When he asked a related question, '*what company has the most diverse portfolio of princesses?*' the answer was of course Disney. For Mooney, this was the Aha! moment.

The next day, Mooney gathered his team and launched what he called the Princess Initiative. Instead of selling individual Disney characters, Mooney bundled Snow White, Cinderella with six other characters – Ariel, Belle, Jasmine, Mulan, Pocahontas, and Sleeping Beauty – and repackaged the group as princesses.

As a result of the Princess Initiative, Disney's \$200 million a year line of dolls has become a \$4 billion global brand featuring over twenty-five thousand princess products. The Disney Princess brand is the leading licensed toy brand in the United States for girls.

And all of this came from asking a question that every customer vision statement should address, '*what do our customers want to become?*'²⁴

Once Mooney answered this question his princess design and marketing team could start addressing the question *what do we want our customers to become?*²⁵

Uncovering fresh sources of value

Firms who invest the resources to compile a company portfolio of strategic innovations and their associated value-multiplying insights are often surprised by the large number of additional sources of value the portfolio collection process uncovers.

New sources of value come from:

1. Fresh, previously unknown, newly discovered insights.
2. Underappreciated insights which are known about but have been undervalued because their potential value has never been appreciated.
3. Underleveraged insights which are known to be important, are being worked on, but because of their game changing potential, now need more time and money.²⁵

Aha! sales playbooks

There is little point in collating a portfolio of strategic innovations if the information it contains remains inaccessible to the salesforce. The information in the Strategic Innovations Portfolio must be distilled, translated and repackaged as Aha! sales playbooks.

'Aha! sales playbooks' are practical field tools that provide sellers with lists of useable insights backed up by questions, supporting messages and success stories.



Challenging assumptions

How do insight-led sellers come up with value-multiplying insights? The flash of insight more often than not comes from questioning a basic assumption.

Whenever the famous and prolific inventor Thomas Edison was about to hire a new staff member he would take the applicant out for a bowl of soup. If the person salted their soup before tasting it, Edison would not offer him the job. "He did not hire people who had too many assumptions built into their everyday life. Edison wanted people who consistently challenged assumptions."²⁶

Why, why, why?

"Genius hits a target no one else can see" said Schopenhauer, "and most of those targets are right under our noses."²⁷

When you start asking questions about things that your customers and competitors treat as unimportant, you sometimes end up with answers that no one imagined.

To illustrate this it's fun to draw on the story of how the U.S. rail gauge came to be four feet, eight and a half inches.

The U.S. standard railroad gauge (distance between the rails) is four feet, eight and a half inches. That's an exceedingly odd number.

Why was that gauge used? Because that's the way they built them in England, and English expatriates built the U.S. railroads.

Why did the English people build them like that? Because the first rail lines were built by the same people who built the pre-railroad tramways, and that's the gauge they used.

Why did 'they' use that gauge then? Because the people that built the tramways used the same jigs and tools they used for building wagons, which used that wheel spacing.

Why did the wagons use that odd wheel spacing? Well, if they tried to use any other spacing the wagons would break on some of the old, long-distance roads, because that's the spacing of the old wheel ruts.

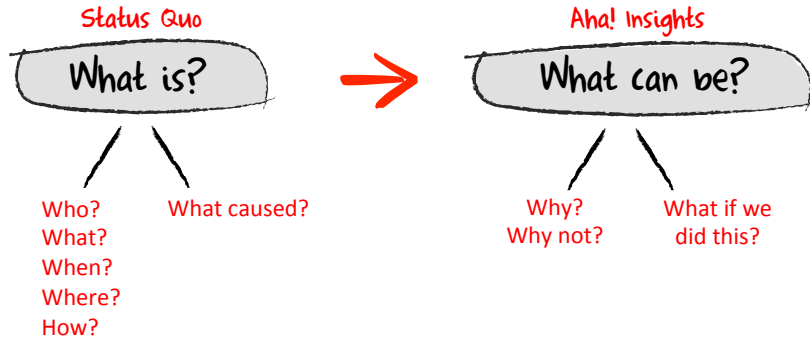
So who built these old rutted roads? American Scientist Dr. Richard J. Soloman argues "most carriages in the Middle Ages inherited the old Roman gauge of approximately four feet, eight and a half inches. Julius Caesar set this width under Roman law so that vehicles could traverse Roman villages and towns without getting caught in stone ruts of differing widths. Over the centuries, this became the traditional standard. The first long-distance roads in Europe were built by Imperial Rome for the benefit of its legions. The roads have been used ever since."²⁸

There is a debate on the internet about whether this story is sound history. But for the purpose of this discussion, that doesn't matter. Long-held, deeply entrenched assumptions shape buyers thinking and behavior. If you want to change a customer's mind, the best place to start is with their assumptions, and to start asking lots of why questions.²⁹

From what is, to what can be

Sellers significantly increase the odds of uncovering insights if they systematically shift their thinking from a 'What is?' to 'What can be?'³⁰

From What Is to What Can Be



Adapted from The Innovator's DNA, 2011

Uncovering customers' unmet and unvoiced needs

When most salespeople and companies want to understand their customer needs they typically start by asking what do our customers want? The problem with this approach argues A.G. Lafley, CEO of Procter and Gamble, is "the customer can rarely tell you what he or she wants or needs."³¹

Lafley knows money making insights mostly come after you have spent lots of time with the customer or consumer trying to find out the jobs they do in their daily work. Money making insights come when you dig into your customers' deepest desires, which include "their unarticulated, or unable to be articulated needs".³²

Jobs that cause hassles

So what customer jobs should sellers focus on? The short answer is the jobs that cause the customer the greatest hassles.

Jobs based thinking was invented by Harvard Business School professor Clayton Christensen and has been responsible for helping companies such as Proctor & Gamble to triple its innovation success rate.³³

To find out the jobs that are the source of the customers' greatest hassles, the authors of *The Innovators Guide to Growth*, Scott Anthony, Mark Johnson, Joseph Sinfield and Elizabeth Altman have come up with three simple questions.

1. "Is the job important to the customer?
2. Does the job occur relatively frequently?
3. Is the customer frustrated by the inability to get the job done with today's solutions?"³⁴

Answer yes to each of these questions and you have a job or hassle screaming out for an insight-driven solution.

Job Hassle Equation

$$\left(\begin{array}{c} \text{size of} \\ \text{problem} \end{array} + \text{frequency} \right) \times \text{frustration} = \text{hassle}$$

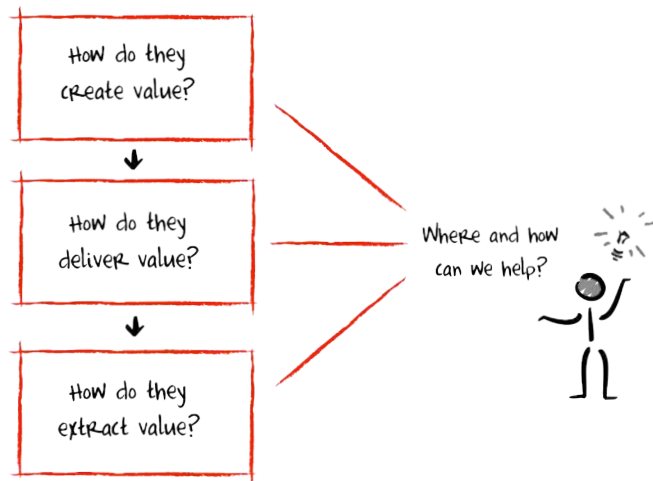
Analyzing a customer's business model

A company's business model is a simplified picture that captures how it creates, delivers and extracts value. In other words, how it makes and loses money.

A deep knowledge of a customer's business model is a big help to an Aha! Adviser looking for an edge over competitors.

Business model opportunities fall into two types:

1. There are opportunities to help customers strengthen and enhance their current business model.
2. There are opportunities to help customers transition to a new, more profitable and resilient business model.



Zara invents fast fashion

Zara is the flagship chain store of the Inditex group, the world's largest fashion retailer. Louis Vuitton fashion director Daniel Piette describes Zara as "possibly the most innovative and devastating retailer in the world."³⁵

Zara succeeds because its business model is built around speed – it's called fast fashion. Zara needs just two weeks to develop a new garment compared to the six month industry average, and launches around 10,000 new designs a year. "In the fast world of fashion, speed wins. At Zara, speed means pinpointing trends early, coming in with appealing designs quickly and getting them into stores fast."³⁶

With lots of new styles every week in Zara stores, customers know they will find something cool and exciting when they shop. They also know they must buy fast, because Zara replaces styles very quickly. "The result: the average Zara customer visits a Zara store an average of 17 times a year, compared to an average of three visits per year for customers of other clothiers."³⁷

Zara stocks lots of fresh merchandise and avoids having too much stale merchandise that can be moved only by lowering the price. Fast revenues and very little discounting lead to superior financial results.

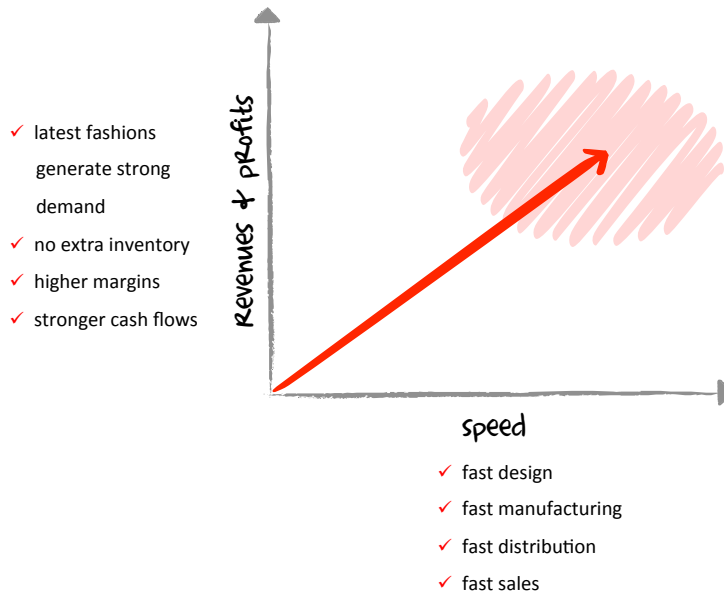
To link its "hundreds of factories to its hundreds of stores – each with the right assortment of colors and sizes", Zara needs state of the art distribution and logistics.

In 2002, the Spanish city of Zaragoza was designing an audacious plan to build the biggest logistics park in all of Europe, called PLAZA. At the same time, Zara's parent company was planning to build a large new distribution center in neighboring Barcelona.

To woo Zara away from Barcelona, the Plaza sales team used its insights into Zara's business model to deliver Zara a mega-sized, automated distribution center "covering a whopping 120,000 square meters" (1.3 million square feet) – about the size of 23 American football fields under one roof.

Zara can now deliver product ready for sale to all European stores within 24 hours and all stores worldwide within 48 hours.³⁸

Zara's Fast Fashion Business Model



Google: from enemy to ally

In Chapter 1 we looked at how Google-driven technologies have fuelled the destruction of the traditional tell-and-sell sales model.

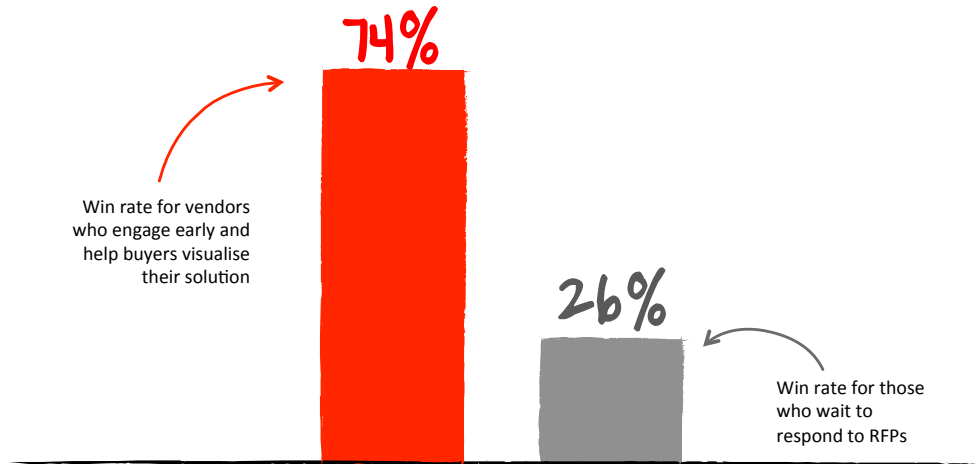
When sellers discover that how they sell (Aha!s and self-persuasion) is more important than what they sell (products, services or solutions), they change their attitude to Google.

Aha! led sellers prefer to sell to sophisticated, knowledgeable clients who invariably have done much of their homework on Google. When traditional sellers become insight-led Aha! Advisers, Google turns from an enemy into an ally.

Getting in early

Insight-led sellers leverage their superior ability to create value by meeting clients early in their decision making process. Forrester Research shows the win rate for vendors who get in early are three times those sellers who wait and respond to requests for proposals.³⁹

Vendors Who Get in Early are
Three Times More Likely to Win the Sale



Forrester Global Executive Buyer Insight Survey, 2012

In the next chapter we'll look at how high performing sellers use the power of self-persuasion to shorten their sales cycle and turn their Aha! generating talent into closed sales.



CHAPTER THREE

The new science of sales success:
the proven power of self-persuasion

The sales training industry has a serious credibility problem when it comes to making claims based on its research. "Much of the so-called research," writes respected researcher and sales expert Neil Rackham "has methodological holes in it you could fly a jumbo jet through." "Customers are rightly cynical about unsupportable claims that masquerade under the name of research."¹

In contrast, this chapter features research on the power of self-persuasion conducted by university based social psychologists and neuroscientists. Before academics can get their research published in a reputable journal they first have to submit their findings for peer review. Peer review is a process where a scholarly work is checked by a group of experts in the same field to make sure it meets the necessary standards.

THE POWER OF A SEDUCTIVE STORY

Before sellers can convince a customer to buy their product or service, they first have to convince them they need to change. To persuade their customers to change most sellers arm themselves with rafts of facts and figures packaged up as PowerPoints, brochures and white papers.

But research shows facts and figures which are devoid of emotion struggle to convince. Why? Neuroscientists have discovered "emotions determine the meaning of everything." Every time we experience something, our stone-age brain is hard-wired to ask two emotion fueled questions, "Will it hurt me? or will it help me?"²

Truth and Story

The ancient Jewish parable 'Truth and Story' shows why hard facts and figures devoid of emotion struggle to convince.

"A long time ago in a small village lived two girls, one named Truth and the other named Story. Each wanted to be the most popular girl in the village. Soon a rivalry between them developed. They decided to settle the question once and for all with a contest. Each girl would walk through the village and whichever girl was greeted by the most villagers would be the winner.

Truth went first.

She set off down the cobblestone street, passing through the heart of the village. Not one person came out to greet her. By the time she reached the other end of town, she was devastated.

Story went next.

She had only taken a few steps into the village before people came running out of houses and shops to greet her. "Story, how are you?" "Story, good to see you!" And so it went until she passed through the village and reached Truth who was in tears.

"Story," said Truth, drying her eyes. "You win. You are the most popular girl in the village. Everyone likes you. But why?"

Story put her arm around Truth's shoulder. She spoke in a consoling voice. "You and I," she said, "we are not so different. I have Truth in me too. But nobody wants to hear the naked Truth." "So what am I supposed to do?" said Truth. "Here," said Story, removing her cloak. "Take this, and wrap yourself in it." "What is it?" Truth asked. "Emotion," Story said. "Wear it, and you, like me, will become Story."³

A story's persuasive power derives from the fact it is a form of self-persuasion. Brain studies show when we are listening to a captivating story our brain becomes coupled with that of the story teller. When we hear a story about pain we feel that pain.⁴

In 2011, Raymond Mar, a professor of psychology at York University in Canada, published a review of 86 fMRI brain scan studies and concluded that there was substantial overlap between the neural networks we use to understand stories and the ones we use to navigate our relationships.⁵

"Human minds yield helplessly to the suction of story. No matter how hard we concentrate, no matter how deep we dig in our heel, we just can't resist the gravity of alternative worlds" writes Johnathon Gottschall in his enthralling book *The Storytelling Animal*.⁵

We ignore evidence in favor of a good story

A frightening example of the power of stories over facts and statistics comes from the world of medicine.

Participants in a patient decision making study were presented strong, compelling evidence that a drug called Tamoxol was effective in treating 90 percent of patients who had suffered from a disease. In other words, Tamoxol was a highly effective treatment. When participants were asked to imagine they had the disease 88 percent of the group said they would take the Tamoxol treatment.

But when participants were given one negative story about a patient called Pat who had died from the treatment and again told the treatment was 90 percent effective, just 39 percent of people opted to pursue the treatment.

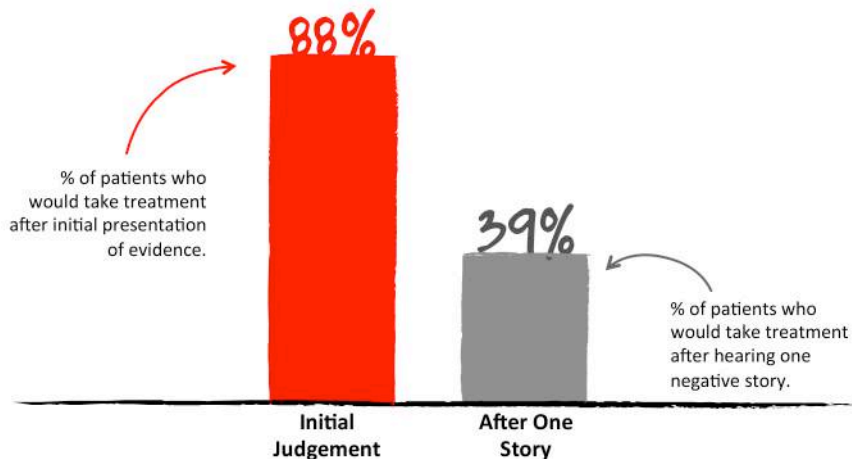
The negative story read: "Pat's decision to undergo Tamoxol resulted in a poor outcome. The worm was not completely destroyed. The disease resumed its course. At one month post treatment, Pat was blind and had lost the ability to walk."

In other words, one negative anecdotal story was powerful enough to influence most of the participants to ignore the evidence that 90 percent of patients who had taken the drugs were cured.⁶

Conversely, when treatment was only 30 percent effective and participants were given a positive story, 78 percent said they would take the drug.

As you can see, "the evidence on effectiveness of the treatments was completely ignored in favor of the power of the story."⁷

The Impact of Just One Negative Story



An American finds love in Paris

The irresistible pull of a simple, engaging narrative was vividly demonstrated by the advertising that accompanied the 2010 Super Bowl.

Super Bowl ads are regarded as the pinnacle of advertising creativity. A 30 second advertising slot costs over \$3 million. Agencies spend millions on eye grabbing visuals and exotic locations to make sure their ads display the highest production values.

So it was surprising when Google (who hadn't been known for advertising and certainly not on TV) ran a simple, cheaply produced ad consisting entirely of text, on how an American finds love in Paris using Google Search.

The clip starts when a guy enters "Study abroad Paris, France" and clicks on the search results to learn more. As the plot unfolds, he searches for advice on "how to impress a French girl". A romance is in the air. A few searches later he's looking for "Paris churches". Finally we see a search on "How to assemble a crib". The video ends with the message "Search on."⁸

Whereas most of the Super Bowl ads were produced by the ad agencies seasoned and talented creatives, the Google ad was created in-house by the "Google 5", a bunch of students recruited from ad and design schools.

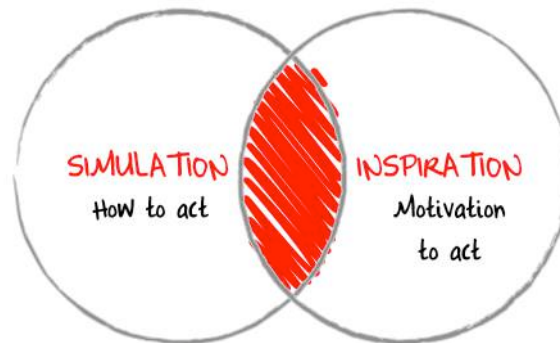
Michigan State University marketing professors who rank Super Bowl ads voted the Google ad, called Parisian Love, as their top choice. Neuromarketing company Sands Research ranked Parisian Love as fourth out of 60 on "neuro-engagement and very high on memorability."

"Here is proof" writes Roger Dooley, a noted neuromarketing expert and author of *Brainfluence*, that "text beats richer media when it tells a story ... even in a highly visual medium like television."⁹

Why do stories persuade?

In their brilliant book *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die* authors Chip and Dan Heath argue stories are powerful persuaders because of their ability to simulate and inspire.

The Persuasive Power of Story



First, a story acts as a flight simulator for the brain. It provides simulation, knowledge about how to act.

When we hear a story we simulate it. It's the brain's way of helping us navigate similar challenges that we might face in the future. Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio believes the brain evolved stories "as a sort of dress rehearsal for the future". Our brains can replay the steps and evoke the emotions that caused past failures.¹⁰

Secondly, stories are powerful because they provide inspiration or motivation to act. Inspiration drives action, as does simulation. Heroes who overcome big odds to succeed motivate us to emulate them.

If he or she can do it, so can I. That's why stories with protagonists who are ordinary, frail or vulnerable are so appealing. We identify with them. The hero's triumph creates emotional resonance and energizes us to take action.¹¹

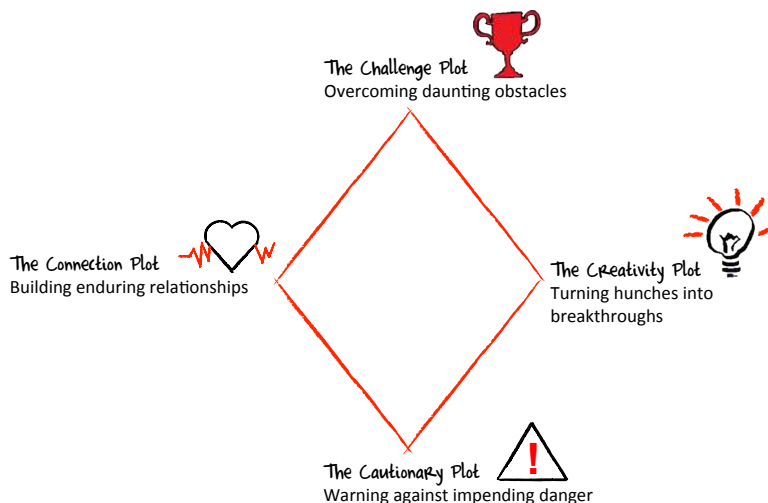
How to spot story plots that motivate and energize

For their book, *Made to Stick*, authors Chip and Dan Heath read hundreds of stories to search for story templates that would help readers spot stories that would motivate, energize and drive productive action.

The Heath brothers identified three basic templates; the challenge plot, the connection plot, and the creativity plot. These three plots are based on Chip Heath's research at Stanford University.¹²

I've added a fourth template called the cautionary plot.

The Four Basic Plots that Inspire Productive Action



The challenge plot

The challenge plot is especially popular with B2B salespeople because its essence is a story of business success against the odds. Variations include the underdog story, the rags to riches story, and the triumph of sheer willpower over adversity.

Challenge plots make us want to try harder, to go the distance, to hang tough. We draw courage from ordinary people like ourselves who summon up the courage to tackle formidable challenges and triumph, achieving extraordinary results.¹³

Use the Challenge Plot When You Want to Make People:



Set higher goals



Take on new challenges



Work harder and persist longer

David and Goliath is the classic challenge plot. In about 1030 BC, the Philistine army prepared to wage war against King Saul's Israelites.

When Goliath stepped from the ranks of the Philistines to challenge the Israelites, the Israelites cowered in fear. Goliath stood over nine feet tall, his helmet and body armor seemed impenetrable. His sword and spear gleamed menacing in the sunlight.

Against Goliath stood David, a young shepherd's boy clad only in cloth. His sole weapon was a homemade slingshot.

At first, Saul told David he was too young, small and inexperienced to fight a battle with a hardened veteran, so he gave him protective armor. The armor was too heavy so David discarded it, rushing into combat clad only in a shepherd's tunic.

Rushing toward Goliath, David took a stone and launched it with his sling. The stone pierced the slight gap in Goliath's helmet. Struck on the forehead Goliath fell face down,

dead on the ground. David then raced forward, grabbed Goliath's sword and cut off his head.

The Philistines fled.

In the story, it is only after David has slung the stone do we appreciate that the boys experience with a shepherd's sling is a strength as is his agility and speed. Then we appreciate David has discarded the armor because it would have slowed him down. Lastly, when the stone hits Goliath's forehead we discover Goliath's critical weakness.¹⁴

The insight is giants are not what they appear to be. The same factors that make them strong can be their sources of greatest weakness.¹⁵

The connection plot

Where challenge plots involve overcoming obstacles, connection plots are about the way we use relationships to bridge gaps with other people.

Use the Connection Plot When You Want to Make People:



Work with others



Reach out and help people



Be more tolerant

Lego Ninjago Seven-year-old Luka Apps spent all his Christmas money on a LEGO Ninjago Ultra Sonic Raider set. But the thing about LEGO's – those small pieces are easy to lose. Against his father's advice, young Luka took his new Jay ZX shopping. And then, he lost it. Luka then decided to write a letter to LEGO asking for a replacement. Here is Luka's letter:

"Hello.

My name is Luka Apps and I am seven years old.

With all my money I got for Christmas I bought the Ninjago kit of the Ultrasonic Raider. The number is 9449. It is really good.

My Daddy just took me to Sainsbury's and told me to leave the people at home but I took them and I lost Jay ZX at the shop as it fell out of my coat.

I am really upset I have lost him. Daddy said to send you an email to see if you will send me another one.

I promise I won't take him to the shop again if you can.

- Luka"

A short time later, Luka received a reply from Richard, a LEGO customer service representative. Richard wrote that he had spoken to Sensei Wu, a master from the Ninjago line.

"Luka, I told Sensei Wu that losing your Jay minifigure was purely an accident and that you would never ever ever let it happen ever again.

He told me to tell you, "Luka, your father seems like a very wise man. You must always protect your Ninjago minifigures like the dragons protect the Weapons of Spinjitzu!"

Sensei Wu also told me it was okay if I sent you a new Jay and told me it would be okay if I included something extra for you because anyone who saves their Christmas money to buy the Ultrasonic Raider must be a really big Ninjago fan.

So, I hope you enjoy your Jay minifigure with all his weapons. You will actually have the only Jay minifigure that combines 3 different Jay's into one! I am also going to send you a bad guy for him to fight!

Just remember what Sensei Wu said: keep your minifigures protected like the Weapons of Spinjitzu! And of course, always listen to your Dad."

Connection plots encourage us to care more, to be more tolerant and helpful and to love our neighbours.¹⁶

The creativity plot

The third type of inspirational story identified by the Heaths is the creativity plot.

When you think creativity, it's tempting to think of the story of Archimedes shouting eureka! and running round the streets of Syracuse naked, or the story of the apple falling on Newton's head sparking his theory of gravity.¹⁷

Use the Creativity Plot When You Want to Make People:

 Tackle a long standing, perplexing problem



Be Innovative



Experiment with new approaches

Nuggets of wisdom "A few years back, Toronto based gold mining company Goldcorp (GG) was in trouble. Strikes, lingering debts, and an exceedingly high cost of production forced the company to terminate its mining operations. The gold market was contracting, so most analysts assumed that the company's fifty-year old mine in Red Lake, northwestern Ontario, was dying.

Without evidence of substantial new gold deposits, Goldcorp was likely to fold.

Chief Executive Officer Rob McEwen needed a miracle. Frustrated that his in-house geologists couldn't reliably estimate the value and location of the gold on his property, McEwen did something unheard of in his industry: He published his geological data on the Web for all to see and challenged the world to do the prospecting. The "Goldcorp Challenge" made a total of \$575,000 in prize money available to participants who submitted the best methods and estimates.

Every scrap of information (some 400 megabytes worth) about the 55,000 acre property

was revealed on Goldcorp's website. News of the contest spread quickly around the Internet and more than 1,000 virtual prospects from 50 countries got busy crunching the data.

Mining is one of the world's oldest industries, and it's governed by some pretty conventional thinking. Take industry rule number 1: Don't share your proprietary data.¹⁸

The fact that McEwen went open-source was a stunning gamble. But McEwen wasn't hamstrung by the mining industry's conventional wisdom. McEwen wasn't a miner, he didn't think like a miner. As a young man he had worked for Merrill Lynch in the investment business.¹⁹

Within weeks, submissions from around the world were flooding into Goldcorp headquarters. The first place winners in the contest were Nick Archibald and his team of geologists at Fractal Graphics, an Australian geoscience consulting firm who had never been to the mine, or ever been to Canada.

The contestants identified 110 targets on the Red Lake property, more than 80 percent of which yielded substantial quantities of gold.

In fact, since the challenge was initiated, an astounding 8 million ounces of gold have been found – worth well over \$3 billion. Not a bad return on a half a million dollar investment.

Today, Goldcorp is reaping the profits of its inventive approach to exploration.

"One hundred dollars invested in the company in 1993 is now worth more than \$3,000 today."

Creative plots work because they push us to be innovative, to fire up our imaginations, to try out fresh approaches.²⁰

The cautionary plot

While challenge plots, relationship and creativity plots inspire listeners to be courageous, bold and innovative, there are times when a customer needs to be warned about a danger or cautioned against making an unwise decision.

Cautionary tales of course have been the staple of children's stories for many years. *Little Red Riding Hood* was originally written as a cautionary tale for well-bred young ladies to warn them against talking to strangers. Most of us can still vividly recall the story of the big bad wolf.

When caution is the watchword, it's time to use a cautionary tale.

Use the Cautionary Plot When You Want to Make People:



Aware of an impending danger



Assess the full risks involved in making a decision



Reconsider a questionable decision

Each year my company trains hundreds of wealth advisers. Wealth advisers typically begin their relationship with a client by agreeing on an investment and retirement plan

and then meeting regularly to review progress and take investment decisions that will optimize returns largely based on a client's appetite for risk.

When the share market has been falling or flat for a period, it is not uncommon for impatient, frustrated clients to start looking at bargain stocks that have the potential to produce spectacular returns.

Cigar butts

Here is a cautionary tale taken from one of the annual letters legendary investor Warren Buffet writes for the shareholders of his holding company, Berkshire Hathaway.

"My first mistake," Buffet writes, "was in buying control of Berkshire. Though I knew its business-textile manufacturing to be unpromising, I was enticed to buy because the price looked cheap.

If you buy stock at a sufficiently low price, there will usually be some hiccup in the fortunes of the business that gives you a chance to unload at a decent profit, even though the long-term performance of the business may be terrible.

I call this the "cigar butt" approach to investing. A cigar butt found of the street that has only one puff left in it may not offer much of a smoke, but the "bargain purchase" will make that puff all profit.

First, the original 'bargain' price probably will not turn out to be such a steal after all. In a difficult business, no sooner is one problem solved than another surfaces – never is there just one cockroach in the kitchen.

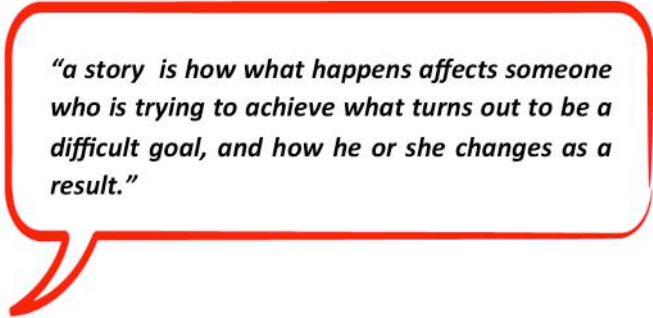
Second, any initial advantage you secure will be quickly eroded by the low return that the business earns. For example, if you buy a business for \$8 million that can be sold or liquidated for \$10 million and promptly take either course, you can realize a high return.

But the investment will disappoint if the business is sold for \$10 million in ten years and in the interim has annually earned and distributed only a few percent on cost. Time is the friend of the wonderful business, the enemy of the mediocre."²¹

The Buffet cigar butt story contains all the persuasive elements that a wealth adviser would want to use in a story to caution an impatient client against making a rash decision to invest in what appears to be a bargain stock.

Warren Buffet, author of the tale, is arguably the world's most successful and most respected investor. Buffet doesn't just deliver cautionary advice against buying bargain stocks; he confesses he fell into the same trap when he purchased Berkshire Hathaway. Buffet uses a vivid, memorable metaphor of the cigar butt to frame the listener's thinking. His language is plain, his logic is compelling.

So what is a story?



"a story is how what happens affects someone who is trying to achieve what turns out to be a difficult goal, and how he or she changes as a result."

Novice story tellers often make the mistake of believing a story is "something *dramatic* that happens to someone". Story consultant and author of *Wired for Story* Lisa Cron reminds us a story is so much more.

Writers call "what happens" the plot.

"Someone" is the *protagonist*.

The "goal" is the *story question*.

And "how he or she changes" is *what the story itself is actually about*.²²

THE POWER OF AN INTRIGUING QUESTION

For decades, marketers have been aware that headlines determine the success of copy based communications such as ads, emails, direct mail, tweets, blogs and websites.

But what types of headlines pull hardest? Two researchers at B.I. Norwegian Business School compared the impact of statement headlines with question headlines. Statement headlines use direct persuasion, question headlines use self-persuasion.

The researchers, Linda Lai and Aidun Farbrot first tested three kinds of headlines on Farbrot's Twitter account, which had 6,000 followers.

The first was a statement: "Power corrupts."

The second asked a question: "Does power corrupt?"

The third used a self-referencing question: "Is your boss intoxicated by power?"

Question headlines gained over 150 percent more clicks than statement headlines.

When questioning headlines included self-referencing words like “you” they pulled 175 percent more clicks than statement headlines.

In the second experiment Lai and Farbroth posted headlines for products for sale on FINN, a Norwegian shopping site similar to eBay.

The researchers tested four products: an iPhone 4, a couch, a television and a Miele washing machine.

They wrote simple statement headlines like “For sale, Black iPhone 16GB” with straight forward questions like “Anyone who needs a new iPhone 4?” and self-referencing questions like “Is this your new iPhone 4?”

The research showed readers clicked on question headlines 137 percent more than statement headlines; this rose to 257 percent more for self-referencing questions.

The takeaway from this research is that if you want to get more clicks you should word your headlines as questions, especially self-referencing ones. It is also further proof of the power of self-persuasion.²³

THE IRRESISTABLE POWER OF IMAGINATION

Sellers are taught that buyers are always tuned into the radio station W.I.I.F.M. “what’s in it for me?” Since the 1920’s sellers have been taught customers buy products or services for their benefits. Benefits answer the buyer’s question “Why would I want to buy this? Does it make me money, save time or eliminate hassles?”

As a result, sellers spend lots of energy identifying, rehearsing and presenting the benefits of what they sell.

In the early 1980's a team of psychology researchers led by W. Larry Gregory at New Mexico State University carried out a remarkable study that tested two different ways of communicating benefits to prospective customers. One script employed direct persuasion, the other script employed self-persuasion.

The researchers canvassed homeowners in Tempe, Arizona on their opinions about cable television. At the time, cable TV was only available in a few large cities in the U.S.

Tempe citizens couldn't get cable TV. But unknown to the citizens, the researchers knew cable TV was about to come to Tempe, and residents would shortly be offered the opportunity to buy a subscription to a new cable television service.

One group of homeowners was asked to consider the advantages of cable television (CATV) when it eventually arrived, and were read a short script:

"CATV will provide a broader entertainment and informational service to its subscribers. Used properly, a person can plan in advance to enjoy events offered. Instead of spending money on the babysitter and gas, and putting up with the hassles of going out, more time can be spent at home with family, alone, or with friends."

A second group heard a slightly different script:

"Take a moment and imagine how CATV will provide you with a broader environment and informational service. When you use it properly, you will be able to plan in advance which of the events offered you wish to enjoy. Take a moment and think how, instead of spending money on the babysitter and gas, and then having to put up with the hassle of going out, you will be able to spend your time at home, with your family, alone, or with your friends."

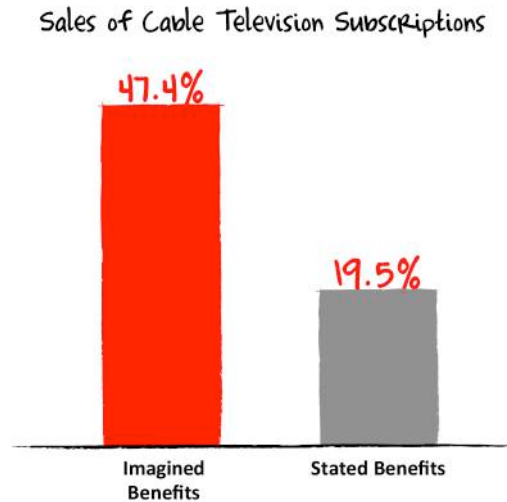
After reading one of the two scripts, the interviewer asked the owner a list of questions which included "How likely do you think CATV will become as popular as regular television?" She then thanked them for participating.

Just a few weeks later, cable television arrived in Tempe and the local cable company sent its sales team out to households selling subscriptions.

When the researchers analyzed which homes had taken up the offers, they found 20 percent of homeowners who read the first version signed up.

However, a remarkable 47 percent of the homeowners who were read the second version signed up. That's nearly two and a half times as high.²⁴

Imagined Benefits outsell Stated Benefits by 240%



Compare the two versions. The first version explains how “a person can plan in advance”.

The second asks readers to “imagine” themselves experiencing the benefits.²⁵

When you ask someone to imagine themselves experiencing the benefits of your product or service you are using self-persuasion. The use of the word imagine causes us to suspend our disbelief.

"Brain studies show picturing a behavior in our minds and actually doing it are more or less the same thing ... The mere act of imagining a behavior" writes Rob Yeung, psychologist, researcher and author of *I is for Influence*, "may create a pathway that makes it easier for people to actually follow through to do the behavior too."²⁶

THE SURPRISING POWER OF FREE CHOICE

The 1992 movie *Glengarry Glen Ross* depicts two days in the lives of four desperate, underperforming real estate salesmen. Corporate office sends Blake (played by a young Alec Baldwin) to "kick their ass" and "motivate" them to get out and close more sales.

In one of movies' most memorable sales scenes, Blake unleashes a tirade of verbal abuse at the men. He threatens them, saying:

"We're adding a little something to this month's contest. As you know, first prize is a Cadillac Eldorado ... Second prize is a set of steak knives ... Third prize is you're fired. You get the picture."

"Only one thing counts in this life," he screams, "Get them to sign on the line which is dotted!"

The scene climaxes when Blake flips over a green chalk board and points to where he's written the first three letters of the alphabet.

"A-B-C" he says.

"A – Always

B – be

C – closing.

Always be closing. Always be closing."

ABC is probably the most quoted acronym in sales training. The simplicity and apparent logic of ABC makes it understandable and memorable.

But ABC is based on a flawed understanding of buyer psychology. Customers resist when sellers use direct persuasion tactics based on the mantra of ABC. No customer has to do anything; the choice is always theirs.

Sellers are much more successful when they acknowledge that fact and invoke a form of self-persuasion.²⁷

But you are free to accept or refuse

In 2000, two French researchers set up an experiment in a shopping mall to test the persuasive impact of a single eight word sentence.

First, a researcher made a simple direct request to a number of individual shoppers' asking for money so he could catch the bus home.

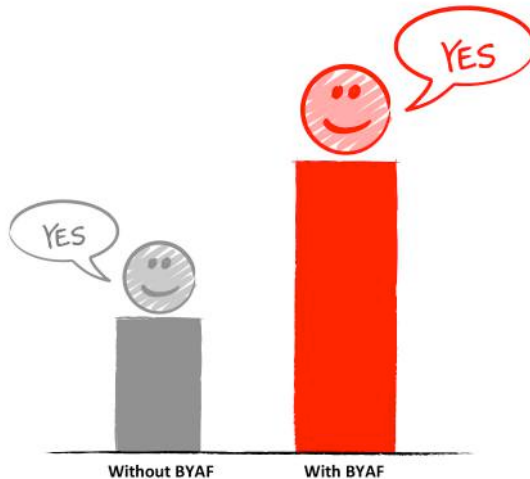
The precise words he used were, "Sorry Madam/Sir, would you have some coins to take the bus please?"

Then a researcher approached a second group of individual shoppers and added eight words, *"But you are free to accept or refuse."*

Only ten percent of these answered yes to the first request. However, 47.5 percent agreed to give money when the phrase "... but you are free to accept or refuse" was added.

The 'But You Are Free' technique (BYAF) has now been tested in 42 studies involving 22,000 people. Across all the studies, a BYAF phrase doubled the odds that someone would say yes to a request.

Adding BYAF Doubles Your Chances of Success



The BYAF technique has increased donations to tsunami and land mine charities. One BYAF study staged in a nursing home found nursing home residents were much more likely to participate in activities with other residents.

The researchers had discovered a remarkable simple persuasion technique that was practical and easy to use, that can be applied in virtually any setting including sales.

People dislike being told what to do, so when you want someone to say yes to your requests it is not enough to ask, you have to specifically tell people they are free to accept or refuse.²⁹

Reinforcing a customer's autonomy

The exact words used to reinforce a customer's autonomy don't matter. Using the phrase, "it's up to you", works just as well as the standard, "but you are free". The phrases however must always recognize the customers freedom to say "no".³⁰

Reinforcing someone's autonomy is easy, writes Yale University School of Medicine psychologist and author of *Instant Influence* Dr. Michael Pantalon.

First, "Come out with the strongest autonomy reinforcing statements you can honestly make."

Second, "Be honest about what you want." The easiest and usually the most effective way to demonstrate you're not trying to manipulate a customer is to acknowledge your agenda. An IT salesperson could say, "I'd like to see you adopt our software – but in the end, whether or not you buy from us or someone else, *it's up to you*."³¹

Smiling for the first time

In 1999, New York based entrepreneur and former Madison Avenue adman Brian Mullaney co-founded the charity Smile Train to provide free corrective surgery for children in developing countries with cleft lips and palates. Millions of children in developing countries with unrepaired clefts live in shame, and have difficulty eating, breathing and speaking.

Cleft repair surgery is simple, the transformation is immediate. Patients see their smile for the first time, parents cry tears of joy, lives and communities are changed forever.

At Smile Train, Mullaney and his team pioneered a new approach to providing free surgery in developing countries by empowering local doctors to solve the problem themselves. Smile Train developed cutting-edge 3D technology to train doctors in developing countries in treating cleft palate children (Mullaney calls this the “teach a man to fish” model).

Mullaney also leveraged his 30 year marketing background to build one of the most cost-effective fundraising programs in the non-profit world, raising more than \$750 million for clefts in less than ten years. Today Smile Train has more than 2.7 million donors and has provided life changing surgery for more than 1 million children.³³

All the time, Mullaney kept asking: *why do people give money to charity?* Academic research suggests two prime reasons:

1. People are altruistic. They want to help others.
2. People give to charity because it makes them feel good about themselves (the warm glow effect).

Mullaney believed there was a third factor which people didn't mention.

3. People give because they give into social pressure, even though they wish they'd never been asked in the first place.

Mullaney believed the third factor was much more important than charities were prepared to admit. But he knew that this was why Smile Train included a picture of a disfigured child in need of cleft surgery on its millions of mailings.

Mullaney asked: what if Smile Train offered potential donors a way to ease social pressure and give money at the same time? His radical answer: offer donors a "once and done" option. Smile Train would tell potential donors: *Make one gift now and we will never ask you for another donation again.*

The "once and done strategy" ran against conventional wisdom. In fundraising it costs a lot of money to acquire a new donor. Most charities lose money in their early mailings, but donors who give generally give again and again. Logic therefore suggests cultivating repeat givers is the key to success. That's why donors who make an initial donation can expect on average 18 mailings a year.

But what if there were a lot of untapped potential givers who “would consent to a single date with Smile Train as long as Smile Train promised to never ask them again”

Households that got the “once and done” letter were twice as likely to become first time donors. The “once and done” campaign raised more than twice as much initial revenue as the traditional standard letter.³⁴

But the question remained, what had Smile Train sacrificed in long term donations? The “once and done” mailing included a reply card that asked the donor to check one of three boxes:

1. This will be my only gift. Please send me a tax receipt and do not ask for another donation again.
2. I would prefer to receive only two communications from The Smile Train each year. Please honor my wishes to limit the amount of mail sent to me.
3. Please keep me up-to-date on the progress The Smile Train is making on curing the world of clefts by sending me regular communications.

Surprisingly, only one third of the donors opted out of future mailings. “Most donors were happy to let Smile Train keep mailing them – and as the data would show, also happy to keep donating money.”³⁵

The “once and done” campaign raised overall donations by a remarkable 46 percent. And because of the opt outs, Smile Train saved money by sending out fewer letters. So why did Brian Mullaney’s direct mailing experiment enjoy such spectacular success?

First, Smile Train was honest about its agenda and motives. Smile Train candidly acknowledged the hassles that repeated charity mailings represent.

Second and most importantly, Smile Train gave the potential donor control of the transaction by giving them the freedom to say no by allowing them to opt out of future mailings.

Smile Train's "once and done" campaign was astonishingly successful because of the way it cleverly exploited the power of self-persuasion.

Self-persuasion doesn't just change minds, it changes behavior

Ultimately self-persuasion is more effective than direct persuasion because it doesn't just change minds, It changes behavior.

Is it any wonder that eminent American psychologist Professor Eliot Aronson, whose work featured in chapter 1, after a lifetime of studying the science of persuasion felt confident enough to declare:

*"Self-persuasion is almost always a more powerful form of persuasion (deeper, longer lasting) than being directed by another person."*³³

It's now time for the sales training industry to spend less time talking about the art of selling and spend more time teaching the *science of selling*.