

5 INSIGHTS INTO

BUYER BEHAVIOUR

smarter selling
stop talking and start listening!

Charmaine Keegan, Director, Keynote Speaker and Founder of Smarter Selling is a world leading expert in training high performance sales teams.

She is one of Australia's leading sales trainers. She has studied and observed the psychology of human behaviour, influence, persuasion and trust for over 2 decades and is considered an expert on Sales Techniques and how it relates to communication, in particular how to sell your solution effectively, with authenticity and integrity.

Charmaine has trained over 8,000 sales professionals empowering them with the confidence to embrace selling with integrity and authenticity to deliver immediate revenue growth.

She believes sales is comprised of four fundamental elements - good communication, exceptional customer service skills, personal accountability and a commercial mindset. She is passionate about selling and even more so, empowering others to sell.

Smarter Selling training programs set sales teams up for lasting success with simple to execute, contemporary and proven sales methodologies. They are developed and trademarked by Charmaine. They evolve as communication evolves. Her speaking engagements, webinars, workshops and programs are renowned for being informative, engaging, fun, interactive and highly practical. She makes it easy for professionals to sell and your customer to buy.

She also trains in NLP (how we operate), Hypnotherapy (unconscious communication) and Timeline Therapy (recognising your baggage and the baggage/beliefs of your customer). She continuously studies the psychology of human behaviour and is considered an expert on sales techniques.



UNDERSTAND YOUR CLIENT'S PERSONALITY

Ever wondered why it's so hard to sell? Ever got frustrated because someone isn't buying what you are offering? Ever wondered why selling isn't everyone's 'thing'?

It's useful to know that first and foremost we all have a different way to buy, we all have a different strategy and way we go about it. Ever wondered why certain individuals buy off you yet others, that you've filed in the 'too hard basket', seem to get on much better with Joe from the office, even though Joe is a bit odd? Have you decided it's because you and your regular clients are similar, or is it because you have adapted to their 'individual ways'?

Sales Mastery is about realising that we are all different and that we all operate differently. We cannot and must not put ourselves in a box only getting on with few select similar, instead know that with exceptional awareness we can adapt and serve our solution to many and all.

Let's break it down into 5 insights.



Insight 1

THE CLIENT ISN'T YOU

This is a key insight and an important place to start. If I were to ask you what sort of food you like, what clothing appeals, the books you enjoy, TV programs you follow or what holiday you prefer, you would have clear answers that may be similarly shared by others. There would also be choices and preferences that do not resonate with others at all.

And yet when it comes to client interaction, we tend to default into treating the client as though we are selling to ourselves. That biblical term 'do until others what will be done to you' is utterly useless in a sales context, because what we ourselves like, expect and deem as professional does not in any shape or form necessarily reflect how someone else expects or interprets. In fact, knowing what we like, can blind us in thinking it's the only way, or even worse, to be the 'right' way. You will naturally find people that agree with your way, that's life. You can find people that agree with you on anything.

Let's take one tincey wincey example.

Salesman John has an exceptional solution you want, but when you meet him he is late, you try to overlook it (it was after all, just a few minutes), but it has annoyed you that he didn't apologise for his lateness.

You value accountability. He used some jargon in his pitch and that irritated you. He also asked about your partner and implied they needed to be there, that got your nose out of joint. It's OK, he doesn't know (you reason). As he left, he said 'I'll email you later today'. By 6pm there was no email. You find this slack, you counted on his word. You call his mobile, it's an overly casual voice message and with someone laughing vaguely audible in the background. His email arrives the next morning, it's very much how you want it - short and to the point and covers all that you require. Great, but he made several glaring grammar errors, nor did he apologise for being a day late. You try to overlook this but it's bugging you.

Good solution or not, John, you are now on the back foot, fighting for this business. In a short window the 'errors' you made have been judged.

John does the exact same thing with someone else, say Sam, wanting the same solution. Sam doesn't care for the same things you do, but he does care that John didn't go into enough detail on the email, and he likes to be texted when someone is on their way. That's what you do, right? John also didn't address Sam by his surname, just his first name, which Sam found overly familiar and somewhat rude. What happened to manners these days? John had regularly mentioned 'doing a good deal'. Sam wonders - is he implying we are short of money? The audacity annoys Sam.

So, collect everything you judge, every way you like to be treated, the emphasis and importance of what you consider doing a job 'right', take and lift that metaphysical bubble in the air and recognise, 'this is me, this is what I care about, value, judge, expect and how I buy. This is how I measure professionalism and how I want to be treated'. Then admit 'It is the same for my client'. All clients are different. All clients have different expectations.

By the way, it is useful to know your own buying strategy and behaviour, it will highlight your natural defaults. I will list the most common ones later on.



Insight 2

WHERE TO START LOOKING FOR CLUES

Ok, so we have established we all are different. The question, therefore, is how do we find out what our client likes, dislikes, values and judges? The moment you realise that understanding someone else is so important, something quite magical happens – you step up your awareness: wow, we are all different. I could win or lose this business not related to the actual solution itself, but due to all the other stuff that goes on. Please re-read that and let that sink in.

That's how business is won and lost, how relationships are made and broken. It's down (firstly) to how I interact and engage. What I say and don't say.

So take more notice of each client and start to 'read' what they do and don't like, how they want to be engaged with, notice what turns them on and off, how they expect to be treated and after 'reading and deciding that' – you can adapt your style accordingly.

Let's start with their LinkedIn or website profile (if they wrote it). What are their values? A clue: people write about what's important to them. Next, you know all that upfront banal, 'rapport building' chit-chat you've just been 'getting out the way' with clients for years? You know, them going on about their new sofa, pool or home? Well, actually that's where they are revealing to you how they buy, what they care about and what's needed to impress them. They are reeling off their perception of and how they measure professionalism, how they are motivated to buy including their actual buying strategy.

Believe me, clients are screaming out what they care about. Listen, be present, listen some more. How are they moving as they talk? Are they excitable, leaning in, are they appalled, leaning out and crossing their arms at the same time? That "banal" chit-chat is actually pure gold.

So, looking for clues is as easy as being present and observing. Observing what they write, what they ask and how they answer your questions.



Insight 3

WHAT EXACTLY WOULD THEY SAY AND HOW CAN I INTERPRET THAT?

Some of this is easy, the client asking 'can I have more detail?', literally means needing more detail. Someone asking, 'can you give me a summary?', needs a summary.

So, you may wonder why do we miss signals, even such easy ones. It's OK, I have the answer. We are frequently too much 'in our own heads' to notice what the client is saying.

First, to really be able to listen to a client, to be truly present and 'take in' (have heightened awareness), you need to be out of your own head. In other words, if, when engaging with a client, your mind is wandering to such thoughts as... 'should I show a brochure now or shall I ask that question next?', you are 'inward focused' and no matter what they tell you – or how loud and obvious they will be screaming that killer line of what they need – you won't hear or notice it as you are 'inward' and not 'outward' focused.

You need to be fully prepared, including questions to ask, question they'll ask, info about your solution and how it's different from other client alternatives – you need to be a specialist in your field, a true 'trusted advisor'. You will then feel genuinely confidence in front of your client (they are buying into that!).

So, your thorough understanding of the sales journey will enable you to be present. When you are fully present you can then be 'outward' focused, observing and taking in how the client is behaving, all that they are saying, doing, writing, noticing, looking at, reacting to, commenting on... etc.

Let's backtrack to your default for a moment, I know you are trying to work out who you are. Here are the most common trip-ups and simple solutions:

1. Detail vs summary:

When you buy: you like a lot of detail when buying.

When you sell: it's highly likely you spray excessive details at your clients.

What's made this worse: fuelled by someone having said, 'wow, you know so much detail, this is impressive', which has given you the false impression that a lot of detail is good. It is good, but only for people that want detail.

What's the downside: your default and the fuelling mean you will overlook when someone just wants a summary.

How can you tell: Watch the client, look at their notes, have they said 'give me a summary', are their emails short and to the point?

2. Literal vs Inferential Styles | Listeners and Talkers:

In life: you pick up on clues, hints and things implied. Welcome to the land of inferential listeners.

What's made this worse: you have been commended on your ability to 'read between the lines' and so you (mistakenly) think it's a gift.

When you sell: your client Claire says, 'I need A & B' you have decided that she would have also meant C because you are good at picking up on clues.

What's the downside: Some people (50% approx) are literal. Claire is literal. She only wants A and B and because you have offered C as well, she thinks you are not listening or paying attention.

Did you hear the story of the poms who arrive in Australia and for their first BBQ are told to 'bring a plate'?. Yep, I brought a plate. I can see how that happens. That's me. Highly literal.

Those two factors, detail and listening/talking styles, alone can flaw people.

Those who appreciate detail, even when told to summarise, think that the six paragraph email they sent (it was, after all reduced down from 12), is totally apt, as in their mind, it is a summary.

Yet, the client at the other end of that email sees it as an essay and concludes you didn't listen. If in doubt, a recommended approach is 'here is the top line, see more details in the attachment' with a hyperlink to more information.



Insight 4

READ WHAT THEY SAY WHEN IT COMES TO MOTIVATION

Let's look at buying behaviour at the point of motivation. So, as it is with everything else, we all get motivated by different things. Let's take a car for example. Your client, during their chit-chat, says:

'Ah, you know we saw that car a year ago we knew it was the one for us, but we like to sit on things for a while.'

Strategy is: we like, we decide, we wait.

Your approach: bring the timing forward - 'when you go ahead, it may take some time to get it to you, etc.' - you create the illusion of time.

'We saw it and our other one is old now and probably not safe.'

Strategy is: new for old, lean to safety.

Your discussion: to highlight 'safety, evolving from what you have as replacing, so it's more reliable.

'Our old car was fun but not very efficient.'

Strategy is: efficiency is valued.

Your discussion: is about efficiencies.

'We saw it, but our current car is working fine so there's no need to replace.'

Strategy is: new for 'broken'.

If they see their current product as not yet broken, you would motivate them by tactfully talking about it as though it were broken or faulty with your language. Great care has to be taken when doing this. And be honest, if it's working ok then move onto another client who needs it. However, if you are sure your solution is better, then watching your language and refrain from implying and reinforcing what they currently have is good. Tact is key here.

'Our current car is fine, but you know, I love having the latest'

Strategy is: likely to be an early adopter, could be showmanish.

Sell by: discussing 'latest this and latest that'.

'Ah yes, I saw this car a year ago, but you know you know how it is, you ponder on it, and later you still want it, so you buy it.'

Strategy is: they will sit on it, delay.

Sell by: you keep going back. They will eventually buy.



Insight 5

BUYING STRATEGY

Some clients take longer to make a buying decision, while others are quick. This is influenced by several factors, including (but not limited to):

- How educated they are on the problem and on the different corresponding solutions,
- How motivated they are to buy. I.e. what has to happen for them to want to purchase something,
- If it is priority for them right now and finally,
- How they buy.

Add to this the actual order and sequence that takes place when purchasing.

Example: Someone, who seemingly wants your solution, keeps ringing up (and has done so for over 3 months). The reason may be any of these:

1. Their buying strategy might be to keep ringing up seeking clarity asking incessant questions for four months. They do that for everything. That's just the journey they undertake when purchasing.
What to do: Be the expert, keep asking and answering their questions, be the trusted advisor. Do everything right. Have high awareness, adapt to them.
What not to do: Do not move on price.
2. Their strategy for buying is to check out options before they need it (i.e. their current xyz will need replacing, updating or a total new solution). You might hold that new solution; they are checking out their options.
What to do: Be the expert, keep asking questions, be the trusted advisor.
What not to do: Do not move on price.

The order and sequence of how we buy now comes into play.

This, in NLP speak, is referred to as our representational system which refers to the senses through which we use to experience the outside world. How would you know? One way is to listen to their words (we call these someone's 'predicates').

Visual: The person needs to see it.

How would you know - listen out for them using these words: see, look, view, appear, show, dawn, reveal, envision, illuminate, imagine, clear, foggy, focused, hazy, crystal, picture. it's purely a 'need to buy a necessary item'. Simply put, it's a task, not a pleasure.

Auditory: the person needs to *hear* about it.

How would you know – listen out for these words: hear, listen, sound(s), make music, harmonize, tune in/out, be all ears, rings a bell, silence, be heard, resonate, deaf, mellifluous, dissonance, question, unhearing.

Kinesthetic: the person needs to *feel* it or refers to how they *feel about* it.

How would you know – listen out for these words: feel, touch, grasp, get hold of, slip through, catch on, tap into, make contact, throw out, turn around, hard, unfeeling, concrete, scrape, get a handle, solid.

Auditory Digital: the person is sensing/doing self-talk running over detail (like the price).

How would you know – listen out for these words: sense, experience, understand, think, learn, process, decide, motivate, consider, change, perceive, insensitive, distinct, conceive, know.

To understand buying strategies, it's again useful to look at your own, being aware that you may be referring to what you consider as 'normal' as your yardstick in measuring and interpreting someone else's. This is not a good thing. You should never assume or judge, but you inherently may do so when you read this next section, subconsciously evaluating if its 'right' or 'wrong' referring to your own strategy.

Here are some examples of buying strategies. My own, if you will.

1. Motivation to buy: I buy when what I have is broken beyond repair. What can confuse others: they can't understand why that vacuum cleaner is so outdated – they assume I have no money. What can go wrong for a salesperson: they judge my affordability based on what I have currently.
2. I then go buy the best I can afford.
3. I do not care at all about the latest version of anything. I do not care what others think about my car, house, clothing, children's haircut and the list goes on. External opinions do not affect me. (In fact, many business owners are the same, if we had listened to others, we most likely wouldn't have started a business - that means our meta program is inward. Read another e-book on that!) What can go wrong for a salesperson selling to me: to throw comparative lines at me like, 'the latest', 'everyone else likes' or 'most rated', all of which put me off the salesperson and their solution.
4. My order and sequence: Visual-Kinaesthetic-Audio Digital (VK Ad). When I buy something, I'm a high 'Visual Kinesthetic cenesthesia', meaning I see it and feel it almost instantaneously. In other words, I have to see it, I have to touch it and the price (Ad) comes last. What can go wrong for a salesperson: they talk to me without letting me see or touch it. Or they talk price. It's all over red rover.
5. My convincer: one time – although I've inserted a small pause. This means I see it – next thing I own it. I don't mess about.

Let's put this into context:

Example one:

I'm out with my red bag, the team keep saying replace it as it is falling apart, but I can't because it still functions. Whilst I'm out it completely breaks. My instinct is to fix with a few bolts (but then realised, it's not 1978, and not our UK farm with my ole man offering budget solutions). I then accept that it is part of my 'appearance', so I probably should step up my game and buy something.

I decide I want a red bag that has short handles and at least 3 pockets. The very first store has a red bag that fits my requirement, so I buy it. Note, I will not have looked at any alternative bag options, I will not have 'shopped around' at other stores. (*10% of first world country populations fit this 'convincer' type. The majority, over 70% need to 'weigh it up' against another one or two alternatives.) What can go wrong for salespeople: they create a 'choice' for me. What happens: I leave the store. I can't deal with choice. *As a teenager I cringed at the thought of going 'shopping'. For me, it's purely a 'need to buy a necessary item'. Simply put, it's a task, not a pleasure.

Example two:

My mobile phone case has snapped. (Again, my first thought was a sticky tape solution, even while I was busy grocery shopping) and that's what I do whilst I go shopping!). The first store has brilliant phone case options, but they are all encased in plastic packaging. I love the look but I can't feel any. This store is no good to me. My friends say she buys online, this is no good to me. I can see, but not feel. I find a second store where the phone cases are openly displayed, and although they are not as visually appealing as the first store, the fact that I can inspect them by touching and feeling, overrides the looks.

The salesperson sees my current taped up phone and assumes I have no money (or I suspect as much by his words 'if you're on a budget') and takes me to the 'bargain box'. I dig around (you just never know) and then go back to the section that caught my initial interest.

As soon as I see it and feel it, I know that's the one. It's a 10 second decision. When I get to the counter, I consider the price (Auditory digital – cost last). I buy it. If you are shaking your head incredulously, let me add. My husband and I decided at 10am to buy a car (our car had broken, remember my strategy is replacement of something broken). By 12 noon we had purchased a car – zero research, we saw it (visual), tried it out (kinesthetic) and then talked price. It was the first one we saw and it fitted the bill, so we bought it.

We purchased our house and practically everything else the same way. Others will say to me 'you know how it is, you look for months, you do your research, that's what everyone does' and I have to say 'no, that's what you do'.

How is this helpful? Well, I hope by now you have realised that your buying strategy is yours and yours alone. If by chance you should be like me for example, a one-time convincer, you will no longer get perplexed by a client who needs to 'weigh up options'. In fact, you will 'read' that in your interactions, adapt and offer them two solutions (or possibly even three, if you read the situation that they may need more).

If your strategy is to always weigh up a few options yet your client only wants one, then you will now realise that they only need one solution.

So far, we have been focussing on your client's words, in another ebook we discuss their eye patterns, so even if they are not saying anything, you can 'see' how they make their buying decision.

So, in summary your ability to understand someone's buying behaviour will make or break the relationship.

Remember our job is to make it easy for the client to buy. We need the interaction to be seamless and easy. We need to amend our dance to match that of our clients – not the other way around.

NEXT STEPS: BUILDING ON THESE **SKILLS, WHERE TO FROM HERE?**

There's no doubt that the current crisis is taking an intense toll on some businesses. But it's equally true that others are thriving – their sales are doubling or even trebling compared to pre March.

Being able to quickly pivot in response to a changing environment will serve you well. The good news is once we have learned a new skill, adapted and evolved, then learning more becomes easier. We continue to develop.

Be comfortable with the uncomfortable!

To learn more about how to do this from someone with 28+ years of experience as a successful high performance salesperson and international sales skill trainer, contact us.

Read more of our sales tips
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Sydney: 02 9188 5253
Melbourne: 03 9088 3382
team@smarterselling.com.au
smarterselling.com.au

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