

Making Buyer Lemonade

by Andreas Iatridis

In this article we look at buyer behaviour and the customer transition to sharpen that focus and become more efficient in managing your sales conversations.

The goal of this is to make sure you are having constructive calls and identifying tangible buyers in other words buyers who:

- Have a genuine need for a genuine problem
- Buyers who are engaged and responsive
- And a buyer who is the decision maker or has direct access to a decision maker

If all our leads were like that we would be rich, but unfortunately, as we well know, not all those with whom we speak are clear on their requirements. That is our job;

To facilitate that **Thought** process and help them decide.

The more efficient we are at doing this, the sharper we become in identifying those “tangible buyers”. This takes robust qualification skills and a solid understanding of the different buyer types as we will discuss shortly.

But first let’s take a look at the definition of the customer transition:

The Customer Transition is the Logical Thought Process that anyone goes through before making a Positive Decision to Buy

Positive Decision to Buy this is where we want our leads to arrive, to the point where the buyer confidently knows that:

**The Price is Fair
The Source of Supply is Satisfactory
The Time to Buy is Now**

It is a transition, a journey which in B2B sales takes time. It doesn’t matter if you are selling something which is 1000 or 100,000 - your goal is to facilitate that process.

This is why it is vital to identify the different types of buyers as not all are in a state to make decisions. Those who are in a state of indecisiveness, no matter how professional you are, cannot be helped and won’t arrive at a Positive buying decision. A lot of this is down to research and timing...

With that let’s go through the different buyer types, I’m sure you’ve all encountered them if not been one yourselves:

Window Shopper - No genuine need, not ready for your product. As per our last podcast you may remember the buyer who hasn’t yet got a business, but in their minds has created a utopian landscape filled with amazing software tools and an amazing office, but has no customers.

Think of yourself when you go out to town during the day for a wander, perhaps ahead of meeting up with someone, you’ll look at the shops, even go into some, but you’re highly unlikely to buy anything, why? Because you’re not in town for that, you’re meeting someone.

This is exactly the same for B2B. I remember some calls with leads who booked a demo or started a trial simply because they had heard something about the company and were curious to learn more, but weren't in a “buying state”.

It can be tricky to identify these sometimes, but usually this type of buyer, and I know this may sound a tad controversial, is overly interested and has tons of questions which is why as with all sales calls and qualification, you need to take control. Trust me it won’t take too many qualifying questions to quickly realise that the window shopper is not buying anything you're selling. Be swift and move on to the next lead and don't get happy ears syndrome!

Shopping - I would describe this as a very, very early stage buyer who has some kind of need or multiple needs but has yet to fully prioritise or list which ones are more important.

Again think of yourself, you’re in town, but this time not to meet anyone, Christmas is slowly approaching and you have a few things to buy, but you haven’t really given much thought to what you will get and for whom, but you’re hoping to get some inspiration as you walk the highstreet.

You might end up with some items, but you will definitely need to come back again.

Similarly with a grocery list, when you don’t have one you always forget items.

The key issue with this type of buyer is that they are poorly researched on what they need and/or what their actual problem is, your goal is to advise them on where you would start, like in a very common sense logical way.

This buyer definitely needs help and unlike our window shopper is not a lead I would dismiss. Our goal here is to take a consultative approach and help them prioritise what is most important and try to get some sense on a potential timeline.

In terms of there actually being a deal with this buyer type it will be unlikely, they have quite a bit of work to do before they can have a proper conversation.

So be helpful, offer some resources and agree to touch base again at a future point. All amicable and professional, they will remember you and hopefully when a genuine need presents itself will get back in touch.

Researched - A researched buyer is at a more advanced stage in the customer transition, they have defined a need and have, through their research identified potential solutions that match those needs.

Imagine you are planning a holiday, but haven’t quite decided yet where or when, but you will have some initial criteria for example:

- It must be a warmer climate
- Be close to beaches
- Must be family friendly

With that you can start your research for destinations which match those requirements. As you go through this process you will begin to look at availability and compare prices to draw up a list of 2 to 3 potential destinations.

In carrying out this research you are refining the list of potential choices which best match your needs. Last step is to book.

These leads require careful attention and guidance to help them through the process. You want to educate them on how and why your solution is best for them. Your goal is to make their decision, an easy one.

These buyers will of course require multiple calls and support from your wider team, but are most certainly a tangible buyer worth your time.

Decided - These buyers are rare. They have carried out their research and are actively speaking with vendors. They are at a Desire to buy stage in the customer transition.

This means they are very clear on their decision criteria, timelines, they have internal buy-in and have a good idea on budget.

A year ago I was looking to buy a car. Safety, fuel efficiency and performance were my criteria. I looked at both the new and second hand car markets, test drove a number of cars and through that process decided on buying an extremely low mileage Audi A3 Sportsback. This took a few months, but I was decided from the onset.

These types of leads are ones you definitely do not want to lose. Do your research and learn as much as you can about them. To be a trusted advisor the more familiar you are with their objectives and the problems they are trying to solve the better you can align your solution.

In going through the sales process make sure that you are offering everything they need, regardless of budget. This buyer is pretty much ready to spend so make sure they spend well.

I know that sounds like pure sales talk, but you do not want to undersell and as for budget if they have one approved they can always get a little more particularly if you have done a good job at demonstrating value.

If you think of the iPhone, back in the day you'd get the earphones and full charger plus headphone adapter, today you just get the phone and a cable... You want to deliver a service and make sure your customer has everything they need.

Your ultimate goal is to make it difficult for them to not choose you.

Understanding buyer psychology and the customer transition is vital to how you manage your leads. Putting yourself in the buyer's shoes, understanding where they are at in the buying process, how decided or undecided a buyer is, will not only save you time, but help you build a pipeline of tangible deals.

In short a tangible buyer equals tangible pipeline and real sales conversations.

