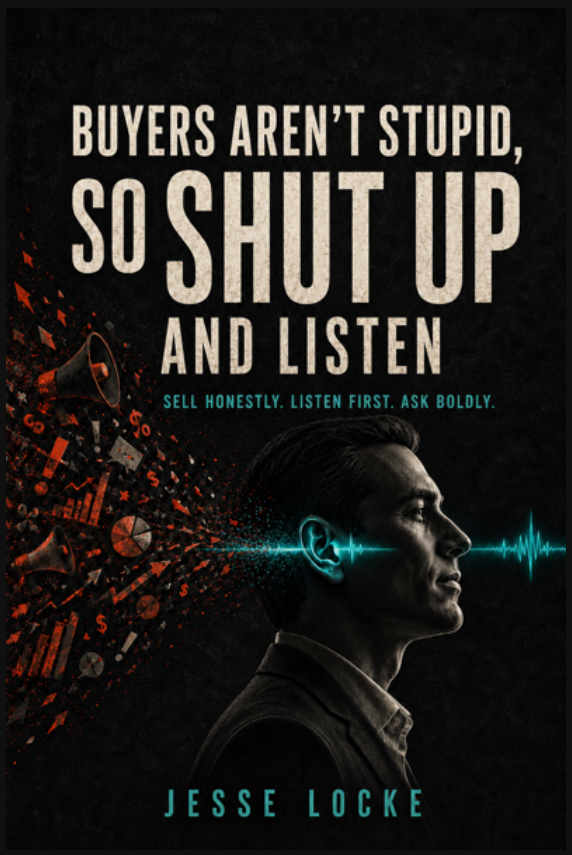
FREE SAMPLE CHAPTER

Buyers Aren’t Stupid, So Shut Up and Listen

CHAPTER THREE

Focus — The End in Mind



JESSE LOCKE

Full book available on Amazon: amzn.asia/d/0bGLiwN8

CHAPTER THREE · FOCUS — THE END IN MIND

“Knowing exactly where the sale ends is the only way to know what to do next.”

Why are you in sales? Is this the job for you? Did you get into sales because that is all you had? Or are you a true professional who is passionate about selling and your ability to influence the revenues and products your company sells?

Why you are here matters to you and very few other people. If you have learnt anything from the previous chapter, then you understand that you can control your destiny as a sales professional, which is not true for many other professions. Controlling your destiny requires focus and dedication, like achieving anything worthwhile does. The question I used to ask my sales trainers was, “Focus on what?”

I have tried focusing on many things, with varying results. I focused on closing the deals, which is what great salespeople do. I read books and listened to tapes on how to close deals, and I got very good at closing deals with tighter margins, but man, did I churn customers!

Then I thought that maybe if I focused more on my customers, I would have less churn and greater margins. This is what happened: I sold fewer deals, but I had great relationships with my customers. When they did buy, I had no competition and made great margins. These types of outcomes are not entirely a bad thing as long as you are achieving your targets and the boss is happy (or your three bosses: your bank manager, home manager and work manager). The industry you are in might be focused on farming, and the relationship is what matters most, or you might be a great hunter in fast-moving consumer goods that requires great closing skills. Either way, if you just focus on isolated parts of the sales process, I can tell you from someone that has learnt the hard way—YOU ARE MISSING OUT!

A true sales professional who has mastered the sales process and is outcome-focused will win consistently more often than a sales professional who is not. Focus allows us to be clear-headed no matter what is going on in our personal lives or back at the office. This relates to our bullish personality traits as salespeople: our dogged determination to win and to come back with the order. To ensure we can do this more often than not, we must focus on working through the sales process with every valued transaction we are working on. This requires focus on multiple steps to ensure we take our customers along on the journey each time we talk to them about a sales opportunity, whether that discussion is on the telephone or sitting in front of them. And even when we are not!

I say “not” because we are selling all the time, we never stop. So, even when we have customers who are also mates due to our strong relationships, we are still ‘game-on’, even at the pub! By this I mean that listening is the best form of selling in social situations. Always have an ear for an opportunity. Make a mental note of it instead of

discussing it while still at the bar.

To do this, we must also be fit, as always being ‘on’ mentally is very draining. If you aren’t doing an exercise routine now, then I recommend you start one that you can add into your lifestyle to make it permanent. Ideally, exercise in the morning so you are ‘on’ for the day ahead.

Identify the key outcomes you desire to achieve

For each opportunity, we need to be clear on the end in mind. The following list of key outcomes that you are likely to want to achieve will help to get you started, but you need to decide on what result you are going to be focused on achieving. The key is to be specific, like it is with all SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals:

- My client will place the $1.2 million order for the radio antenna project with me for the hardware and contract installation by the end of this quarter.
- My client will engage my company to respond to their tender for new shop fittings, as our solution best fits their needs.
- My client will sign my preferred supplier contract for his fleet of new Teslas. The time frame for this is by the end of the month.
- I will achieve my half-year target and exceed my gross margin number by 10% after taking the business centre hardware order in the month of May.
- I will close three of the five sales calls I make today through my determination to follow the sales process on each call I make.

These examples can be reworded to suit your situation and are not limited to single-sale opportunities. You need to write down the outcomes you are focused on and put the list on your wall so you can read it every day. This then becomes a very powerful technique. Your subconscious will start focusing on the end result, and you can consciously focus on the sales process.

Focus on the AIDA selling process

Now that we have an end in mind for our sales campaign that will be focused on by our subconscious thoughts, we need to focus on taking our customers through the selling process at every available opportunity.

To focus on the selling process, let’s go back to the first chapter and review the AIDA concept—a formula used in selling to produce a favourable response from a customer. The assumption is that the salesperson must first make the potential customer aware of a product; foster interest; stimulate desire; and, finally, encourage action (to purchase). To refresh your thoughts, here is a brief recap of each AIDA component.

Awareness: As sales professionals, we are charged with creating awareness of our product through cold calling and prospecting. By creating awareness, we become valuable to our customers. This means starting the sales process by building rapport with potential clients. Find ways to get in front of them. If we create awareness around a product or service that interests buyers, they will allow us, or even invite us, to advance to the next stage in the selling process.

When discussing products and services with today’s buyers, we must first listen and find out what they know about our product or service before we start talking about or selling it to them. We need to extract every bit of relevant information from them first so we can set the direction we need to take each customer to convert them into a buyer. This information extraction will give you the right to progress to the next step in the selling process.

Interest: This is the step where most inexperienced salespeople get confused and lose a potential sale that was sitting right in front of them. To take away any confusion, this is the step where we qualify the potential purchase of this buyer. At the same time, this is where the buyer is qualifying themselves in or out of buying our product or service, making this the most critical step in the sales process.

All preparation in a sales appointment needs to be focused on getting the right to take the customer to the next stage. Otherwise, you might as well thank them for their time, say goodbye, and move on to the next one. Your opportunity as a sales professional in the interest phase of the AIDA process is to slow down and understand the buyer’s motives:

- What does he/she like about your product?
- Are they the right person to authorise the purchase or influence the sale?
- What are their time frames to purchase?
- What are the business motives for the purchase?

This is your opportunity to become their trusted advisor by asking key, intelligent questions that shape the purchase in your mind and especially in the mind of the buyer. This will have the buyer talking up their reasons why your product will benefit their business and give you all the ammunition you need to start creating buyer desire to own your product or service. This is where you get to take the customer to the next stage in the buying process and take control of the sale!

Desire: By this stage, the customer is emotionally invested in the outcome. Keep the focus on their business needs and the value your solution delivers, and you will naturally move them toward a decision.

Action: This is where buying and selling become the same thing. The customer is ready—ask how they'd like to proceed, look for ways to add further value, and make the experience so positive they become your best source of referrals.

The AIDA sales process is a simple one on the surface, but it is not always easy to follow. Customers, like all people, are unpredictable. This is why focus is so important. Through focusing on the end result subconsciously, we allow ourselves to think about the steps we need to go through with our customers. While we are going through these steps, we need to ask ourselves logical questions as a thermometer test to ensure the customer is coming along on the journey.

The following table provides some questions and tell-tale signs that you are on the right track.

This table is again for your reference. You may want to create your own table with the sort of questions you ask yourself to ensure you are taking your customer on the sales process journey. If you do not ask yourself these types of questions, then you could be failing to keep yourself on track, which in turn can see the sale go off track. Keeping your customer on track as well as yourself is an absolute must to ensure success. Each “No” answer gives you an opportunity. The opportunity is to work on and develop the skills to turn that “No” into a “Yes” with the next customer you engage with. The upcoming chapters will focus on these skills.

Ask yourself	Buyer signals	AIDA stage
Does the buyer like you?	The buyer is doing most of the talking about themselves, their company and their role. Body language is relaxed and open.	Awareness
Does the buyer like my product?	The buyer is connecting your product’s benefits to their business needs and asking intelligent questions to fill in the gaps.	Interest
Can the buyer make the purchase?	The buyer has explained how budgets are allocated and you understand who needs to sign off.	Interest
Does the buyer see real business benefit?	The buyer is describing how the product would be integrated into their business and what it would feel like to own it.	Desire
Is there a pending event or deadline?	The buyer is asking about delivery time frames, onboarding, training and other operational questions.	Desire
Have I met everyone involved in the decision?	Buying signals from multiple stakeholders.	Desire
Is there an approved budget?	The buyer is walking you through their purchasing process. If a business case is needed, they may ask for your help.	Action
Is the customer excited about owning this?	If all of the signals are in play, the buyer is ready. It is time to ask for the order.	Action

Enjoying the chapter? The full book has eleven more — get Buyers Aren’t Stupid, So Shut Up and Listen on Amazon: amzn.asia/d/0bGLiwN8.