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INSIDER: Neuro-Sell: How Neuroscience Can Power Your Sales Success

John Tran, MBA Candidate

Is there a connection between neuroscience and selling real estate? By exploring key functions of the brain’s decision-making processes, Simon Hazeldine has discovered a way for sales professionals to increase the likelihood of closing a sale. Studying how the brain consciously and unconsciously processes information and relating it back to the world of real estate bridges the two disciplines in ways that give real estate professionals a true advantage.

Think Point #1: The Client’s Three Brains

In order to sell effectively, real estate professionals should have a clear understanding of the brain’s structure.

1) **The Old Brain** – the brainstem and cerebellum, commonly referred to as the *reptilian brain*, has a lot to do with selling. As the gate keeper for the rest of the brain, the reptilian brain acts like a secretary and determines what calls make it through to the CEO. Two types of information are allowed through the old brain, information that a) is of current value, and b) relates to potential threats and danger.

   The reptilian brain seeks survival, avoids pain, and prioritizes comfort. When initially meeting someone, the reptilian brain subconsciously triggers a response to determine if the stranger is a friend or foe. For example, if a potential client initially meets a real estate agent, a fight/flight/freeze response is automatically triggered and message receptors may shut down, a response taking fractions of a second. As a result, communication with the client may become incredibly difficult. A stellar first impression is essential at this stage. Make sure the environment in which you meet your client for the first time is comfortable and inviting. Messages from the real estate professional to the client should always be based around information that adds value to the client’s situation. As a real estate professional, communicate to your clients that your goal is to move them to a situation in which they will be more comfortable, and if this is accomplished, the client will be more receptive to your messages as the relationship moves forward.

2) **The Middle Brain** – also known as the emotional brain, helps real estate agents understand how much of a role the environment plays in the client’s decision-making process. This part of the brain creates emotions and urges that directly influence behavior. The most active section of the middle brain is called the *fear system*. When this part of the brain detects danger, it maximizes brain functions and decision making in ways that it believes will enhance survival. A brain registering danger may shut down messages you are trying to
communicate to the client. The key take away for real estate agents is to never stimulate the fear system in the middle brain. Professor Joseph Ledoux, a neuroscientist, discovered scientifically that emotional arousal in the brain dominates what is called *control thinking*. Keep your clients’ emotions in consideration throughout the entire sales process because their emotions can have more of an effect than your logical reasoning when it comes to choosing to buy or not.

3) **The New Brain**—referred to as the *rational brain*, is responsible for analyzing complex data and carrying out thought processes that separate humans from animals. Highly complex, the new brain fulfills four main purposes:

1) Sensing – uses the five senses to obtain information on the environment
2) Integration – gathers all of the information for processing, making meaning out of the information
3) Creating ideas and plans – takes the integrated information and forms new ideas
4) Execution – uses motor functions to act upon the ideas and plans created

It is helpful to understand that every step of the sales process travels through these stages of the brain, both consciously and unconsciously. With this knowledge, real estate professionals can look at their own sales process and enhance the stages that stimulate the four main purposes of the new brain, while eliminating non-value adding information at the same time.

Try your best to never put your client in a situation that is confusing or uncomfortable. Use the environment of your office, and even open homes, to stimulate all of their senses to keep them interested and engaged. When it comes to the new brain’s functions of creating plans and executing them, compliment that process by eliminating any stages in your own sales process that can hinder the customer progressing to closing on a deal with you. Supplying them with quick, timely, and valuable information will help move that process along. Check lists and process maps may also help smooth your client’s progress toward purchasing a home.

**Think Point #2: The Four Client Colors**

Clients think and act differently, which means their buying behaviors may vary. If real estate professionals understand how their clients buy, they can sell to their clients in ways that best suit them and make them the most comfortable.

*Green Client* - Green clients are curious, creative, and energetic. They enjoy seeing new things and tend to be spontaneous. If you can show these types of clients something innovative, new, or novel, you will have their full attention. Focus on creating stimulating environments that are unique when presenting a home. In your messages to the client, always communicate how excited you are to show them the next property as this will spark their interest.

*Blue Client* – Blue clients are compassionate, loyal, and helpful. They tend to be polite and agreeable. Blue clients dislike conflict throughout the sales process and would rather promote
good feelings. As buyers, they approach new situations with caution until they have a clear understanding of the environment and how it will affect the relationships they value. The quality of the relationship between the agent and the blue client is crucial. Promoting a sense of partnership, reliability, and friendliness is important when working with a blue client. Real estate professionals should be sensitive to the fact that blue client personalities can take a considerable amount of time to come to a conclusion. It is perfectly acceptable to outline every single extensive detail of a property when communicating with these clients.

**Red Client** – Red clients are goal-oriented and are focused on work. They tend to be authoritative and assertive and as buyers they want to be in an environment where they feel they can control the results. It is important to balance their inclination towards rapid action with thoughtful decision-making processes that will add value to their work and the relationship itself. As a real estate professional, be straightforward with them as they value the main points of the bug picture over the details. Be quick and courteous when it comes to answering their questions, and don’t hesitate to intervene if you believe the red client is coming to a decision too abruptly.

**Gold Client** – Gold clients tend to be analytical, guarded, rule-oriented, loyal, and competent. Details are incredibly important to gold clients. Gold clients prefer planning and processes over spontaneity. They can be slow to come to conclusions because of their cautious and meticulous nature which is important for sales professionals to keep in mind. Provide these types of clients with plenty of supplementary materials outlining the details of the properties you are introducing to them. These types of clients also prefer planned out schedules complete with addresses, directions, and times before the initial face-to-face meeting.

**Think Point #3 – The 8 Stage, Neuro-Sell-Friendly Selling Process**

Hazeldine believes that the job of a sales professional is to serve clients by helping them make the right decisions. For this purpose, Hazeldine created the Neuro-Sell brain-friendly selling process, a strategy focused on the client which creates an environment for clients to actively engage in the decision-making process. The key: nothing is pushed or forced upon the client.

1) **Consider** – Before client encounters, be sure to consider what they want and what you can offer. Every encounter with clients should have a purpose, and the purpose should either be to close the sale, or to advance the process. Communication that focuses on the goal will benefit clients and keep them more engaged throughout the entire process.

2) **Comfort: connect** - As mentioned previously, meeting a client for the first time will subconsciously trigger that *friend or foe* response. To make yourself more friendly to the client’s brain and more comfortable to the client, a real estate professional needs to:
a. Smile
b. Use open, relaxed body language
c. Raise your eyebrows when first making eye contact with the client (a sign you feel positively about the encounter)
d. Keep your voice modulation and tone calm; the speed of your voice should be controlled and gentle

3) **Comfort: chameleon** – Studies show that people who feel comfortable with each other mirror each other’s actions. Real estate professionals who are strong in this process speak with their clients in a similar tone and pace. Echoing a client’s “nodding” and “leaning forward” actions draws in the client. Being in an environment where the client feels comfortable will help them focus on the task at hand.

4) **Comfort: control** – It is important to monitor the health of the relationship between you and your client and remain in control. Real estate professionals should always be focused on maximizing clients’ sense of comfort since being comfortable plays such a huge part in the brain’s conscious and unconscious decision-making processes. Keep clients comfortable by keeping them informed and up-to-date on the property-buying process at all stages.

5) **Context and Catalyze** – This stage of the sales process requires the real estate professional to have a clear understanding of what the client’s goals, needs, challenges, and problems are. Once the needs are established, you can encourage the client to take action. Remember to move your clients from “pain to comfort.” For example, your client may be relocating his family to a new home. After you have a good idea of what the client’s family is looking for, convince the client that you are the one truly capable of moving the client’s family into the home that fits their needs. You can provide comfort in a very stressful time for the client.

6) **Information Check**—be sure to know the answers to these questions:
   a. **Cash** – Are you aware of the client’s budget?
   b. **Criteria** – Do you understand what the client is looking for and have you prioritized his or her needs?
   c. **Authority** – Are you aware of the client’s decision-making process and the other people involved in closing the deal?
   d. **Pain** – Are you aware of the negative outcomes the client may face if he does not move forward with your recommendation? Does he agree with your assessment?
   e. **Pleasure** – Are you and the client aware of the positive outcomes of a successful deal?

This phase of the process enables a real estate agent to propose realistic properties that fit the client’s needs. By knowing the negative and positive outcomes of working or not working
with you, you can encourage the client to move forward with his decision in a way that appeals to his brain, pain to pleasure.

7) **Convince** - this phase of the Neuro-Sell process has to do with understanding your client’s color and convincing him that moving forward with your proposition is a positive action.
   
   a. **Curiosity** – *Green Client*
   b. **Clarity** – *Blue Client*
   c. **Concrete** – *Red Client*
   d. **Certainty and Credibility** – *Gold Client*

   By understanding a client’s color, the real estate agent can make changes in the way she communicates and shows properties to clients. Maximize the power of knowing what really appeals to clients and use that information to your advantage.

8) **Confirm and Conclude** – Now, it is time to help the client make a final decision.
   
   Remember that people are seeking to buy: (1) a solution to a problem (attempting to avoid pain) and (2) good feelings (pleasure). An effective way to conclude is to a) remind clients of the pain they want to avoid and b) remind clients of the pleasure and positive outcomes that will be a result of moving forward with you. As a real estate professional, you are the change agent that can solve many of your clients’ problems. Let them know that you are the solution to what can be a very stressful property-buying period in their lives. Let them know that the properties you are recommending will take them out of their stressful situation and into a more desirable state. This type of communication will make your proposition more appealing to their minds and they will be more open to your messages moving forward.

**Recommended Reading**


**About the Author**

**John Tran, MBA Candidate**

**Baylor University**

John Tran is a graduate student from Dallas, Texas. He earned his bachelor’s degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Healthcare Management at the University of Texas at Dallas. Before enrolling at Baylor, John worked at both the American Heart Association and Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas. John is currently pursuing an MBA with a concentration in healthcare and plans to pursue a career in hospital business operations.