



Dear Friend,

Sell...Not Always a Dirty Word

Okay, it's confession time.

In launching **Executive Advantage**, my primary focus was on service -- providing top-notch management consulting and professional development support. Seriously, I was on a mission. I longed to assist leaders to create profitable and productive organizations where goals are met, innovation occurs, and people thrive; and I saw myself coaching individuals to effectively navigate in their roles and to live lives with greater direction, achievement, and balance. That's where I was headed!

But, hold the bus. You and I both know that you don't just decide to go into business one day and the next day find a line of folks just waiting at your doorstep. (Oh, if only...) Instead, you've got to get out there and sell what you've got. There, I said it ... sell.

Anybody who knows me well will tell you that I love *buying*. (After all, this is the woman who carted her child off to countless end-of-season sales, with preferred customer coupons in hand, under the guise of taking "math practical-application field trips." Can you say, "Teachable moments"? Alright, can you say, "Therapy"?) So, I confess. A natural-born buyer, I am; a natural-born seller, I am not!

News flash -- we're not all folks who think selling a fur coat in the middle of the desert is fun. So, the key is learning your individual attributes and blind spots and then finding a way to use who you are to your advantage. For me, it was thinking of our services from the perspective of the potential buyer -- something I can relate to. For you, it may be different. Whatever your approach, though, the bottom line remains the same: Attention to sales is necessary for any business.

That's why we've dedicated this edition of **EA Insights** to sales. Keep reading as we take a look at who buyers are, why they're buying, and why they may buy from you.

And, don't miss the special offer at the end of this edition. This month, we're showcasing our sales profile. So, whether you're new to sales or a veteran looking for a boost, give us a call. Let us help you to identify your personal characteristics for sales success and take a step toward maximizing your potential.

All the best,

June

June Melvin Mickens
Executive Advantage, LLC

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"Quotes"

"Once you have sold a customer, make sure he is satisfied with your goods. Stay with him until the goods are used up or worn out. Your product may be of such long life that you will never sell him again, but he will sell you and your product to his friends."

~William Feather

"Goodwill is the one and only asset that competition cannot undersell or destroy."

~Marshall Field

"Good listeners generally make more sales than good talkers."

~B. C. Holwick

"The successful producer of an article sells it for more than it cost him to make, and that's his profit. But the customer buys it only because it is worth more to him than he pays for it, and that's his profit. No one can long make a profit producing anything unless the customer makes a profit using it."

~Samuel B. Pettengill

"Where there is no rapport, there is no sale. Enrolling people in your product or service is the same as enrolling them in you."

~Proverb

Trading Places...Think Like a Buyer

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Let me ask you a question.

Do you want to improve your sales?

I hope you answered "yes." If not, then you might want to reconsider why you're in business. (And, it really doesn't matter whether your business sells dishwashers, accounting services, jackhammers, temporary labor, or anything else. We're all in the business of selling something!)

Seriously, whether your goal is to start selling or to sell more, here's my advice to you. Make it a practice to take off your seller's hat and learn to think like a buyer!

I read once that "People don't like to be sold ... but they love to buy." If that's true, then it makes sense that you'll gain more buyers by learning what prompts people to purchase whatever it is you're selling.

So, in an effort to help you spark your sales outcomes, let's consider three questions that should aid you to think more like buyers.

Why Do People Buy?

When you think about it, why people buy is simple. We make purchases to fulfill a need or a want. That's it.

Think about needs-based buying for a moment. *Need* usually centers around one of three areas -- gaining something, avoiding the loss of something, or solving some problem. The reality, though, is that not all needs are created equal. That's because some buyer needs are active, and others are latent. Active needs ("We need 600 widgets by next week!") are ones that the buyer openly acknowledges and has a clear intention to resolve. Latent needs ("That department is unpredictable.") are still needs, but they haven't risen to the level of being admitted or they haven't gotten bad enough to prompt a plan of attack. They're back-burner issues, perhaps because the buyer doesn't yet recognize the impact of inaction or because an acceptable (or, at least, tolerable) work-around has been developed. So, buying is unlikely to occur until the need becomes active. However, once that happens, the decision-making about what to buy tends to be rational, focused, and fact-oriented.

Contrast needs-based buying with buying to satisfy a *want*. This type of

purchase is personal in nature. It involves the buyer understanding what he wants, knowing (on some level) why he wants it, and then articulating that to you so you can determine whether what you've got fits the bill. And, that doesn't always happen easily. Why? It's largely because wants are based on emotion or perception, and the buyer may not have come to grips with all of this himself or may not be able to explain it.

So, as you think about your service or your product generally, consider what you seek to meet -- needs ... wants ... both? Then, as you interact with each prospective buyer, try to tap into the reason for this particular purchase. Is there a need to be met? Is there a desire to be satisfied? Could tackling a surface-level need also allow the buyer to fulfill an underlying aspiration?

Who's Buying?

Have you ever gone window-shopping? It's a favorite past-time for many. But, don't fool yourself. Window-shopping isn't just a concern for the retail community; it happens all over in some form or another. (Let me add this note. Don't ignore window-shoppers; you never know when they're coming back to actually buy!) So, if your goal is to understand buyers better, what distinguishes serious prospective buyers from recreational window-shoppers?

Bona fide buyers typically display three characteristics -- 1) a want or need, 2) resources, and 3) spending authority. We've looked at needs and wants already; so let's touch on the other two here.

No matter how much interest a person has or how much value she sees in what you're providing, unless a buyer has resources to spend, there won't be a sale. So whether it's cash, a gift certificate or credit, or goods or services to barter, a genuine buyer will have acceptable resources to compensate you for your work.

In addition to having resources to pay you, an actual buyer has decision-making authority. This is important because the buying conversation may be initiated through a variety of routes. However, ultimately, the real buyer is the person who has the right to decide both to work with you and to allocate the resources for that work to occur. Unless decision-making authority is present, the person on the other side of the table is limited to making recommendations about the purchase decision; and, while that very well may be an important role, final say-so rests with another, and no deal will be concluded until that person's approval is obtained.

What Draws Them to You?

I'll never forget a networking event I attended once. Upon arrival, I very carefully scanned the tables to choose just the right seat, the one that would put me smack-dab in the middle of a group of interested, receptive prospective buyers. Well, clearly, my radar was malfunctioning that day. Instead of being in my dream seat, when table introductions occurred, I found myself at a table where four of my seven tablemates were competitors!

Competition is keen today, and buyers have many options. So, what about your product or service, or about you, would be attractive to a buyer? That's a core question for any business.

Certainly, value, quality, and fit play important parts in the decision about where to buy. That is, how do the benefits of your goods or service stack up to the cost? Will your product be one of quality, or will the investment need to be repeated sooner than expected? Does this solution meet the buyer's expectations, or is there a better fit out there? The answers to these questions are all central to the decision to work with you or to choose a competitor.

But, perhaps the greatest draw for the buyer is you (or your company's representatives). If the option is available, people buy when there's an emotional connection. They seek to meet their needs from vendors who are credible. They tend to satisfy their wants from suppliers who understand them. You build that connection by demonstrating that you and your company are trustworthy, that your product or service fulfills its claims, and that you deliver as promised (if not a little more than promised). When that happens, buyers use you again when they can, and they tell others about you -- opening up new streams of prospective buyers.

Executive Advantage Special Offer



Want to Improve Your Sales?

Discover Your Attributes!

You know how to sell. You know what you're selling. But, do you know how your unique attributes support or hinder your sales performance?

Contact [Executive Advantage](#) today, and arrange to complete your personal sales profile. For a limited time, we're offering the Attribute Index for sales professionals at a special price with a personal debrief.

Don't miss this chance to:

- understand your distinct traits for thought and decision-making
- learn how your unique make-up impacts performance
- begin maximizing your sales outcomes

Improved results are just a step away. Contact [Executive Advantage](#) today [online](#) or at (301) 280-5950.

"People buy products for what they can do, not for what they are."

~F. G. 'Buck' Rodgers

"Get the confidence of the public and you will have no difficulty in getting their patronage. Inspire your whole force with the right spirit of service; encourage every sign of the true spirit. So display and advertise wares that customers shall buy with understanding. Treat them as guests when they come and when they go, whether or not they buy. Give them all that can be given fairly, on the principle that to him that giveth shall be given. Remember always that the recollection of quality remains long after the price is forgotten. Then your business will prosper by a natural process."

~H. Gordon Selfridge

"Everyone lives by selling something."

~Robert Louis Stevenson

"The world's greatest need ... is mutual confidence. No human being ever knows all the secrets of another's heart. Yet there is enough confidence between mother and child, husband and wife, buyer and seller ... to make social life a practical possibility. Confidence may be risky, but it is nothing like so risky as mistrust."

~Arnold Joseph Toynbee

"If you want to know when to sell, find out when I am buying."

~Unknown

About Executive Advantage

At [Executive Advantage](#), we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

To learn more about [Executive Advantage](#), contact us [online](#) or at (301) 280-5950.

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