

# 12 Tips for “Psychological Selling”

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## A few basic psychological tidbits that can help you write compelling copy and improve your selling skills

Many copywriting and marketing gurus teach simplistic ideas about psychology. They insist that people can be fully understood and manipulated with a checklist of motivators or pyramid of needs.

What nonsense! I can't even figure out why the guy at the pet store puts 75 cat food cans in one bag and a tiny box of treats in another so that I lurch to my car leaning to one side. How can I possibly summarize human psychology in a few bullet points?

People are highly complex and often mysterious, so we all struggle to understand our fellow humans. However, now that you've gotten over "being afraid to sell" here are a few basic psychological tidbits that can help you write compelling copy.

- People make decisions emotionally. They decide based on a feeling, need, or emotion, not through a logical thought process. That's why intangible benefits are the keys to persuasion. When you're writing, you should ask yourself, "What is the emotional hot button here?"
- People justify decisions with facts. Example: a man sees an advertisement with a photo of a sports car and instantly falls in love. However, he can't bring himself to buy the car based on a feeling, so he reads the copy for technical details about the powerful engine, safety features, and low maintenance. He wants the car because it makes him feel good. But he buys it only when he can justify the purchase rationally.
- People are egocentric. The word "egocentric" means centered around the ego or self. We all see the world in terms of how it relates to us personally. So when your copy asks someone to do something, it must also answer the unspoken question, "What's in it for me?" On a deeper level, the question might be "How does this give me feelings of personal worth?"
- People look for value. Value is not a fixed number. Value is relative to what you're selling, what others charge, what the prospect is used to paying, how badly the prospect wants it, and how the prospect perceives the difference between your offer and others. You must demonstrate a value that seems to be equal to or greater than the asking price. The greater the value relative to the price, the more likely people are to buy.
- People think in terms of people. The human brain is not a computer, calculator, or information processor. Scientists have shown that its primary function is to deal with social interactions. Remember how some mathematical questions in high school were stated as real-life situations? They were always easier to understand and solve than abstract problems. Your copy, therefore, should feature people through names, personal pronouns, quotes, testimonials, stories, photos of satisfied customers, etc.
- You can't force people to do anything. When people buy, it's not because you wield some magical power over them. You can urge. You can push. You can entice. But ultimately, people do what they want to do. This means your job is to show how what you're offering meets your prospect's needs.
- People love to buy. Some say people don't like to be "sold." Not true. People love to be sold. They love to discover wonderful new products and experiences. What people don't love is to be cheated or tricked. Therefore, it can be helpful to change your analogy of the marketing process. Instead of "selling" to people, try to "help" them. Sell good products, make appealing offers, and treat people fairly. That's a surefire formula for success.
- People are naturally suspicious. It's true that there's a sucker born every minute, but most people are moderately skeptical of any offer. They seek to avoid risk. You can never predict the level of suspicion any particular person has, so it's usually best to back up all claims with evidence, such as testimonials, survey results, authoritative endorsements, test results, and scientific data.
- People are always looking for something. Love. Wealth. Glory. Comfort. Safety. People are naturally dissatisfied and spend their lives searching for intangibles. At its simplest, writing good copy is a matter of showing people how a particular product, service, or cause fulfills one or more of their needs.

- People buy “direct” because of convenience and exclusivity. If people could easily find the things you offer at a nearby store, that’s probably where many would buy them. So if they are not buying from you directly for sheer convenience, they’re doing it because they can’t find the item elsewhere (or just don’t know where to look). That’s why it’s wise to emphasize the convenience and exclusivity of what you wish to sell.
- People like to see it, hear it, touch it, taste it, or smell it before they buy it. Some people never buy online because they can’t examine the merchandise. Some items, such as books and CDs, are tangible and familiar enough to sell easily online because there is little doubt about the physical quality. Other items, such as clothing or food, may be a harder sell — at least until people have a satisfactory buying experience — because quality may be variable. Think about how people buy things in stores and ask yourself if there is some element of that sensory experience that is missing from your sales message.
- Most people follow the crowd. Most of us are imitators. We look to others for guidance, especially when we are uncertain about something. We ask, “What do others think about this? What do others feel? What do others do?” Then we act accordingly. This is why testimonials and case histories are so influential.

Of course, this barely scratches the surface. Psychology is a deep and eternally revealing line of study. And while I don’t believe in making things more complicated than they have to be, I think there is great benefit in knowing not only what people do, but also why they do it.

## About the Author:

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