

Selling and Motivation - a transfer of enthusiasm

By James Sale

The well-known sales expert, Brian Tracy in his many books and tapesⁱ claims that 50% of any sale is a “transfer of enthusiasm”; in other words, is something quite independent of the skill sets that so many organisations spend so much money investing in. To be clear about this: that at least 50% of selling is not correlated with goals and scripts, prospect calling, identifying correct product need, presenting the best solution, answering objections, or even getting the prospect to take action, or what is called ‘closing’. And there are more skills besides. If this is the case, then what is this ‘transfer of enthusiasm’ about and what is ‘enthusiasm’?

Before looking at this issue in more detail I would like to suggest that this position of Tracy’s is also evident in fields that seem unconnected, but which truly are: for example, recruitment. One of the world’s leading experts, Lou Adler, in his workⁱⁱ makes the point that the number one success factor in any hire is high levels of energy (also referred to as ‘drive’ and ‘initiative’). This he rates above (though doubtless vital) team skills, past performance, and adaptability. But the connection with sales should be obvious: the very recruitment process itself is a sales process, and the outcome we are looking for is to select the right ‘product’ at the right price in order to work the asset. That may sound a little cold, but it is essentially what we do.

Enthusiasm...

The word ‘enthusiasm’ itself is highly nebulous, but if we consider its etymological root we understand it comes from the Greek:

enthousiasmos (Plato), meaning inspired, or ‘breathed, or possessed by the god. Indeed, it is probably the single most attractive quality in another human being; it casts a kind of divinity over us; we seem more than we are; we have an energy that is ‘god-like’ and unstoppable. One of the sure signs that a god was amongst us (in Greek literature) was their shining or glittering eyes. Now, does this ring a bell? The enthusiast invariably has glittering eyes too, and boundless energy, whether it be sharing with you their stamp collection, or perhaps selling you the latest Mercedes model. The essence of enthusiasm is energy, high powered energy; and the synonym for energy in the workplace is motivation! Common sense tells us we are dealing here with the same thing: the transfer of enthusiasm that is so important in the sales process is precisely that transferable energy that we experience in the highly motivated person.

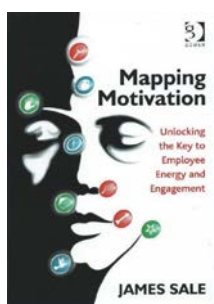
“The essence of enthusiasm is energy, high powered energy; and the synonym for energy in the workplace is motivation!”

To be highly motivated is to be an enthusiast. And it is contagious – or perhaps as we might like to describe it now in the age of internet marketing: it's viral. That is why it is so important.

If this be conceded, then it follows that we need to investigate motivation and its relationship to sales in more detail because 'enthusiasm' as a concept is, as I said before, nebulous... way too nebulous! But here we encounter our first problem: motivation, too, seems undefined and indeterminate. The root problem is that heretofore there has been no language to describe it or metric to measure it; and that in business is what we want, especially the metric. Perhaps to say no language is slightly inaccurate; post-Freud we have had the pleasure/pain principle; we are motivated towards pleasure (in the language of Neuro-Linguistic Programming) and away from pain. And this is an elementary language. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is also a language and indeed seems as much about 'wants' as needs, which really is about motivation; for what do we really 'need'? Yes, to live and survive and breathe oxygen: that's a need at the bottom of the hierarchy, but as we move up we rapidly find we are in the world of wants. We can want self-esteem, high self-esteem, but we meet many people who want to keep their low self-esteem or lack of self-esteem, as in some way they feel safer that way. So, we have these embryonic languages, but not a full-blown descriptive language, and certainly not one that measures motivation.

What is motivation?

Before looking at this, we might want to ask ourselves what is motivation and where does it come from within the human psyche? The general academic consensusⁱⁱⁱ is that motivation is energy that needs directing; the core word here being energy. I accept this view, and so ask where does this energy we call motivation, then, derive from in the human psyche? I think there are three areas within us from which this is generated. My book, Mapping



Motivation, outlines this in a lot more detail^{iv} but in essence motivation comes from three factors interacting with each other in a dynamic fashion: one factor is our personality, the natural bent we have to be and do things in a certain way, and when we do things that way we get more activated. As our personality it is relatively fixed and constant and predictable; we can't do much to change that however we may appear to behave. Second, is our self-concept, which has, according to Carl Rogers^v, three sub-components: self-esteem, self-image and the ideal-self. These in a strange way correspond to the three time tenses; the self-esteem being how we feel about ourselves, which originates at some womb-like time in the past when all we could do was feel, and so is correspondingly incredibly powerful; the self-image is how we see ourselves now, in the present; and the ideal-self is who we want to be at some point in the future, hence the need for strong role-models.

The key thing to understand here is that the self-concept is a belief about how we view our self; it is not a thought, but as a belief it is malleable and changeable. It is a belief inwardly directed. Finally, our expectations fuel or lower our motivational energy. Expectations are essentially beliefs about future outcomes: if I believe engaging in a certain activity is going to turn out well, then I am more likely to engage in it.

A good example here would be sales: if I expect my call to not result in a sale, there is almost certainly going to be a drop in energy. But again the word *belief*, only this time it is about and directed towards the external world and what we think will happen. Again, it is malleable. It can be changed. What this means is that we estimate that if we consider personality as the ‘genetic’ factor, then some 70%^{vi} of motivation is malleable and changeable; this too accords with common sense in the sense that it is obvious to anyone that motivation changes, positively and negatively, for nearly everyone over time.

Based on this, and based on the work of Maslow, Edgar Schein and the increasingly popular Enneagram^{vii}, a nine type motivator tool called Motivational Maps has been developed, which predicates that each person has all nine motivators within their psyche, but for most people the top three are what drives them at work. This being so and defined, it means as well that each person has three ‘hot buttons’ that turns them on if we get to the heart of their motivational profile; it is in fact, what they want – they want their top three motivators satisfied, for that is what it means to be motivated! Indeed it feels good, very good.

That being so, what are the nine motivators and what are their hot buttons by which we trigger their positive responses? The research at Motivational Maps found the following:

	Hot Buttons	Opportunities for Manager	Opportunities for Self
Searcher	Meaning & Make a Difference	Praise & Regular Feedback	Demand Quality Feedback
Spirit	Freedom & Independence	Autonomy & Empowerment	Renew your vision
Creator	Innovation & Change	Rewards for innovation	Problem solve through innovation
Expert	Expertise & Mastery	Training & Development	Seek training & learning
Builder	Money & Material Satisfaction	£££'s & Material Perks	Re-set your goals
Director	Power & Influence	Responsibility & Influence	Request more responsibility
Star	Recognition & Respect	Awards & Status	Work on visibility
Friend	Belonging & Friendship	Support & Involvement	Be a friend
Defender	Security & Predictability	Communications & Continuity	Seek clarification

Figure 1

The implications of this from a sales and marketing perspective, then, are quite radical. What it means from a sales perspective is that each person has at least three hot buttons and are asking themselves a question, consciously or more likely subconsciously, when faced with any buying decision that can be quite separate from the specified needs of the purchasing organisation. These subconscious questions can be expressed like this:

	Subconscious Sales Q	They buy because ...
Searcher	How do I know I'll make a difference?	make a difference, impact, purposeful
Spirit	How do I know I'll be able to prioritise?	freedom, independence, decision-making
Creator	How do I know I'll be able to make changes?	innovation, latest, advanced
Expert	How do I know I'll be an expert?	know-how, mastery, insight
Builder	How do I know I'll make money?	money, possessions, elevation
Director	How do I know I'll be in control?	power, control, influence
Star	How do I know I'll look good?	prestige, importance, being noticed
Friend	How do I know you'll be there for me?	loyalty, liking, rapport
Defender	How do I know this will work?	continuity, warranty, peace of mind guarantees

Figure 2

If the sales person can pitch their goods and services so that one or two of these motivators, especially the number one motivator of the prospect, can be met – their hot button is pressed, so to speak - then what is sometimes called ‘resonance’ occurs: we are speaking, it would seem, the same language. And this extends further to marketing itself.

The motivators are in three groups of three, correlated with Maslow, Schein and the Enneagram. To wit, three motivators are Relationship driven, or the Green motivators (Defender, Friend, Star). Their characteristics are past orientation, efficiency consciousness, and change and risk averseness. Three motivators are Achievement driven, or the Red motivators (Director, Builder, Expert). Their characteristics are present orientation, effectiveness led, and change and risk calculating. Finally, there is the Growth driven, or the Blue motivators (Creator, Spirit, Searcher). Their characteristics are future orientation, holistically aware, and change and risk friendly. There is also the possibility, which I won't explore here, of a fourth, ‘mixed’ category. It should be said at this point that these groupings apply to individuals, teams and whole organisations, and represent strong predilections.

	PROCESS	SELLING FOCUS	MARKETING FOCUS
GREEN	Efficiency Systems Slow decision making Change/risk averse	PROOF RELATIONSHIPS DEFERENCE	When in Rome... Tribes Movements Safety
RED	Effectiveness Goals Steady decision making Change/risk calculated	RESULTS ADVANTAGES BOTTOM LINE	Just do it... Control Competitiveness Outcomes
BLUE	Holistic Idealistic Fast decision making Change/risk friendly	IMPORTANCE FIRST-MOVER BIG PICTURE	Make a difference Autonomy Uniqueness 'the big deal'
R A G	combination	Drill down More!	combination

Figure 3

Thus the selling and marketing foci need to correspond to the above framework if we are going to increase the success of our sales and marketing efforts. Naturally, as in all selling and marketing, there is no magic bullet that works with all people all of the time. But this is a question of increasing the likelihood, be it of a hit rate of one in five to one in four, or a click rate that increases because the target market sees something it likes in language that it likes – that it wants. It should be evident from any close inspection of Figure 3 just how different these three categories are: the Green requiring ‘proof’ in selling, and wanting safety in current trends in the marketing versus, say, the Blue’s need for significance in selling, that the product or service is important and makes a difference somehow and, in marketing, its appreciation of uniqueness – something almost anathema to the Green. These are vital distinctions to make if we know our market.

Finally, one ought to say that the work with Motivational Maps is far more developed in the management, team and appraisal field than it is in the sales, recruitment and marketing areas. But motivation is a concept that truly crosses boundaries, since it informs all areas of our lives, not just business-wise or organisationally. More work and investigation, then, is needed in this promising new area for creating superior results using a language and a metric to define and describe motivation in a way that has not been done before.

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- ii Hire with your Head, Lou Adler, Wiley, 2010
 - iii A recent exception to this view is E. Tory Higgins, whose book, *Beyond Pleasure and Pain: How Motivation Works*, OUP, 2014, claims that motivation is about having “preferences directing choices”, page 24
 - iv Mapping Motivation, James Sale, 2016, Gower Publishing, especially Chapter 2, The Roots of Motivation
 - v Carl Rogers, A theory of therapy, personality and interpersonal relationships as developed in the client-centred framework. In (ed.) S. Koch, *Psychology: A study of a science*. Vol. 3: Formulations of the person and the social context. New York: McGraw Hill, 1959
 - vi Arvey, R. D., Bouchard, T. J., Segal, N. L., & Abraham, L. M.. Job satisfaction: Environmental and genetic components. *Journal Of Applied Psychology*, “While the results indicate the majority of the variance in job satisfaction was due to environmental factors (70%), genetic influence is still a minor factor”, 1989
 - vii A nine point personality tool going back to the days of Homer, but only current in the USA from the 1950s onwards. See Michael J Goldberg, Goldberg Consulting, *Travels with Odysseus*, 2006; also see, Judith Searle, *The Literary Enneagram*, The Editorial Department, 2011a