

## Why People Buy

The age-old dilemma for salespeople is that while people love to buy, they hate being sold. This inherent contradiction has affected commercial transactions since the first days of trade. Plainly spoken, we want to believe that we are making the buy decision independent of anything anyone else might have said or done. To cater to this simple human quirk salespeople have struggled to understand why people buy – so that, of course, we can influence buying behavior without anyone realizing we're doing it.

The secret to why people buy is really not much of a secret at all. People buy because the desire they have for the product or service is greater than the fee being demanded in exchange. While this is accurate, it is a somewhat simple view of the world. There is more to it and this article is being written to set the record straight.

Perhaps before we explore why people buy we should look into why they don't buy things they may want in the theory that the reverse of why they don't buy will lead us to why they do. People don't buy products they want because:

1. They cannot afford it – the cost of the product is higher than their financial means enable or permit them to spend.
2. The perceived value is wrong – although they want the product they perceive the price to be too high (not worth it) and they decide to wait until the value and the price come more into line with one another. Electronics is a good example of this where prices often start high (and only the must-have early adapters buy) and then the price comes down and other people are able and willing to purchase as well.
3. They don't want it – as hard as it is for some of us in sales to understand, sometimes people simply do not want what we are selling.

Now that we have determined why people do not buy we can explore the reasons they do. Counter to the theory postulated above, the motivation for buying is not necessarily the inverse of why people do not buy. Certainly people buy because they want to, but increasing sales can only come if we understand the other, underlying reasons. The reasons for buying are a bit more complex. The reasons people buy are:

1. Trust - people buy because they have trust. They either trust the company manufacturing the product because they have had a good experience with the product or other products by the same company, or they trust the channel through which the product is being sold, or they trust the salesperson encouraging the buy. Any way you look at it, trust is a central component to the buy decision.
2. Image – people buy because of the non-tangible benefits the product delivers, such as image. Although a function purely of marketing, image associates certain characteristics and qualities to products that people want, by extension, to be associated with them. Were this not true there would be no difference in our minds between Volkswagen and Mercedes Benz. There is a difference and when we buy one over the other (particularly the Mercedes) the decision is not an economic one but one of image. Image is not only a function of how we see ourselves; it is also a function of how we want others to see us.
3. Emotion – a key driver in the buying decision is emotion, as in how we “feel” about certain products. Certainly part of the feeling is comprised of the other factors, such as trust (do we feel good about the product) and image (does the product make us feel or look good), but there are also other emotions at play such as passion, fear, jealousy,

guilt, and others. The challenge in tapping too deeply into the emotions of the consumer is that it is the one buy decision driver that leads to high percentages of buyer regret, as the desire or justification for the buy fades as the emotion dissipates.

4. Necessity - a somewhat obvious buy decision driver, this factor reminds us that we buy things we need, generally when we need them. The sale tactics on these sort of items are more competitive in nature, meaning we need to convince consumers not that they have to buy the product, but rather that they need to buy your product (as opposed to your competitors).

5. Comfort – people buy things for the comfort they provide, whether it is physical comfort, a convenience that save time or enables a certain activity, or emotional comfort that eases guilt or just makes them feel good.

6. Faith - people buy things based on faith, not in the religious sense, but as an extension of the trust we discussed earlier in this article. The primary difference between trust and faith is that trust has some sort of empirical aspect to it either born of experience or reputation. A faith based purchase is driven by a desire to believe in the product. A great example of this is weight loss formulas.

7. Hope – certainly an extension of faith is hope. Not only do we want to believe that the weight loss pills will work, we hope they will. Hope gets a separate mention because there are times when we hope even when we have no faith.

These buy decision drivers are the keys to selling more products. If we are able to position our products or services so that we hit some of these buttons (it's always better to hit more than one), the consumers will respond by demonstrating their gratitude – they'll buy more.