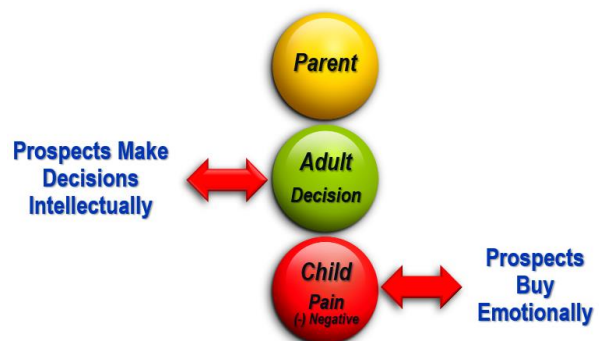


The Spirit Ponders and The Heart Concludes

By Richard Higby, PhD

I'm a scientist and specifically, a chemist. By virtue of my having risen through the corporate ranks, I have honed my inherent analytical skills to become a master at putting together spreadsheets calculating the net present and future value of a proposal. As appropriate, I can detail out the specific labor and material savings supporting the investment and my conclusion that we should move forward. Regrettably, my track record for 'closing the deal' is far less than I would like given the amount of effort I produce. I can rationalize, intellectualize and diagrammatize in presentation after presentation and there will always be a level of uncertainty in the prospect's mind. Are you telling the truth? Is your data current? Can your organization deliver? With every question there is a probability, a likelihood, of an unsuccessful outcome. As the prospect asks more questions the probability of failure compounds until the outcome is no longer certain and even more data is requested. While I am gathering more data, the deal is lost and my competitor has scored yet another victory.

Decisions are made emotionally and rationalized intellectually. Mass media advertising appeals to guilt for tasks not done (*Reach out and touch someone*, AT&T 1986), pain avoidance (Excedrin, 1976) or creating positive emotion toward a brand or experience (*The Fun Ones*, Carnival Cruise Lines, 2020). Selecting the best way to reach out to Mom, the effective drug to take to relieve pain or the cruise, airline, or vacation experience is the intellectual rationalization used to pick the vendor. In professional business development, we strive to identify and amplify the buyer's pain with their decision making even if they are unaware of it at the time. We ask questions around their business, technical specifications, funding, and decision makers. Questions evolve to the feelings the prospect has toward each area and engage to understand the full root cause of pain. In terms of behavioral psychology, we are using our "nurturing parent" to appeal to their "child" ego states (*I'm Ok – You're Ok*, Harris, 1967). Once the pain is developed and understood, we can move to the impact of our solution, its features, benefits and pricing.



Knowing how to engage a prospect in an opening dialogue, engaging in a conversation that uncovers their pain (and your opportunity) are difficult skills to master well. Only those who understand behavioral psychology will become the true masters. This insight is hardly new. The title of this piece, *The Spirit Ponders and the Heart Concludes*, was found on the walls of Château de Chenonceau by a student of Mastering Business Development and is attributed to Louise Dupin (1706-99). Madame Dupin researched and wrote on the social, economic and political status of women in her era. She was engaged with such thinkers of the time as Voltaire, Fontenelle, Montesquieu and Rousseau.

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About the Author



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