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**Understanding the Buying Process Can Increase Your Sales**

**By Karon Thackston**

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Most marketers don't give a lot of thought to the buying processes of their customers. That's a shame. Lending due attention to the buying process can have a dramatic effect on your sales.

What is the buying process? Where does your customer fall within it? How can you use it to help bring your customer to the point-of-purchase? Follow me as we take a look at the decisions customers must make before deciding to buy.

Each and every one of us goes through some sort of buying process when we make a purchase. At times the process is long and labored - as when buying a new computer. At other moments it happens almost without thought - when buying a box of your favorite cereal, for instance. But make no mistake... it does happen.

Generally speaking, the buying process consists of five steps. Those products/services that are new to the market, are new to your customer, or are very expensive will require a longer period of consideration in each phase. Products/services that are familiar, that have market longevity, or that cost very little will require a shorter (even instantaneous) process.

**Step One – Need/Want Recognition**

During this step, buyers realize they want or need something. They recognize that they have a problem or a desire, and they choose to find a solution. If this need or want is something along the lines of lunch, the buying decision can be made relatively quickly, without much thought of the actual buying process. Hunger is a quick problem to solve, most options are familiar to buyers, and the cost is usually low.

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If the need or want is a new car, however, the actual buying decision can take weeks or months. There is a greater risk, new models and features come out all the time, the cost is high, and the possibility of making a "mistake" when buying is great.

### Step Two – Information Search

Once the choice has been made to fill a need or want, your customer begins to search for information in order to make a quality decision that is in his/her best interest. Web sites may be visited (in which case you should offer some way for the customer to remember you, such as printable versions of information, downloadable brochures and catalogs, a way to bookmark your site, etc.). Brochures may be gathered (be sure to offer your contact information). Phone calls might be placed (check to ensure you or your call staff has the information they need to answer questions). Free samples, test drives, and other means of "trial" work wonderfully to guide your customer through the information search

stage and onto the evaluation and purchase stages.

### Step Three - Evaluation

After your customers have collected all the information they feel is necessary, they begin to evaluate their options and narrow their choices until they finally pick the one thing that they are comfortable with, and that they can afford. This is the time to follow-up with your customers. Is there additional information they need in order to choose? Did they have problems with the free sample that can be corrected? Your "presence" during the evaluation stage is important, so do your best to retain customer contact information in order to "gently" offer any additional details the buyer might need. (Nobody likes a hard sell, or to be pushed into buying.)

### Step Four - Purchase

Once all the information has been evaluated, a purchase is made, and your customer walks away happy... right? Well... not always.

### Step Five – Cognitive Dissonance (Post Purchase Anxiety)

While customers may have thought they chose the best solution when they purchased, many times customers later experience cognitive dissonance, a.k.a. buyers' regret. They second guess their decision and begin to feel uncomfortable about their decision. This is where trial periods, guarantees, and/or warranties come into play.

Customers will have more confidence in their decision, even after it is made, if they know they aren't "stuck" with their purchase. Having a guarantee to fall back on gives them the comfort to know that - should something go wrong - they won't be left stranded. Generally speaking, a guarantee is a psychological support rather than a literal one. Most customers never take advantage of guarantees... they don't think they need to. However, if a guarantee wasn't offered, the anxiety of feeling "all alone" would overcome many buyers and persuade them into asking for a refund.

## Understanding the Buying Process Can Increase Your Sales

Understanding each step in the buying process can help you structure your selling process and your marketing materials to cater to the customer. Take the time to consider what your customer goes through when making the choice to buy, and alter your business accordingly. In doing so, you'll increase your chances of making more sales, and landing more satisfied customers.

Most buying decisions are emotional. Your ad copy should be, too! Let Karon write targeted copy and ezine articles for you. Visit her site at <http://www.ktamarketing.com>, or learn to write your own copy at <http://www.copywritingcourse.com>. Don't forget to subscribe to Karon's free ezine at <http://www.ktamarketing.com/ezine.html>.

### **Increase Your Sales With These 5 Buying Stimulators**

**By Bob Leduc**

#### **Increase Your Sales With These 5 Buying Stimulators by Bob Leduc**

INCREASE YOUR SALES WITH THESE 5 BUYING STIMULATORS  
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Use these 5 powerful buying stimulators in your ads, web pages and other sales messages to get more sales. They produce immediate results without increasing your costs.

#### **1. CONVERT BENEFITS INTO FEELINGS**

People usually buy a product or service because they expect to feel a certain way after the purchase. Keep this in mind as you develop your ads, web pages and other sales tools.

Use vivid word pictures to dramatize the pleasant feeling your customer will experience when enjoying the benefit produced by your product or service. The following portion of a business opportunity ad I saw recently illustrates this concept:

"No boss. No schedule. No debt. Money to buy what you want and lots of time to have fun."

#### **2. DRAMATIZE THE FEELING OF LOSS**

After telling your prospect what they will gain from buying your product or service, tell them what they will lose if they do not buy it. Most people fear loss more than they desire gain.

Strengthen your selling appeals by reminding prospects of what they will lose if they do not buy from you. For example, the above business opportunity ad becomes more powerful by adding the following:

"Or... continue building wealth for your boss while you struggle month after month just to pay your bills."

### 3. REDUCE PRODUCT CHOICES

Promote only 1 product or service each time you advertise. Most people have difficulty selecting one product to buy

when their decision forces them to delay or reject buying something else they also want. When prospects cannot make an easy choice they often make no decision at all — and you lose the sale.

TIP: Combine several products or services into one package for one price. Eliminate the difficult decision of selecting and rejecting items by not including an option to buy any items separately. You will get more sales because your prospect's buying decision is limited to a simple "yes" or "no".

### 4. INCREASE THE BUYING OPTIONS

Offering choices of WHAT to buy reduces your sales. But offering choices of HOW to buy increases your sales. Offer many different ways for customers to buy from you. The same method is not convenient for everybody. Prospective customers are more likely to act immediately when their favorite way of ordering is available.

For example, many online marketers only accept orders online. They could easily increase the number of sales they get by including options to order by phone, fax and postal mail.

### 5. SIMPLIFY THE BUYING PROCEDURE

You get more sales when you make it easier for customers to buy from you. Look for ways to make your buying procedure easier and faster.

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For example, many online marketers use a shopping cart to process their orders — even when they offer only 1 or 2 items. Don't force your customers to endure the complicated process of a shopping cart just to order 1 item. Some will abandon the process ...each one a sale you lost needlessly.

Use a simple online order form instead of a shopping cart when you offer only 1 or 2 items. It generates more sales.

Each of these buying stimulators will increase your sales. Start using them now in your ads, web pages and other sales messages. They will produce immediate results without increasing your costs.

Bob Leduc is a Sales Consultant with 30 years experience in generating low-cost leads. He recently wrote a manual for small business owners, "How to Build Your Small Business

Fast With Simple Postcards", and several other publications to help small businesses grow and prosper. For more info:  
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