

Subconscious selling

Connect with customers where they make buying and staying decisions

By Patti Hathaway, CSP

Do you want to generate higher revenues and sales? The top 20 percent of salespeople who earn 80 percent of the money are expert communicators. They are experts in two fields. First, the field in which they are selling and secondly in communicating at the subconscious level. I will assume you are an expert in insurance products. Now let's learn how you can become a master salesperson at the subconscious level.

The Gallup organization listened to 10 million customers over the past decade via thousands of studies. They learned: "Customers are emotion-seeking individuals. They make choices to satisfy emotional desires and not merely their rationale needs." (*Follow This Path*, 2003). Gallup developed a measure of customer engagement that quantifies the strength and nature of a customer's emotional connection to a company. They found that without a strong emotional bond, customer satisfaction is meaningless.

Here's your reality check.

- Do you know how to connect emotionally with your customers at a subconscious level, where they are making their buying (and staying with) decisions?
- Are you a short-term thinker who is trying merely to sell the next insurance product or are you focused on building relationships with each customer that will bring you and your company long-term profits?
- Are you focused on learning new sales techniques and increasing your product knowledge? Or are you truly focused on understanding your customer's needs (which leads to increased sales and increased customer retention)?
- There is an extremely powerful scientific technique that will help you create a strong emotional bond with your

current and prospective customers. This technique comes from the science of neuro linguistics programming.

Before I explain the technique, let

me give you some background information that will help you see its potential power. One of the biggest barriers to exceptional customer service and sales



is the simple fact that we can think four to five times faster than the other person talking. A typical customer speaks an average of 150 words per minute yet we can listen/process/think at 500 words per minute. Most insurance agents don't use their processing speed to build rapport at a subconscious level with their customers. Instead, they use the extra time to multitask by thinking about the next prospective client or the last

customer who yelled at them over the phone. The strategy I'm going to teach you will give you something to do with that extra lag time in your thought/speech ratio.

One last piece of background information: Mehrabium conducted a research study to determine how important the nonverbal aspects of communication are compared to the actual words we use when communicating one on one. If you

divide up interpersonal communication into the words we use, the tone of voice and gestures or body language, what percentages would you give to each? The following conclusions were made: Your words are worth 7 percent of your communication, your tone of voice is worth 38 percent and your gestures are equivalent to 55 percent of your total communication.

Again, your words are 7 percent, tone of voice 38 percent and gestures or body language is 55 percent. Yet, most sales training centers around the use of words. Since the nonverbal component is far more important, that is the part on which we'll concentrate. Let's talk about what neuro linguistics programming is and why it is so powerful.

In short, NLP, developed by John Grinder and Richard Bandler, is a strategy that allows you to "read" customers more sensitively and sell and service them more effectively. We are able to establish a positive relationship quickly by incorporating NLP into the way you work with customers. "Neuro" stands for your nervous system or non-verbal behavior. Everything in your nervous system runs subconsciously. Most times, you are not consciously aware of what you are doing nonverbally. The way you typically sit is probably not consciously chosen. You sit the way you always sit. It is subconscious and natural.

"Linguistics" stands for your language. In this case, your nonverbal language. "Programming" is just like a computer program. Computer programs are put into place to achieve a specific result. With this technique we are looking to build rapport with customers at a subconscious, emotional level.

Mirroring, which is one of several NLP techniques, is the art of copying another person's behavior to create a relaxed communication situation. The reason is that we like people who are like us. "Birds of a feather flock together." "We like to do business with people we like." If we look nonverbally just like someone, and 93 percent of that person is nonverbal, they will like us at a subconscious level. They will think to themselves, "I like this person. He or



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she is just like me." And, if we like someone, we trust them and want to do business with them. Think about the potential this has for selling as well as going deeper with your current customers and keeping them loyal to you for life. Specifically, this is how you mirror.

First, match the other person's voice tone or tempo. If they talk fast, you talk fast. If they talk slowly, you talk slowly. When I speak in New York, I can't speak quickly enough. If I'm in southern Texas, I slow my pace down to match their pace. One way to help you match the other person's tempo is to match the other person's breathing rate. Pace yourself to it.

Match the other person's body movements, posture and gestures. If the person you're mirroring crosses his/her legs, you cross your legs. If the other person gestures, you will gesture. Of course, subtlety is everything. You may want to wait several seconds before moving. A very important point about gesturing is that we only gesture when

we speak. This won't make much sense to you until you go out and observe other people speaking to each other. But trust me, this is important to keep in mind.

The process of mirroring is totally natural. You do it naturally with people you like and with whom you have already built rapport. Have you ever noticed you and a friend simultaneously scratched your noses at the same time? It's mirroring, it's just that you didn't know that is what it is called.

Gerald Zaltman in his book, *How Customers Think* (2003) sums it up best when he states, "The customer selection process is largely affected by emotion, the unconscious and social and physical context. Ninety-five percent of thinking happens in the unconscious mind. Customer-centric firms understand customers must be skillfully heard, not aggressively sold to." How much more effective would you be in sales if you truly would listen to your customers' needs, bond with them at an emotional,

subconscious level and recommend and sell the very product they need (because you listened to what they said)? The mirroring technique has worked flawlessly for me over the last 18 years to build my business solely on repeat and referral business. What might it do for your insurance business? ■

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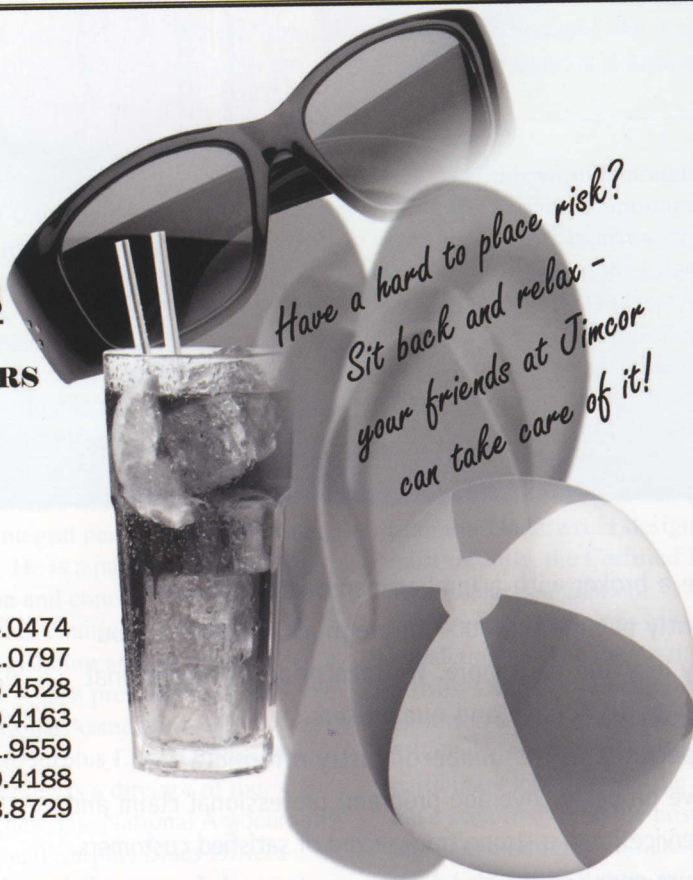
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