

Understanding the Buying Process Can Increase Your Sales

By Karon Thackston

Understanding the Buying Process Can Increase Your Sales

Karon Thackston
karon@ktamarketing.com

KT & Associates <http://www.copywritingcourse.com>

by Karon Thackston © 2003
<http://www.copywritingcourse.com>

Most marketers don't give a lot of thought to the buying processes of their customers. That's a shame. Lending due attention to the buying process can have a dramatic effect on your sales.

What is the buying process? Where does your customer fall within it? How can you use it to help bring your customer to the point-of-purchase? Follow me as we take a look at the decisions customers must make before deciding to buy.

Each and every one of us goes through some sort of buying process when we make a purchase. At times the process is long and labored – as when buying a new computer. At other moments it happens almost without thought – when buying a box of your favorite cereal, for instance. But make no mistake... it does happen.

Generally speaking, the buying process consists of five steps. Those products/services that are new to the market, are new to your customer, or are very expensive will require a longer period of consideration in each phase. Products/services that are familiar, that have market longevity, or that cost very little will require a shorter (even instantaneous) process.

Step One - Need/Want Recognition

During this step, buyers realize they want or need something. They recognize that they have a problem or a desire, and they choose to find a solution. If this need or want is something along the lines of lunch, the buying decision can be made relatively quickly, without much thought of the actual buying process. Hunger is a quick problem to solve, most options are familiar to buyers, and the cost is usually low.

If the need or want is a new car, however, the actual buying decision can take weeks or months. There is a greater risk, new models and features come out all the time, the cost is high, and the possibility of making a "mistake" when buying is great.

Step Two - Information Search

Once the choice has been made to fill a need or want, your customer begins to search for information in order to make a quality decision that is in his/her best interest. Web sites may be

visited (in which case you should offer some way for the customer to remember you, such as printable versions of information, downloadable brochures and catalogs, a way to bookmark your site, etc.). Brochures may be gathered (be sure to offer your contact information). Phone calls might be placed (check to ensure you or your call staff has the information they need to answer questions). Free samples, test drives, and other means of “trial” work wonderfully to guide your customer through the information search stage and onto the evaluation and purchase stages.

Step Three – Evaluation

After your customers have collected all the information they feel is necessary, they begin to evaluate their options and narrow their choices until they finally pick the one thing that they are comfortable with, and that they can afford. This is the time to follow-up with your customers. Is there additional information they need in order to choose? Did they have problems with the free sample that can be corrected? Your “presence” during the evaluation stage is important, so do your best to retain customer contact information in order to “gently” offer any additional details the buyer might need. (Nobody likes a hard sell, or to be pushed into buying.)

Step Four – Purchase

Once all the information has been evaluated, a purchase is made, and your customer walks away happy... right? Well... not always.

Step Five - Cognitive Dissonance (Post Purchase Anxiety)

While customers may have thought they chose the best solution when they purchased, many times customers later experience cognitive dissonance, a.k.a. buyers’ regret. They second guess their decision and begin to feel uncomfortable about their decision. This is where trial periods, guarantees, and/or warranties come into play.

Customers will have more confidence in their decision, even after it is made, if they know they aren’t “stuck” with their purchase. Having a guarantee to fall back on gives them the comfort to know that – should something go wrong – they won’t be left stranded. Generally speaking, a guarantee is a psychological support rather than a literal one. Most customers never take advantage of guarantees... they don’t think they need to. However, if a guarantee wasn’t offered, the anxiety of feeling “all alone” would overcome many buyers and persuade them into asking for a refund.

Understanding each step in the buying process can help you structure your selling process and your marketing materials to cater to the customer. Take the time to consider what your customer goes through when making the choice to buy, and alter your business accordingly. In doing so, you’ll increase your chances of making more sales, and landing more satisfied customers.

Most buying decisions are emotional. Your ad copy should be, too! Let Karon write targeted copy and ezine articles for you. Visit her site at <http://www.ktamarketing.com> , or learn to write your own copy at <http://www.copywritingcourse.com> . Don’t forget to subscribe to Karon’s free ezine at <http://www.ktamarketing.com/ezine.html> .

[Get-Articles.com](http://www.getarticles.com) : 1000's of reprintable business and internet marketing-related articles.

[Submit your article for reprint.](#)