

BMKT 114: Psychology of Selling

Unit 4 Course Materials – Discovery Agreement



Let's do a quick review of where we have been, and look towards where we are going. In unit 1, we worked on developing trust. We established our commonality, competence, propriety (professionalism) and demonstrated our positive intent. In Unit 2, we discussed the fact that people have both physiological needs and psychological needs. We then translated these into rational (task needs) and emotional (personal needs). The specific drives that motivate a buyer to buy a product and for what reasons. Emotional being the strongest motivator. In unit 3, we moved into problem analysis. Since a problem is defined as the difference between what you have and what you want ~ we want to create a questioning strategy that solicits this information. From the information extracted, we can present solutions to the prospects "problems." Think of problems as being needs, wants or desires. Not always *problems* as one might think of them.

Discovery Agreement (Brian Larson)

After the questioning analysis is completed, it is critical to be sure that you clearly understand the prospects situation. After all, a lot has been said, much of it not directly related to the problem. In some cases even the prospect is not sure *exactly* what the issues are and what needs to be solved. If you have discovered enough information, you now know:

- The issues at the root of the problem to be solved.
- The degree of importance.
- The prospect's idea of the cost to solve the problem. (even if it is not realistic)
- Preconceived notions as to how to solve the problem. (although the prospect may not be fully aware of all the possible solutions)
- The decision making process.
- (the people who will be either directly or indirectly involved in the buying decision)

Certainly there is more information that will be provided depending upon the specifics.

Once you have acquired this information, it is crucial for you to clarify the issues and get agreement from the prospect. We will call this the *discovery agreement*. It is a playback of all the information relevant to the prospects situation (i.e. what they *have* and what they *want*) **AND** a request for agreement. In other words, after recapping the situation, you ask: "Is that correct?" One of two things will occur. Either the prospect will say yes, in which case you can proceed to present a solution. Or they will say no, in which case you will get more information that is necessary to sell your product. This replaying of information demonstrates you are listening to the prospect, understand what they are saying and understand their point of view. Do this without judgment. Even if the prospect is incorrect in their assumptions, now is not the time to tell them they are wrong. You will educate them and persuade them to take a different viewpoint during your presentation. It also clarifies in the prospect's mind the problem and gets them to "*feel the fever.*" What once was a minimal issue may now be one the prospect feels needs to be



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solved at once. Prior to you making clear their wants or needs, they may not have seen the issue as urgent.

Here is a story that makes another point. At the turn of the century, the railroad baron's were racing to build their rail lines from coast to coast. The one who finished first stood to make great fortunes; the one's who were last would lose great fortunes. Labor was in high demand and technology was antiquated. One of the greatest challenges facing the engineers were the mountains that stood in their way. If they started digging at one end until they got to the other side, the time it would take would be tremendous. After all, you can only get so many men inside to do the work. On the other hand, you could dig from both sides at the same time and meet in the middle. This approach would be much faster, however if they missed each other in the middle, they would dig two tunnels. How did they do it? They took *soundings* along the way. This allowed the workers from each side to know where the other side was at. Ultimately they met in the middle. A huge time advantage. The discovery agreement is like taking soundings. It makes sure you understand the prospect and be certain you both end up meeting in the middle. You need to get agreement that you understand the prospect's point of view, what their needs are and their preconceived notions as to how to solve their desires. Nothing is more devastating to a salesperson than to take hours to develop a sales proposal only to find out they didn't have a clear idea what the prospect wanted solved. This simple technique has helped me know exactly what the prospect wanted before I made a presentation. It was also a way to find out additional information I didn't anticipate knowing when I developed my questioning strategy. Every case is a little different.

OK, you have demonstrated your ability to identify problems when you completed the assignment in unit 3. The more difficult skill to develop is determining what questions to ask to extract the information required to make an on-target presentation. The assignment this week requires that you study different prospect scenario's and writing questions that would solicit enough information to make a proposal.

Please keep the following in mind.

1. You are not doing anything that is selling; you are simply to list questions that you might ask for information.
2. You need to be specific about the information you are asking for. A prospect may know little about your product, or even what they want since they may not possess the most up-to-date information on new offerings. Don't expect a question like "What are you looking for today?" to cover it. In some cases they don't think they want anything until you probe into specific problem areas. Remember the example of the copy machine presented earlier?
3. You are only writing the questions you would ask of a client. *Do not provide answers or responses.*



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4. After listing your questions, read through them and answer them in your head to determine whether or not you will have *discovered* enough information to make a fully informed proposal. Would the answers to your questions determine:

- The issues at the root of the problem to be solved.
- The degree of importance.
- The prospect's idea of the cost to solve the problem.
- Preconceived notions as to how to solve the problem.
- The decision making process.

Please remember, questions like “What can you afford?” is not appropriate and considered “*killer questions.*” Please avoid them.

This questioning strategy skill is critical to your success in sales.

Next week you will be given sample responses a prospect may have provided to your questions, and you will then be writing your first *discovery agreement*. You cannot write a discovery agreement until you obtain the answers to your questions.

