

Inside Their Head

Clues to understanding your customer's decision-making process

Editor's Note: Last issue, Pat Malone wrote about your role as a decision-getter. This article focuses on understanding your customer's decision-making.

When your customer goes into decision-making mode, he is being influenced by two considerations:

- “What do I know?” This is the logical side of our brain calling up all the data and facts that we have that pertain to the decision at hand.
- “How do I feel about what I know?” This is the emotional side of the decision making equation.



By Patrick T. Malone

how many canines they currently see, and if 4 in 10 dog owners have 1+ cat, what the potential new business impact could be on their practice. At the same time, their emotional side could be apprehensive about talking to each canine owner about feline wellness knowing 6 out of 10 don't own a cat (logic to justify emotion). Ultimately, this conflict might produce inaction and your customer avoids making a decision today.

The good news is attitudes translate into actions and that is something you can see in your customer's body language, hear in their voice and correlate to their words.

These considerations will exert some influence in the decision-making process depending on the importance of the decision. A relatively simple decision, like reordering a vaccine, will be dominated by the logical side of our brain. “How many doses do I have on hand?” “How many do I use in a month?”

A more complex decision, like switching vaccine suppliers, will be dominated by the emotional component of decision making. “Am I sure this vaccine is less reactive?” “Am I comfortable with this manufacturer?”

If you are proposing BI's feline wellness program to your customer, their logical side may be thinking about

Meet the decision-makers

This dynamic is in a constant state of flux, creating decision-making attitudes inside your customer, and that is the bad news – you cannot see an attitude. The good news is attitudes translate into actions and that is something you can see in your customer's body language, hear in their voice and correlate to their words. The following are some typical decision-makers you will see in your distribution career.

Apathetic Agnes is indifferent to your idea. Look for these non-verbal clues – lack of interest, low energy, little or no eye contact, unresponsive, pessimistic, monotone, uncaring

or the lack of any reaction at all. “Increasing my caseload isn’t a priority.”

Whining William is always the first to complain. Look for these non-verbal clues – low energy, sighing, apologetic, tired, slow movements, sees only failures or extreme negative exaggerations. “The feline wellness will just cause my inventory to increase with no real increased return on investment.”

Risky Ray is always trying to avoid taking a position. Look for these non-verbal clues – indecisive, unsure, hesitant, nervous, fidgety, withdrawn, shy, poor eye contact, short attention span, apprehensive or always looking to postpone deciding. “You are asking me to commit with no real guarantees. It’s just too risky.”

Hostile Harriett is always trying to stop the conversation

Confident Connie has become a co-owner of your idea and is committed to seeing it through to completion.

and flow of information. Look for these non-verbal clues – raise voice, ruthless, biting, righteous, intolerant, blames, threatens, controlling or uses profanity to intimidate. “Absolutely not!”

Skeptical Sam is always challenging the idea on the table. Look for these non-verbal clues – expresses doubt, contests, debates, argues, forceful, aggressive, unbelieving, win/lose, yes/but, disguised as the devil’s advocate. “I’m skeptical that feline owners will actually bring the cats in.”

Neutral Nellie is willing to listen to you and look at your proposal. When people are open to your idea you will see these non-verbal clues – relaxed, amicable, polite, casual, pleasant, friendly, laid-back and interested but not intense. “I’m open to the idea of participating in a feline wellness campaign.”

Studious Stephen wants to study, analyze and/or review your idea. When people are reserved and in study mode you will see these non-verbal clues – Positive, pleasant, reflec-

tive, analytical, conservative, mildly interested, balancing pluses and minuses, and reserved. “There is a lot of information to digest. Let me run some of our numbers. Give me a call Friday.”

Interested Ida has reviewed your idea and is interested in getting more specific information. When people are interested they are – involved, high energy, questioning, good eye contact, cooperative, constructive, pay full attention, considerate and willing to share ideas. “How does the program work? What’s my investment? When do I have to decide?”

Enthusied Ed is beyond study and interest. He likes the idea and is imagining the implementation, operation and



outcomes. He will display these non-verbal clues – smiling, laughing, high energy, faster speech, eagerness and enthusiasm. “That sounds great. I’ve been looking for ways to attract more clients.”

Confident Connie has become a co-owner of your idea and is committed to seeing it through to completion. She will display these non-verbal clues – positive, calm, relaxed, decisive, assertive convinced and in complete self-control. “Okay let’s do it.”

Since your role is decision-getting, you want every customer to end up with a confident, well-informed decision. You need to know their starting point and each step along the way in order to develop the appropriate strategy to help them get from where they are to where they want to be. ■

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