

გამყიდველის სოციალური გავლენის პრინციპები ყიდვის პროცესში

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სოციალურ ზეგავლენას მნიშვნელოვანი ადგილი უჭირავს სხვადასხვა სფეროში და მათ შორის არის სამომხმარებლო ქცევა. სამომხმარებლო ქცევის ერთ-ერთი შემადგენელია უშუალოდ ყიდვის განხორციელების პროცესი. ამ დროს მომხმარებელზე მრავალი ფაქტორი მოქმედებს. ერთ-ერთი ძირითადი ფაქტორი არის გამყიდველი. გამყიდველი იყენებს სხვადასხვა ფაქტორს მომხმარებელზე ზეგავლენის მოსახდენად. ამისათვის ის უპირველეს ყოვლისა უნდა იყოს აღქმული მომხმარებლის მიერ როგორც მიმზიდველი და სანდო. გარდა ამისა, გამყიდველი ზეგავლენის მოსახდენად იყენებს მთელ რიგ ტექნიკებს. მათ შორის ძირითადია: სხვა მომხმარებელთა ქცევის დამოწმება, პროდუქტის შეზღუდული რაოდენობით წარმოდგენა, თანამიმდევრული დათანხმება, დავალებულობის გრძნობის გამოწვევა, კონტრასტული აღქმა. ამ პრინციპების ცოდნა და მათი კრეატიულად გამოყენების უნარი არის აუცილებელი პირობა თანამედროვე კონკურენტულ სამყაროში გადასარჩენად.

The Salesperson's Social Influence Principles in the Process of Buying

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We live in the world of social influences: The number of our social relations rapidly increases and each of them contains the social influence in certain degree – people try to influence each other one or another. This is the case almost in all domains of social life. The targets of influence are

children and parents, friends and spouses, colleges, relatives, neighbors, voters, and, of course, consumers.

The modern human is permanently involved in relations of consumption. He/she systematically buys a big amount of products and services. At the same time he/she often plays the role of a seller. Most of us are "salespersons:" Marketers, lowers, doctors, teachers, psychologists, designers, artists, journalists and so on. We all sell our services. Nowadays a large number of people works in a wide range of services and sells goods, entertainments, work in the field of education and health care systems and so on. Consequently, for these people, professional success is determined not only by expertise in an appropriate area, but also by the art of relationship with a consumer, particularly, the skills of a consumer persuasion. These skills are partially innate and partially based on experience, observation, learning, and training. For the survival in the competitive market environment, the salespeople have to possess certain knowledge and skills to influence a consumer. They have to know the main principles of client persuasion and to be creative in usage of these principles.

One of the most influential principle is liking. No matter what is the reason for liking of the influence source. If we like it, we tend to be more persuaded by it. This truth is known by the professional salespeople very well and they use it in their practice. There are numerous ways to be more liked by a customer. We can categorize them into four main types of reasons. These types are: physical attractiveness, similarity, familiarity and compliments.

We like physically attractive people. It is more likelihood that customer appeals to good-looking salesperson, listens him/her and will be persuaded by him/her. Physically attractive people are more liked because they are rewarded: we get pleasure, experience positive emotions and moods, we feel ourselves calm and comfortable in relationships with them. Another reason is the stereotype that physically attractive persons have other good qualities as well, even such qualities that seem irrelevant to physical beauty, such as intelligence, expertise, kindness, honesty, truthfulness and credibility. It is clear, that the customer would be influenced by such kind of person much more then by other one. The third explanation for the salesperson beauty effect is the association aroused between salesperson and product or service offered by him/her. When one object becomes associated by another one, the positive perception of the first one tends to spread on the second one. That is in the case of the positive perception of the seller the customer tends to perceive more positively his/her product or service. Consequently, to take care about physical appearance for service workers is the part of their professional activity. This would be also taken into account by their supervisors in the process of selection and placement of their employees.

Liking is determined by similarity as well. Generally we like people similar to us and don't like dissimilar ones. The explanation for the similarity-liking connection is that similar people tend to agree with our ideas, values and interests and support our confidence in the rightness of our views. They understand us and we understand them. So interaction with them become more effective and rewarded. Another explanation for such similarity effect on attraction is the human tendency to maintain consistency among attitudes, to organize likes and dislikes in a balanced, consistent way. To perceive similarity with another person and at the same time dislike him/her is psychologically uncomfortable. We maintain cognitive consistency by liking similar persons and disliking dissimilar ones. The customer tends to like similar salesperson. Nowadays this truth is taken more into consideration in service. One example of this fact is that the models and TV journalists become plumper. The question is "is it possible for salesperson to be similar to all customers?" The answer is "yes": one thing is that the effect of similarity works even in the case of small similarities, when it refers to not very important personal qualities. Another thing is that no matter what the objective reality is, the salesperson may just seem to be similar to the customer. The goal is to attain the customer's "discovery" of similarity with the salesperson and this one helps customer in such a "discovery". The customer become more open for influence after hearing that salesperson has similar background or interests, place of origin, like same football team or actress and so on. Such kinds of relationships are more possible in the case of so called "commercial friendships", when salespeople and customers form warm, friendly personal relationships, containing something like affection, intimacy, social support and loyalty.

Commercial friendship has positive effects for marketers also because of another reason: in the one hand, a salesperson becomes more familiar for a consumer and in another hand, familiarity increases attraction. We like more familiar people, more familiarity cause more attraction. The positive effect of frequent contact and familiarity on liking is universal quality for human beings – we like much more everything that is usual and familiar because this make us free from uncertainty and anxiety, the situation become more predictable, we experience less tension and stress and spend less psychical energy. But of cause, it is a salesperson or any other object, if the initial impression is clearly negative, no following interaction would have positive effect. Positive effect of familiarity is the powerful reason for the success of the network marketing and "home shopping parties" – people listen more carefully arguments of familiar person and tend more to be persuaded by them.

Liking is determined by compliments as well. Many salespersons posses great skills of expressing their sympathy for costumers. They know how to say "I like you" to customers and as a result last ones have

no weapon against their offerings. The compliment may refer to the numerous kinds of things and these things may be quite unimportant ones as well. Even more a compliment works even when target knows that it is only tool in the hands of the source. The compliment may be nonverbal, when a salesperson expresses his/her positive attitude toward customer without words – by smile, eye contact, voice. The good salesperson always, even being in a bad mood, has to be able to smile warmly and tell to client, that he/she has wonderful taste, beautiful face, ideal weight, modern appearance and so on.

Besides liking another powerful influence principle is the salesperson's credibility. The source credibility is determined by two variables – expertise and sincerity. An expertise means authority, competence, knowledge and experience in given domain. We tend to believe in experts and their arguments, especially when lacking adequate information. The salesperson has to create impression of being an expert, show his experience and knowledge for having the chance to influence a customer. At the same time he/she has persuade the client in his/her sincerity. It is not easy to get the trust of client. But it is possible and salespeople achieve it in different ways. For example, a salesperson may "inform" customer about bad quality or defect of product and by such a way gain his/her trust. A credible salesperson is especially influential when a consumer has not yet learned much about a product or service and has not formed the opinion about it.

So, attractiveness and credibility are two especially important characteristics for effective salespeople. But they have to use also different techniques to persuade the consumer. Main kinds of these techniques are: principles of social proof, scarcity, reciprocity, consistency and contrast perception.

The principle of social proof means, that we tend to engage in certain behavior if we perceive that other people have done it. When we see that other consumer is interested in particular good, we nearly automatically turn our attention on this object. The effect of social proof is especially strong when the customer experience uncertainty and has no guidelines for decision making. In such case another customer's behavior becomes the guideline. Two conditions strengthen social proof effect: the consumer's similarity with the imitation object and amount of such objects. More perceived similarity cause more imitation. The consumer identifies his/herself with another one and uses following logic: he is alike me, he behaves in such a way that is I have to behave in such a way. No matter if there is or is not real similarity. Only customer's subjective perception is important. It is possible to use false customers to influence the real customer and salespeople do it sometimes, but usually they use another approach: they inform customers about "other customer's choice". The specific case of social proof is when the customer identify

him/herself with any celebrity (doesn't matter why) and purchase certain goods or service only because this celebrity has done it. For example, the salesperson may tell young guy that he is alike to Brad Pitt and Brad Pitt had just such kind of glasses on Kann Festival.

Particularly strong type of social proof is conformity – the influence of majority. We have clear-cut tendency to see an action as more appropriate when majority are doing it. We often think that if a lot of people are doing something, it is the right thing to do. We look at others, gather information about others and take that into consideration in our evaluations and decisions. Because of such human quality salespeople often inform customers that his/her targeted object is favorable thing of most buyers. This message may be transmitted through different ways. For example, the salesperson may use such kind of words: “ Oh, you also like this sofa, it is so surprising, almost everybody likes it” or “ these cookies are selling very rapidly, I have to say them to get more”, or may be such kind of thing: “I can't understand why young people prefer these shoes” and so on. The salespeople's creativity is boundless, especially when they receive good commissions.

Salespeople often use the approach based on the powerful principle of scarcity – people's tendency to perceive opportunities as more valuable to them when their availability is limited. In fact scarcity is perceived as an object's value. We are afraid of losing and the potential loss plays a large role in our decision. Salespeople use scarcity principle in numerous ways. Of course, sometimes the limited-number information is true, but sometimes and quite often, it is wholly false. The object may become desirable only because it is less likelihood to get it. Even more - the consumer may be aware of the major reason for the object attractiveness (it's scarcity), but still has strong desire to gain it. The powerful reason for this is that uncontrollable emotions are involved. At this time it would be useful to ask ourselves: “why do I wish this thing: for using (in anyway) or just for possessing”, the sincere answer may save the huge amount of money that don't correspond to the real value of the object. Such in correspondence often is the case in the auctions. The scarcity principle power comes from two major sources. First is our tendency for spending less psychological energy, to think less: we know that the things that are difficult to possess are usually better than those that are easy to possess and we quickly make conclusion about targeted object, without thinking a lot. We are quite tired from processing external stimuli. The second explanation for scarcity effect is that as opportunities become less available, we lose freedom. But freedom is one of the most important value and we begin to make our best not to lose the freedom we already have – freedom of choice, freedom of possessing. As a result we spend money, sometimes very much money and our freedom become really expensive luxury.

Salespeople use scarcity principle in numerous ways. For example, salesman sees the customer looking at the product and thinking, evaluating it, searching arguments in his mind. At this moment the salesman comes to him and tells that this is really good thing, but unfortunately it is the last exemplar or the salesman may even tell to customer that the thing is already sold. In such a case the customer immediately decides that it is just the thing he needs. But that is not all: until he leaves the store, the salesman “discover” in his computer that they have such kind of things in the warehouse. The customer becomes happy and anxiously waits for the final “verdict”. The another version of this play is “we don’t have, but I can ask our branch shop”. One more example of the scarcity principle usage is when false customer expresses the desire to buy the same thing as real customer thinks to buy or when some customers are invited for purchasing at the same time. When the customer sees the competitive other one the targeted object immediately becomes more valuable. Other powerful thing based on scarcity principle is an announcement that there are only limited-numbers of tickets, vacancies, flats or any other resources. The service workers use not only the number scarcity effect, but the time scarcity effect as well. That is the case when the salespeople tell to consumers that they may get the service only during the limited amount of time or that there is certain deadline for service usage. For example, they say that the concerts will be only until end of month. In such a case you would be in a hurry and may be visit the concert that you would not visit in other case.

The professional salesperson knows human beings’ nature. He/she knows that human usually tends to be consistent and we see this tendency in many activities and in the consumer behavior among them. Particularly, if the person has told or done something, in the future he/she will try to act in such a way that don’t contradict the thing he/she has said or done. This tendency is explained by the fact that human wants to be liked by others and inconsistency is an undesirable personality trait, the person whose words or behaviors don’t match usually is evaluated negatively by others. Another explanation for the consistency tendency is that people are often afraid of new things, their unexpected results and chooses old ways. This is one of the reasons for the success of the brand extensions. So, if the customer bought our product, we will more expect that in the future he/she will buy the same thing, of course, if his/her expectations wouldn’t be failed. Professional salesperson uses human tendency for consistency more subtly as well: the salesperson tries to get the consumer to make a commitment. Once a stand is taken, there is a natural tendency to behave in the ways that are consistent with the stand. For example, if the salesman sees that the lady is carefully regarding the refrigerator, he may ask this lady “Are you interested in this refrigerator?” and then the salesperson makes another question: “Are you going to buy

this refrigerator?" After a short warm and "sincere" conversation the salesman makes the last question "Are you buying this refrigerator?" The likelihood of the refrigerator purchasing will increase and even more, maybe the lady will buy the thing she was not going to buy at all. In another option of this approach the salesperson asks the consumer to make something for him, something little and unimportant, for example to sign the text that he/she positively evaluate this shop, or the shop environment is very pleasant, or something like that. The salesperson may also ask to fill the short questionnaire, give some information and so on. It is difficult to say "no" on such little requests. But the truth is that such kind of little requests have the great latent power, because they make favorable background for future influence: after a consumer say "yes" referring to something, maybe something very unimportant, in the future the likelihood he/she would agree referring to the more important thing increases. This reality is determined by the fact that the customer's self-image has changed a little. He/she becomes considered him/herself as having more favorable attitudes towards the product or the salesperson because he/she had done certain thing for him/her: our self-image is impacted in certain degree by the perception of our behavior.

They often noticed that human beings are "social animals." That is we share social norms that make possible to live in a society. One of them is the norm of reciprocity – when anybody makes something for us, we tend to make something for him/her in return. It is simple but important tendency and salespeople use it in different ways. The salesperson makes something for customer and waits that customer's tendency to be influenced would increase and he/she is right. For this purpose salespeople use free samples or ask to taste the product. Professional salesperson also knows that after he/she spend certain amount of time for consumer explaining what the product qualities are and how do product types differ from each other, it would become more difficult to walk away and not to buy anything.

Another simple and often used technique is contrast-using technique when salesperson suggests to consumer at the beginning product with unrealistic price or with unacceptable quality and only then suggests the product he/she is really going to sell. The last one would be perceived much more favorable and becomes much more attractive after such "an introduction" and likelihood of buying increases a lot.

This survey involves most often used techniques the salespeople use to influence a consumer. Of course salespeople often engage in some of these techniques at the same time. For the success they need not only knowledge but creativity as well – every situation is different, every consumer is specific, although there are typical situations and typical consumers. Two more things are irreplaceable – innate skills and experience. But the knowledge and trainings help salespeople be more influential.

Summery

The social influence is important in different domains of life and consumer behavior is one of them. Consumer behavior involves the buying process. Among other factors operating during this process one of the most powerful is the salesperson's influence. For exerting influence the salesperson has to be perceived by the consumer as attractive and credible. Besides salespeople use numbers of specific techniques. The most powerful ones are: the proof of other consumer's behavior, scarcity of goods or services, reciprocation between a salesperson and a consumer, consistent persuasion and contrast perception. The knowledge of these principles and the skills for their creative usage are key factors for survival in the modern competitive world.

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