Gratitude in Buyer-Seller Relationships
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Was your last purchase a logical one or an emotional one? Even though you want to believe it was logical, it is actually both. In his book Sales EQ, Jeb Blount explains that the emotional experience of buying is more important than any product, price, or feature. Contrary to popular opinion, people act on emotion and justify their decisions after the fact with logic. Most salespeople approach the process in the opposite order, beginning their pitch with logical arguments and closing with emotional pulls. Because of this approach and the lack of understanding, the buyer and seller are perpetually out of sync. To be an effective sales person, it is necessary to approach people the way they buy rather than the way you sell. This requires high emotional intelligence and control, as well as an expanded knowledge of how people make decisions.

THINK POINT #1: The Four Pillars of Sales Intelligence

When asked what sets ultra-high sales performers apart from the pack, most salespeople would say these individuals have harnessed the ability to influence their clients. While this is true, influence is the end result of a long process. In his book, Blount explains that before you can influence anyone, you must first learn how to connect with them on an emotional level. He argues that in sales, there are four types of intelligence that are tightly intertwined: IQ, AQ, TQ, and EQ. Throughout the book, Blount gives tips on how to leverage emotional intelligence to dominate any sales situation.

The first step to sales fluency is understanding the different levels of sales intelligence. The first level is IQ, which stands for innate intelligence. IQ is an indicator of how smart a person is—an attribute no different than athleticism. You are either born with it or you are not, and while it is an important indicator of future success, it is only a starting point for one’s overall intelligence.

Innate intelligence is worthless alone. It must be refined through schooling, reading, and experience to become truly valuable. This level of sales intelligence, AQ, which stands for acquired intelligence, is essentially what makes IQ useful. It unlocks the power of one’s IQ via constant development. People who have a high AQ have a thirst for learning and are always taking advantage of opportunities to grow their understanding.
The third level of sales intelligence is technological intelligence, or TQ. Technological intelligence is the ability to effectively use technology in one’s daily life. As the sales environment changes, individuals who are resistant to technological changes and refuse to integrate new technologies into their daily operations will fall far behind. Ultra-high sales performers (UHPs) use the “Three As” in their approach to technology. The first A stands for *adopt* and is concerned with how fast one is willing to adopt new technology. UHPs tend to be on the cutting edge of technology and often leverage new technologies to gain a competitive advantage over their competition. The second A stands for *adapt*. UHPs understand and adapt new technology to their unique situation. They also tend to understand the difference between a low-value task, one whose completion adds little actual value to the end result, and a high-value task, one that is critical to the end result. They use this knowledge to leverage technology to automate the low-value tasks so they can spend their limited time focusing on the high-value tasks. The third A is *adapt*. UHPs use technology constantly in their day-to-day and become proficient at it by using it, not because they are better at technology in general but rather because they understand its value and are open to experimenting and learning from it.

The fourth and final level of sales intelligence is emotional intelligence, or EQ. It is your acuity for dealing with your own emotions and the emotions of those around you. EQ amplifies the impact of IQ, AQ, and TQ because it allows you to relate, influence, and persuade other human beings. In the modern age where technology dominates, this skill is rarer than ever, which is why it is the key to becoming an ultra-high performer.

**THINK POINT #2: Pillars of Sales-Specific Emotional Intelligence**

Within sales-specific emotional intelligence there are four main pillars—the first being empathy. Ultra-high performers believe their primary mission is to serve their customers. Their mindset in sales situations is others-focused, and because of this, they view things from the buyer’s perspective, both rationally and emotionally. Their more complete understanding of the client enables them to adjust their own behavioral and communication style to make the client more comfortable.

The second pillar of sales-specific emotional intelligence is self-awareness. Ultra-high performers are not perfect and have the same weaknesses as anyone else. What sets them apart from average salespeople is a keen awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. This awareness allows them to more effectively interact with others. They understand when to listen and when to talk, as well as when to be passive and when to be aggressive. Their ability to understand themselves and their environment gives them an advantage when dealing with any type of client.

The third pillar of sales-specific emotional intelligence is sales drive. Sales is a tough work environment—the salesperson’s ability to provide for their family is based solely on their ability to deliver results. This is often an emotional rollercoaster for all parties involved. Ultra-high performers master the art of maintaining their high level of performance in an environment of
constant change. Those with a high sales drive are optimistic, competitive, and have a need for achievement.

The final pillar of sales-specific emotional intelligence is self-control. Self-control is the ability to control disruptive emotions such as anger, delusion, desperation, and uncertainty. Disruptive emotions have the power to derail relationships, cloud judgment, and can lead to decision paralysis. The ability to understand and manage disruptive emotions is what sets ultra-high performers apart from their competition.

**THINK POINT #3: Adapting to the Buyer’s Personality**

Research has shown that you are able to build deeper connections when you interact with clients based on who they are, not who you are. Ultra-high performers understand their own style and are confident enough to adjust when dealing with various personalities. Jeb Blount separates the four primary stakeholder personas based on the DISC behavior assessment personality types. Each style requires a different approach. Adapting to the decision maker’s style requires keen awareness of your own style.

The first personality type is the Director, or high dominance in the DISC assessment. Directors make decisions quickly, crave control, and are most comfortable working with salespeople who know how to get things done. When working with Directors, do not try and compete with them. Directors value confidence and have no patience for long-winded pitches. They want to deal with people who cut to the chase. If you do not have an answer to a question, do not try to fake it. Directors will see right through this, lose respect for you, and proceed to steamroll you. Essentially, Directors can smell fear. To succeed, stick to your guns, and you will earn their respect.

The second personality type is the Analyzer, or high compliance in the DISC assessment. Analyzers tend to be more deal funders than signers. As such, they serve as a check and balance for the deal signers, typically Directors and Socializers. Due to their role, they will try and pick your business case apart. Analyzers are very methodical in their thinking. They deflect all hype and other efforts to “pitch” them. When dealing with Analyzers, stay away from personal questions unless prompted, and always review work for accuracy before the presentation. They are sticklers for detail, and if they catch you with information that is not 100% accurate, they will not be able to move past it.
The third personality type is the Socializer, or high influence in the DISC assessment. Socializers are easy to connect with and love building relationships. As opposed to the first two personality types, it is relationships first and business second. Socializers love to feel appreciated, so it is important to listen first and speak last. The nice thing about socializers is that if you listen to them, you will usually get their business because their need to feel important overrides objective, rational decision making. The problem most salespeople have in doing business with socializers is that they, too, are often socializers. This creates tension because both parties want to talk. It is crucial to control your own desire to dominate the conversation and speak only to guide the discussion.

The fourth personality type is the Consensus Builder, or high steadiness in the DISC assessment. Consensus Builders value safety, having their ducks in a row, and pleasing people. They tend to avoid risk or change. Because they avoid conflict, they tend to be passive-aggressive in most situations. If you offend a consensus builder, you will lose the sale and never know why. This personality type tends to frustrate salespeople the most because they need all the details to be just right before making a decision. Just when you think you are about to close, they will ask for more time or more information. The key when dealing with Consensus Builders is to slow down and earn their trust.

Conclusion

None of us have a single dominant style. In reality, we are a combination of multiple styles with a dominant style showing its colors in stressful situations. The ultimate goal is to reduce friction by managing your own style. Self-awareness of your own style is critical to mastering the art of building relationships. Salespeople who invest in and focus on developing sales EQ will dominate the profession. When you choose to develop your emotional intelligence, you will break down the barriers that hold back the average salespeople.

Recommended Reading

Blount, Jeb (2017), Sales EQ, Wiley Publishing.

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Kevin Pettit is a graduate student from La Center, Washington. He earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in Supply Chain Management from Baylor University's Hankamer School of Business. Kevin is currently seeking an MBA with a concentration in healthcare administration and is currently in his Executive Residency at Mercy Hospital in Oklahoma City.