

Understand What Really Drives the Purchase

“The key to our business is energy efficiency. That’s the beginning and the end. I know my customers and why they buy.”

Was this sales manager right? This is a sucker bet. But with that bold statement, this client started out the input meeting.

Our client had a new product in development and was concerned that customers would be intimidated by the technology. They were taking a technology currently used successfully in large, custom-built applications and adapting it to a much smaller, standardized product. However, would their customer, the plant manager, reject the new product out of hand?

The client again, “This product is a major advance in energy efficiency, the prime buying criteria; this should be like shooting ducks. Just find out if they’re intimidated by the technology. It’s way more sophisticated than anything they’ve seen.”

We went in to the market, talking to plant managers across a wide range of industries. We wanted to determine what really motivated our plant manager. Our unique process for determining the totality of the drivers of the purchase decision uncovers not only the rational reasons but delves deep, using methods derived from psychotherapy to identify the critical emotional drivers. When you have this intimate knowledge of the customer, you can create strategy that increases the effectiveness of marketing communications and your sales force, shortens sales cycles, and increases the closing rate. More sales with less effort.

After talking with large companies, small companies, diversified, and focused, we found a remarkable similarity of opinion. The answers shocked our client. They asked for more interviews. We talked to service firms, distribution companies, and service centers, anyone who might be in the market for a product such as this. The answers stayed the same.

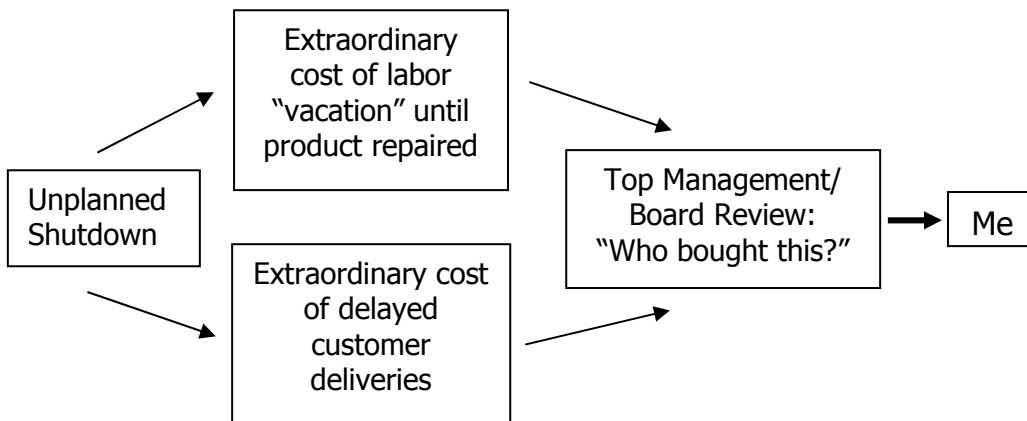
First, energy efficiency was way down on the list of concerns. Above it were:

- Maintenance procedures and costs
- Ability to tie control and monitoring into their existing IT network
- Availability of local service and parts
- Delivery timing
- Installation requirements
- Size and capacity

Far above these, at the top of the list they placed reliability although we probed deeper as this is far too rational. Just what did this mean, really mean? Cutting to the bottom line, the plant manager was most concerned about going home and telling his wife his mistake might cost him his job. Here’s how he got there.

Over, please ...

The plant manager's "reason flow":



"The raise is gone. The bonus is gone. I could be fired." But the worst part, he told us, is the embarrassment of telling his wife. No kidding. Not a joke.

Reliability of our product => not being embarrassed in front of his wife.

That was the fear, the base emotion that drove his decision-making for the purchase of our product.

When you've hit fear, you're at the emotional core, "How do I explain this to my wife?"

With that, selling was just a matter of proving how much more reliable my client's product was than competitors'. Fortunately, that was not difficult.

With this insight as the foundation, we developed the introduction strategy. The most difficult part of implementation was training the sales force to naturally deliver the comment, "... and with that kind of reliability you'll never have to face your wife and tell her you've been laid off."

Our client now dominates this segment of their market and product category. The introduction had their fastest sell-in. The marketing communication provided a strong and steady stream of leads followed by a sales cycle averaging less than four calls to commitment.

When you can build your market strategy on this intimate knowledge of the purchaser, your marketing and sales tactics work harder and faster. You spend less money, need less effort and reap the rewards of being close to your customers.

Note: Our client, concerned about confidentiality, has specifically asked we not disclose their name or the specific product.