

The Decision-Getters

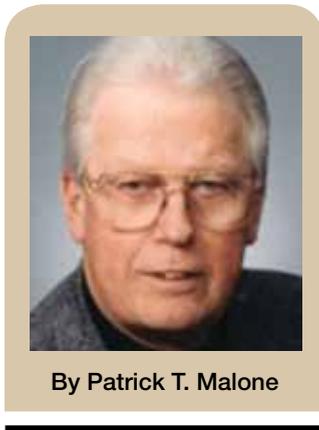
How to get mutual buy-in by the end of a business conversation

Difficult economic times require efficient management and effective sales leadership. We believe that efficient management is all about “decision-making,” while effective sales leadership requires the skill of “decision-getting.” Many expect the economy to turn around in the short term, but what if it doesn’t? What if it gets worse over the next few years? Do you and your organization have the skills to compete and even thrive in a worsening economy?

Your ability to get well-informed, committed decisions from the decision-makers in your clinics is likely to be the difference between success or failure. Top performers throughout the world operate on that same insight. Namely, in order for buy-in to occur, confidence must be achieved – not merely logical understanding of ideas, solutions or technical benefits.

Nobel Prize-winning research in Economics, conducted by Herb Simon in 1976, supports this conclusion. The way people actually do business and make decisions is in a *pursuit of comfort or confidence, whether or not logical cost-benefit-payoff is optimized!*

The skill that sets top performers apart is the ability to do business with people in a way that causes mutual buy-in to some tangible action by the end of the conversation. This ability involves three major components that blend together as



“If you can’t get people committed to what you are trying to do, you can’t get it done.”

– Carly Fiorina, former HP CEO, Oct. 12, 2009

if they were a single skill. The skill set is an explicit ability to:

- Listen
- Connect
- Inspire Buy-In

This is not a soft, vague or incomprehensible skill set. It is specific and measurable.

Listen

Exemplary reps read emotions first, and decipher logical content second. The only way you can tell whether or not buy-in is occurring is to see degrees of positive, neutral, or negative inclination during decision-making conversations. Willingness levels are different, and logic is different depending on people’s feelings about your product or service. For example, we do not reason in the same manner when we are skeptical about the fact that four out of every 10 dog owners have one or more cats, as we do when we are enthusiastic with the prospect of expanding the practice by seeing more felines. Logic is not fixed. Instead, logic is relative to our willingness level or emotional state at any moment in time.

Connect

In your business, the ability to empathize will earn you lots of friends, but without the logic path to make a business connection you won’t produce results for your clinics or your company. The hallmark of top reps is their ability to connect logically to the viewpoint of others. People recognizable for their ability to

obtain buy-in and a following are able to link logic to emotion. For example, when selling BIVI's feline wellness program they are able to acknowledge skepticism and then offer the appropriate proof that four out of 10 dog owners also have cats. It is a well-defined and measurable skill. It causes alignment, teamwork and concerted action.

Inspire Buy-In

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view is the third skill element . . . and the payoff skill for sales leaders and top performing distribution reps. This is the ability to lead conversations in positive directions by linking logic to higher, more encouraging points of view. So when presenting BIVI's feline wellness program to clinic personnel, reps will provide details like:

- “If a clinic sees 5,000 dogs annually and...”
- “Four out of 10 dog homes also have two cats at home, that equals 4,000 cats”
- Ask every client, every time: Have We Seen Your Cat Lately?™
- If only 25 percent of those cats come in for a visit @ \$100, that comes out to \$100,000 of added clinic revenue.

Then reps will answer all the questions the decision maker may have, and engage in imagining what the clinic could do with \$100,000 more annual revenue. Reps then can close with a statement like “I suggest we get you signed up for our *Have We Seen Your Cat Lately?* campaign today.”

The above three-part skill set is the benchmark of every successful rep who demonstrates an ability to get committed customers in business. This is the skill that will allow your company to thrive in this difficult economy. This is the skill set that will have you on the leader board of every contest and in contention for every spiff. So over the coming issues, I will explore each part of this skill more in-depth. ■

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