

Revealing the iSeries Secrets

The iSeries is often referred to as the industry's "best kept secret." Those who understand it adore it, while others ignore it. We searched for someone to help our readers reveal the iSeries secret, and we're excited to bring you Randall Munson, a world-renowned technology sales expert who has been named one of the world's greatest business mentors. He also understands the iSeries, having been an architect and developer of IBM midrange systems for 20 years in Rochester, Minnesota. In his column, Randall will help you understand how to sell the iSeries — and the software that runs on it. His ideas will help those recommending technology purchases in their companies and will help those defending the iSeries from detractors who might try to replace the system.

—Eds. *iSeries News*

Magic of Selling iSeries Sell to the Gut

by
Randall Munson



I could see the frustration in John's eyes — frustration borne of confusion and a feeling of unfairness.

John was selling a high-quality product with rich functions. He was well trained in sales; the product was priced right and provided great value. But John had a problem. He was repeatedly having difficulty getting businesses to purchase his product because it was

based on the IBM iSeries platform.

He told his prospects about the superiority of the iSeries architecture, the unsurpassed reliability, the lower total cost of ownership, the freedom from viruses, and the system's ease of use. I could feel his emotion build. His voice swelled as he complained that his prospects were just not behaving rationally. They were buying competing products on other platforms that were not as powerful, not as reliable, and not as economical. They were not rational. He asked me how he could possibly sell things to people who don't make sense.

John's frustration is common in people who sell high-technology products and complex services. The feeling is also shared by people who are responsible for recommending high-technology products for their own companies to purchase. The frustration comes from a fundamental misunderstanding about how people make purchasing decisions. Like most folks, John thought that

people make decisions about technology products based upon a logical evaluation of the product. But, that isn't how it works.

The Trap Trap

Sales are not logical — they are psychological. A common mistake made by sales professionals, like John, is to try to sell complex and technical products by throwing facts and features at the prospect. They try to build such a large body of positive data that the prospect will be obligated to buy their product. What they fail to realize is that, while technical information is important, it is not sufficient. If it were, you could just post your product specifications on the wall, pull up a chair, and take orders. But it doesn't work that way.

Ralph Waldo Emerson's famous quotation "Build a better mousetrap and the world will beat a path to your door" is a cute saying, but it is utterly false.

To demonstrate the point, I've shown a half-dozen different kinds of mousetraps to people one at a time and asked them to identify the object. The conventional mousetrap (the wooden slab with a snapping wire spring) is instantly recognized nearly 100 percent of the time. The better mousetraps — the newer and technically superior mousetraps — are identified less than 10 percent of the time. The world is certainly not beating a path to the better mousetraps; the world barely knows they exist.

When people discover that a mouse has invaded their home, they scurry to the store and buy a mousetrap. And the mousetrap they buy is the same old-fashioned kind of mousetrap their parents and grandparents used. The

mousetraps that are better, easier to use, safer, more humane, more pleasant, more reliable, cheaper, and technically superior just sit on the store shelf. Woodstream, the company that makes Victor mousetraps, told me they sell eight times more wooden snap traps than their other 12 better mousetraps combined! The truth is this: "Build a better mousetrap, and you still have to sell it." Technical superiority alone does not ensure success.

The world is filled with examples of technically superior products that have failed to sell. In the year 2002, after 27 years, Sony quit producing Beta videotape. Beta home videotape lost in the marketplace to the technically inferior VHS. Having a superior technical product does not mean that people will buy it. Providing information about a superior technical product does not mean you will sell it. Knowledge of a product does not compel someone to buy it. Sales, even sales of technical products, are not logical; sales are psychological.

The Big Stuff

While John began to see that technical information alone does not compel people to buy low-cost consumer products, he thought the rules were different when people shelled out a large amount of money for a major purchase.

To help him step back from his situation and get a fresh perspective of the purchase decision process, I told him about my niece and her decision about what vehicle to buy for her family. For most of us, an automobile is the largest purchase we make in our lifetime, aside from our home. It is a decision we take very seriously.

My niece and her husband have two small children and a third on the way. The perfect vehicle for her and her growing family would be a mini-van. However, she bought an SUV.

Mini-vans have lots of room for diaper bags and portable cribs in the early years; bicycles and little league teams in the middle years; keyboards and drum sets in the next phase; and suitcases, lofts, computers, and sound systems as the kids move to college. I'm on my fourth or fifth mini-van (each bought new and driven until they were worn out and towed away for scrap metal), so I have come to appreciate the features a mini-van offers for a family with children. In a mini-van, one parent can get up and walk to the back to resolve spats and clean splats without having to pull off the road, stop the car, walk around, and get in the back door.

Logically, my niece should have bought a mini-van, but she didn't. To her, a mini-van is what old people drive. An SUV is what young people drive. So, she bought an SUV. Her purchasing decision was not logical; it was psychological.

My niece is not a foolish emotional buyer. She is a college-educated, up-and-coming executive for a national corporation. She acts rationally. But she gladly paid thousands of dollars more for a less convenient vehicle with very expensive features she didn't need. (Four-wheel drive and high ground clearance is not really needed when your tires never leave paved highways.) She made her decision based on her desire for the vehicle. She cited what appeared to be sound reasoning for buying an SUV. But when I probed deeper into her justification, she realized that the real reason behind her decision was that she didn't want to be seen driving around in a mini-van. She wanted an SUV, and the facts didn't change her mind.

People are People

We tend to expect logical people to make mechanically logical purchasing decisions. But people are people. They operate like people, and as frustrating as it may be, people will always act like people. Knowing how people operate is key to selling.

Car salespeople have perfected the technique of the psychological sale. The automobile is a complex machine. But when you walk into the showroom, the salesperson doesn't plunk you in a dark room and narrate a PowerPoint slide show on the technical specifications. If they did that, you would most likely lose interest and walk out. Instead, the salesperson encourages you to admire the gleaming car, experience the comfortable seats, and inhale the new car fragrance. You react by visualizing how fabulous you'll look in your new car, enjoying years of driving excitement. By that time, the salesperson usually has you hooked.

All sales, including technical sales, are emotional decisions. Information causes people to think, but emotion causes them to act. People decide to buy based first on desire, and second on logic. Your first job as a salesperson is to make them want it; then, give them enough technical information to justify what they want.

Justify for the Brain, but Sell to the Gut

To magically "sell" your prospects, you must think differently than your competition. For example, most salespeople accept the process in Figure 1A as a typical sales process. This means they provide information to the prospect, the information generates a discussion, and the discussion leads to a desire for the product and ultimately a decision to buy. Unfortunately, the steps of the sales process rarely progress in a straight line to the decision to buy.



The more likely scenario is that information leads to discussion, questions, then challenges, requests for clarification, and more information (Figure 1B). The whole cyclic sales process lasts much longer than necessary, and this too often results in a missed sale.

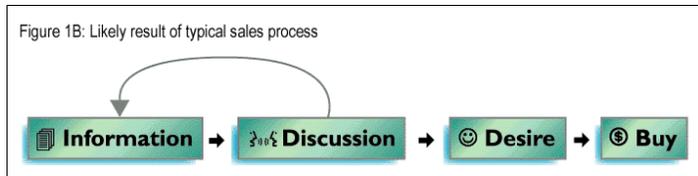
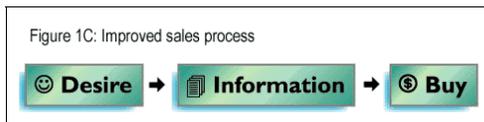


Figure 1C shows a more effective approach. With this approach, you can manage the entire selling process much more effectively by first giving your prospect a desire for your product or service. To create desire, show the prospect how their business, their success, and their life will be better with your product. When they have a desire for the product, when in their gut they want it, then give them the detailed information. At that point, instead of using the information to challenge you, they will use it to justify their desire for the product, and the sales cycle will be significantly faster.



Ah ha!

John understood the principle of selling to the gut, but he still wondered if it applied to all sales — even computer sales. I had him imagine a world in which all computers (including iSeries) and all software packages have exactly the same specifications as they do here. The only thing that is different is the iSeries is widely considered to be the hottest, most desirable, platform in the world. I asked him if selling iSeries hardware and applications would change. He'd love to live in that world, he told me, because selling his iSeries product would be so easy he could double his

sales. Then his mouth dropped open and his eyes widened. It hit him. The *only* difference in the imaginary world is an increase in desire. It wasn't the technical sales information that made the difference; it was the initial desire.

John finally realized that to be successful selling his iSeries-based product, he had to begin by building desire for the product before giving the prospect all the technical details, features, and logical reasons to buy. After he understood how people make buying decisions, his frustration diminished and his sales increased.

Oh, my niece eventually, and reluctantly, bought a mini-van. But she tries not to be seen driving it.

Randall Munson is president and founder of Creatively Speaking, based in Rochester, Minnesota. He is the sales expert that Fortune 500 corporations and technology companies across six continents rely on to increase their sales. Named one of the world's greatest business mentors, Randall combines two decades with IBM and 25 years as a professional magician to become the expert who creates powerful sales programs and helps executives deliver great presentations. Randall is an author and Certified Speaking Professional who presents international award-winning programs to audiences in more than 30 countries. For a free information kit or to book Randall Munson for your organization, please call 507-286-1331, e-mail Randall@CreativelySpeaking.com, or visit <http://www.CreativelySpeaking.com>



This article was originally published in iSeries News, April, 2004.

iseriesnetwork.com