

The Mysterious Ins and Outs of Decision-Making Tomicide Solutions

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[Blog entry](#)

Do you know that the longest recorded flight of a chicken is 13 seconds? The reason why I mention this interesting fact is that if your follow-up is out of alignment with your prospects' decision-making process, then many prospects will flee your sales funnel in less than 13 seconds after entering it. Enter the chicken. Then exit the chicken.

By the way, do you happen to know Buckethead's brilliant 2008 record, entitled "[Enter the Chicken](#)"? Amazing music.

And when prospects flee our sales funnels, that's a rather miserable situation, so I've decided to go into the decision-making process in some detail.

Hope you find it valuable.

Unless you're a peddler that totally ignores how buyers buy, and want to shove your stuff down your buyers' throats as quickly as humanly possible, you most probably recognise the importance of the intricate process of decision-making, and how this decision-making process varies based on buyers' personality types.

Understanding the decisions-making process, you can better understand...

1. How To Fine-Tune Your Sales Process To Match Your Buyers' Buying Processes

No matter how good your sales process is in the traditional sense, if it doesn't match your buyers' buying processes, they are useless.

The problem is that most sellers define their processes by the activities sellers perform not by the activities buyers perform.

For instance, look at some sales funnel activities written in the seller's or the buyer's lingo...

Seller's lingo	Buyer's lingo
Sales presentation performed	Sales presentation watched and discussed with key decision-makers
Proposal offered	Proposal requested
Proposal submitted	Proposal received

Now, I realise that sales projections are made in seller's lingo, but the reality is written in the buyer's lingo. For instance, "Proposal submitted" is pretty meaningless because it plays out in the seller's universe and disregards the buyer's universe.

Yes, dumb, autocratic sales managers who want to track their salespeople's activities may get satisfaction from documenting their teams' activities using seller's terminology, but the reality is that buyers buy when they are ready to buy, not when sellers are ready to sell.

So, if the buying decision is the culmination of buyers' activities, what's the point in writing the sales process in any other than the buyer's lingo? It's just idiotic.

You can track sales activities all day, but if you miss the buyer's activities, there will always be discrepancy between how you sell and how buyers buy.

For instance, you've given a sales presentation. But how did your buyer receive it? Was the real buyer actually there or only his cronies, flunkies and minions? The glorified errand boys and errand gals.

2. How To Avoid Wasting Time, Energy And Money

You have a limited amount of time and money to put your products/services on the market and have them generate revenue for your company. It only makes sense to invest that time and money into prospects with a propensity to buy from you.

At any one time only 3% of your market is ready and willing to buy. See the top of the pyramid below. The bottom 30% has no intention to buy from anyone neither now nor ever. But the remaining 67% can become your clients down the road. It's just a matter of staying in touch with them in an intelligent way.



It may take some time until they buy from you the first time, but in most cases it's unavoidable. Since you provide the education to make an intelligent buying decision, buyers automatically come back to the "credible teacher" not to some unknown peddler, no matter how cheaper the peddler is.

Also, ask yourself how much time and money you're willing to invest in buyers who prevent you from meeting real buyers.

3. Why To Get A Mentor If You Can

Earl Nightingale once said...

"If you're in a situation and you don't have any clear way

forward and want for clear advice, look around and see what everyone else is doing and do the opposite. Why the majority is always wrong."

Have you noticed at seminars or workshops that 95% of the attendees are already very good at the presented topic, but have decided to attend the event to learn one more morsel of the topic that would give them the slight edge over their competition?

And what about the other 5%? Well, 4% will invoke the guarantee to get a refund on another useless "get rich quick scam". And 1% is new to the topic and is keen to learn it.

This mentor doesn't necessarily have to be a real living person, but it can be a concept too. One of my "mentors" is agile project management. The other is "The 12 Whole Man Attributes" promoted by the Special Forces units of the US military. They are...

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Intelligence | 5. Accountability | 9. Decisiveness |
| 2. Physical fitness | 6. Maturity | 10. Teamwork |
| 3. Motivation | 7. Stability | 11. Influence |
| 4. Trustworthiness | 8. Judgement | 12. Communications |

Of course, we all have our own interpretations of these words. In my Personal Operating System, I describe my own interpretation of these words, and do my best to live by those descriptions.

Yes, people have mentors to guide them through the mazes of business and life, but very often, a book or a concept can be equally good mentors. Yes, this approach requires discipline, but being in business, I think you have discipline, so you can do well without the constant "nagging" of a real living mentor.

Oh, and in order to avoid incest, try to get new ideas for your company from outside your own industry. In your own industry too, the majority is doing the wrong thing, so don't imitate them.

4. Eliminate Your Competition

Of course, total elimination is impossible because you can't just assassinate them all. Yes, it's doable, but the consequences can have a serious impact on your business too. So, it's better to find alternative methods.

And I've found that the best way of rendering your competition harmless to your market is by out-marketing your competition.

That is, creating a better, more effective and for the market a more enjoyable stay-in-touch process.

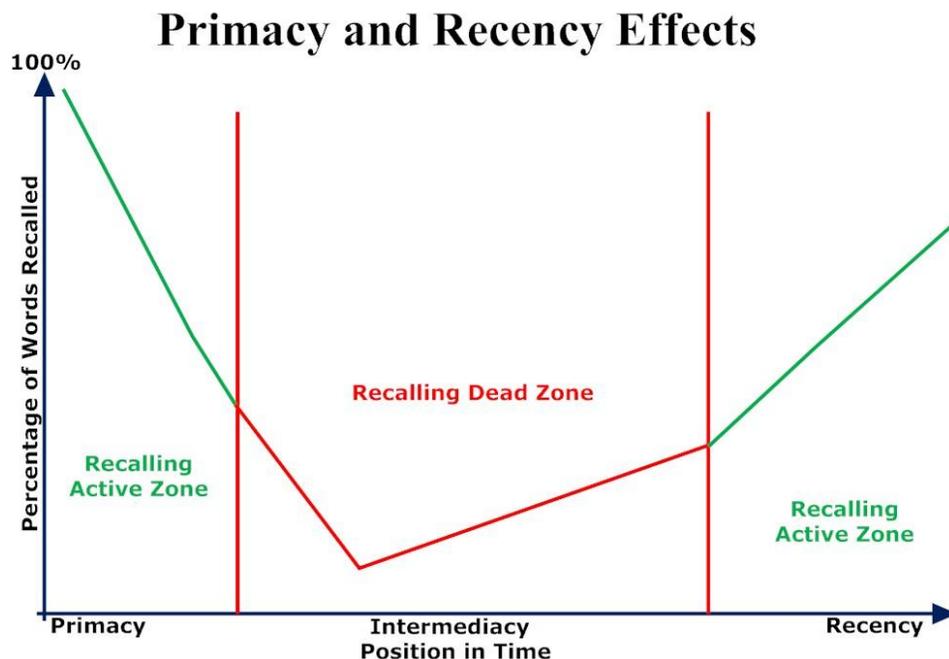
It means the sooner in the buying cycle you sneak into your market's radar screen, the more time and opportunities you have to entice buyers. And you don't do that with idiotic sales pitches (convincing), but through valuable content (compelling). That's a lot easier, can be highly automated and it's rejection-free.

As a result of good marketing, you generate higher margins than your competitors, so you can re-invest more in marketing. You re-invest more money into more effective marketing methods,

you run double rings around your competitors. I would say, this is the ultimate schadenfreude in business. It feels good because you haven't done anything bad to your competitors. You've merely helped yourself through smarter marketing. Yes, the inevitable effect of that is that you become more successful than your competitors, but whose fault is it when your competitors imitate each other and get nowhere in the process? It's not your fault.

5. Go Last If You Can

The way the reptilian part of human brain works, there is a primacy and a recency effect. They refer to the brain's ability to recall information, and were extensively researched and coined by German psychologist, Hermann Ebbinghaus. This is vital because the reptilian brain is the ultimate decision-maker. The neo cortex is just a glorified gatekeeper.



As we can see on the figure above, the brain can excellently recall information from the beginning an event (primacy), and fairly well from the end (recency). But it forgets a lot of the middle bits.

Although for sheer information recall, the primacy effect is stronger, but when there are other considerations too, recency is better.

So, if you present materials that require decision-making, then focus on the recency effect. Fire your big guns at the end of your presentation.

When your buyer interviews several consultants, make sure you go last if possible.

In the real estate industry there is a saying...

"People buy the last house they see."

The last impression is far more powerful than the first one.

And now we can move on to

The Different Decision-Making Personality Types

Yes, we know that most decisions are based on emotions not logic, but there is also a mysterious third ingredient, which are the systems within which buyers' daily operations exist.

So, the decision is not just a personal preference, but something that is heavily influenced by this third ingredient: The system.

What we need to know about those systems is that...

- They don't need to change unless something is missing from them.
- They can change if and only if the previously made decisions are re-evaluated and the current situation is re-calibrated against different criteria
- They first try to fix existing problems through minor tweaks on the status quo and without external help.
- They accept new solutions (forms of change) only if they can maintain an already familiar structure and order.

So, as you can see decisions are based not only on logic and emotions. Much more is involved. Something more complex and intricate.

And this is why it's important to consider how different buyers make decisions slightly differently.

So, let's examine six personality types and how they make decisions, so next time, you can use the first meeting to suss out the buyer's personality, and then, based on that knowledge, you can craft the subsequent communication pieces such that they align with this newly revealed decision-making process.

So, let's start with...

Personality Type #1: Overseers

Overseers are the ultimate "company people". They selflessly dedicate their lives to their companies. Their approach to achieving success is doing more of the same. They hate change and love routines. They have "a way we do things around here" approach to every problem and opportunity.

When you approach an Overseer about your idea of upgrading his company's IT system from Windows 95 to Windows 7, he will throw you out of his office because you dare to initiate change to his precious system.

They love being perceived as the company's paternal/maternal figurehead.

They are not so much profit-focused, but more interested in the intricate inner dynamics of the organisation.

They look for perfect match in their external professionals. That is, you have to be a perfect match to them.

In sales situations, you have to demonstrate this similarity to them without burying them in details.

You recognise Overseers by family pictures on their desks and their children's drawings on their walls.

The good thing is that they love playing the proverbial hosts, so if you have good relationships with them, they become your advocate within their companies.

Their purchases are driven by company needs and requirements. They are the ultimate guardians of their companies' welfare.

Typical question to Overseers: "As your IT professional, how can I help you to make life easier for people in this company?"

Personality Type #2: Leaders

Leaders are aggressive, ambitious and confident people who thrive on challenges and take serious action to surmount those challenges.

Above else, they are interested in results. It also means that a many of them overlook the means of producing results, and willing to pursue illegal and unethical means to achieve their goals.

Leaders don't work for money. They work for the challenge of achieving certain goals and victory over their competitors.

They are "big picture" strategic people with rapid decision-making abilities, based mainly on instincts.

They come up with ideas and have their people work out the details.

Leaders in general love change, because that allows them to plan their futures. They are always on the lookout for quality people to help with those changes.

Leaders' offices often show off their successes.

They are very competitive, even with their siblings and friends, and this rivalry shows up how they present their needs to sellers.

If you can demonstrate that you can help and there is strong ROI aspect of your help, then you have a good chance to be hired.

They are much more result- than cost-conscious.

Typical question to Leaders: "As your IT professional, how can I help you to use technology to get ahead of the competition the competition?"

Personality Type #3: Innovators

Innovators love change. But change takes time. So innovators' purchases are driven by creating time for them, so they can spend more time innovating.

They are “big picture” people, so don’t bore them with details. They tend to get lost in them and then it’s over for you.

On the surface they and their environments look messy and disorganised.

Innovators are quick decision-makers.

Typical question to Innovators: “As your IT professional, how can I help you to free up more time, so you can spend more of it on innovation?”

Personality Type #4: Risk Avoiders

The typical group of risk avoiders are engineers, accountants and lawyers.

Well, not all of them, but definitely most of them.

Just think of it. Engineers’ craft is driven by principles. Accountants and lawyers’ crafts are driven by laws and rules. There is no room for ambiguity.

If it were up to engineers, accountants and lawyers, they’d advise business owners not to open their businesses in the mornings in case something breaks down (engineer), in case there are some unexpected costs (accountant) and in case someone sues the company for something (lawyer).

They love tight regulations because they believe they can use regulations to cover their arses.

They love details, but usually only for detail’s sakes.

When you look at their offices and desks, you find them pretty organised. Often over-organised.

In their purchases, they are after good value.

Since their fundamental belief is that they are overworked, overstressed and underpaid, they worry that every piece of change brings new work and new elements of stress into their lives.

Risk Avoiders are very poor decision-makers. Actually, it’s easier to get an act of kindness out of a Vogon¹ than getting a decision out of Risk Avoiders.

Also, most of them are so narrow-minded that they could look through a keyhole with both eyes at the same time.

Above and beyond serving their companies, they also drive powerful personal agendas. Those agendas are all about personal financial and positional advancement, and a hefty chunk of entitlement.

They are some of the most price-obsessed (cheapest) people, so low-balling professionals can have a field day with them.

Risk Avoiders are the ultimate “everything for nothing” people. When you secure projects with

¹ The Vogons are a fictional alien race from the planet Vogosphere in The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy series by Douglas Adams. Vogons are bad-tempered, mindlessly bureaucratic, aggressive and the writers of “the third worst poetry in the universe”. They are employed as the galactic government's bureaucrats. Furthermore, a Vogon wouldn’t even lift a finger to save his own grandmother from the Ravenous Bugblatter Beast of Traal without a rather despicable amount of red tape.

them, they keep pushing for further price reductions and work scope expansions.

Their motto is: “How can we get more for less?”

The best way to sell to Risk Avoiders is by flooding them with information. Give them numbers, charts, tables; the more the merrier.

Also, these people are suckers for references and testimonials. They may not even want to meet you in-person, but they sure want to read other people’s opinions of you.

Typical question to Risk Avoiders: “As your IT professional, how can I help you to fatten your bottom line and make your life easier?”

Personality Type #5: Socialisers

Socialisers are hard-core extroverts with large social circles. They like people and love interacting with them

They are heavily relationship-focused, and do everything they can to engage other people in conversations.

They love creating attention-catching environments around themselves.

They want to be like and love talking. Talking gives them wings.

Socialisers’ buying decisions are heavily influenced by their relationships with sellers. Their purchases revolve around gaining personal attention.

Their environments are pretty disorganised, but they desperately try to put order into their lives and careers/businesses. And they keep coming up short.

Above and beyond results, they seek new friends and contacts. The good thing is that they are not price-sensitive.

Socialisers are not detail people, so you’d better keep the details to yourself. Socialisers would be lost in them.

Typical question to Socialisers: “From your current IT provider, are you getting the magnitude of personal attention that makes you feel that your company is well looked after?”

Personality Type #6: Executives

CEOs and other senior executives belong of this group. Their main motivation is personal social and financial gain.

It’s also important for them to look good to others, like the board of directors, their own superiors and sometimes even their employees.

Company benefit is one thing, but there must be something in for them personally. Otherwise, they don’t care.

Unlike Leaders, knowing their appointments are temporary, Executives try to minimise or eliminate changes (extra work and risk), unless they can personally benefit from those changes.

So, when talking to executives, talk to them about what they can gain or lose personally. For them their careers are means to an end.

They are not fee-sensitive. Since they regard their companies as separate entities from themselves, they spend other people's money. Therefore, they are pretty generous with fees.

Typical question to Executives: "As your IT consultant, how could I help you to become more valuable to your clients?"

Summary

As we can see, decision-making is a pretty complex process. There are so many moving parts that saying that "decisions are based on emotions" oversimplifies the process. Technically we can say beef stroganoff is made out of cattle, but that statement would do no justice for the expertise needed to make good beef stroganoff. I'm an expert at processing cattle from the last moo to steak, but my beef stroganoff has a lot of room for improvement.

I think we've discussed enough here, so you can look at your own process that facilitates decision-making, you can polish it for higher conversion and more effective disqualification of the wrong prospects.

About The Author



Since 1998, after a 16-year industrial stint as an electronics/computer engineer, project manager and technical buyer, Tom "Bald Dog" Varjan has been working with privately held information technology companies and independent IT professionals to market and sell their complex, high-ticket and hard-to-explain IT solutions to high-end clients.

For Tom's free white paper, "More Brain Less Brawn: High-Leverage Client Acquisition Strategies For Privately Held IT Companies In The Knowledge-Based Economy", go to <http://www.varjan.com>