

How To Truly Understand And Influence The Conscious And Unconscious Buying Motivations Of Your Target Audience

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A few years ago, no one was asked, “Have you Tweeted today?” Game changing influences like the Internet, smart phones and other technologies have altered ways prospective customers can be reached. Growing your market share in this new media environment can feel like very heavy lifting.

With all these new technologies, experts estimate that each of us is now exposed to up to 3,000 advertising messages daily.

But in your own experience, how many of these messages have actually persuaded you to change your mind and buy something you didn’t plan to buy, try a different brand or make a different choice?

If simply getting your message in front of people more frequently doesn’t deliver the results you want, then what will? With so much advertising clutter everywhere we turn, it’s never been more important that your message be highly relevant and on directly target with your target audience’s complete decision strategy for your category of product or service.

Where Is Your Edge?

With products and services becoming so commoditized today, one of the most frequent questions we hear from marketers is, “How can we differentiate within our category to increase sales and market share?” Obviously, growing your market share by 20% is not as easy as simply investing 20% more money in your marketing budget and doing 20% more of the same kinds of programs.

The only significant way to gain a competitive advantage is to understand the motivations of your target audience *better* than your competition, and this cannot be done by using the same toolkit your competition is already using.

So where then *is* the leverage?

Because a decision process hides inside the mind, you need a *natural* (vs. man-made) window into the mind of your target audience to thoroughly understand and capture *all* their buying motivations. To essentially read their mind, you must first comprehensively understand their thinking – *their conscious and unconscious motivations* – related to the specific context of your market.

Since language expression is the only natural and accepted proxy for thinking, a special type of linguistic analysis of the audience’s language choices, in response to specially designed questions about the types of products or services you market, offers the most certain answer. It represents the *only* natural window into their *entire* conscious and unconscious thinking and decision process.

After 40 years of research on this subject and 20 years of real life application and success in Fortune 500 companies, we know with *absolute certainty* that the elusive decision process can be revealed only by understanding the deep structure of your audience’s language and decision choices.

What Exactly Is A Decision Strategy And Why Does It Matter?

A decision strategy is the *entire natural conscious and unconscious process* each of us completes in order to make a decision. Each of us has thousands of unique decision strategies in our mind for every possible context of decision we can make.

And, just as an automobile is made up of separate parts that work together to drive the car in one direction when you hit the gas, all decision strategies are comprised of individual components that work together to drive the ultimate decision.

Fully understanding all of the components of customers' decision strategy provides marketers with crucial insight into:

- ✓ The most persuasive positioning.
- ✓ The most persuasive value-proposition.
- ✓ What to say and how to say it in their advertising and communications to maximize persuasive appeal.
- ✓ The most persuasive marketing and promotional programs.
- ✓ How to differentiate, even in a commodity category.
- ✓ How to change their target audience's mind from "no" to "yes."

Just as dialing the correct phone number connects you to the right person, aligning your communications, promotions, positioning and marketing programs in a way that "matches" your customers' decision strategy is the key to getting your brand noticed and persuading people to buy it.

There is a problem for marketers, however. Just as an automobile is driven by parts "under the hood," over 90% of a decision strategy operates out of our awareness in our unconscious mind. Your target audience is unable to verbalize it, and simply asking them to describe their decision strategy in its entirety will not do. A decision strategy is virtually impossible to capture with any certainty...unless you use the correct tool.

Decision Strategies Work In Specific Ways

Finding the leverage within the audience's mind is straightforward engineering if you know how.

A scientific fact: It is *impossible* for people to think and decide without language. Like gravity, language is the single greatest stabilizer to understanding and persuading prospective customers, especially in a chaotic environment. *Everything* about a person's decision strategy is reflected in his or her language choices, and when you have a person's decision strategy, you know how to capture his or her mind without question...not just *what* to say (content), but more importantly, *how* to say it (deep structure).

Only language covers *all* the bases of the natural thinking and decision process of your customers. Yet, few *truly* understand the uncanny value and power of language and how it relates to thinking, motivation and persuasion.

Reading Minds Is Possible If You Use The Right Tool

Decision making is a cause-effect process, not a statistical or correlational process. People either decide or don't decide in your favor (cause-effect model). They don't decide "on the average" (statistical or correlational model).

Traditional market research strategies often employ a statistical or correlational process. An initial hypothesis is created; bits and pieces of information about the audience are then gathered and "related" back to the hypothesis through discussion or through statistical or correlational methodologies; the hypothesis is perhaps modified, then tested and retested again; and the process ends when the marketer runs out of budget or everyone agrees that enough information has been obtained. While it is possible to get the correct answers through this approach, it is impossible to know *in advance* whether the correct answers were achieved because there is no objective benchmark to work from. Only *after* months after a campaign's launch, millions of dollars spent, and much wait-and-see anxiety, do marketers know whether the choices they made really worked.

Our linguistic approach offers a much simpler, objective and certain alternative. Cause-effect systems like decision making and persuasion require systematic observation of verbalizations, syntax, structure, deep structure and context to understand conscious and unconscious processes. We don't hypothesize; we simply *observe* – at micro and macro levels – how the audience responds when asked specially designed questions about a category or a specific product or service (depending on the objective). The composite of this information – a decision strategy – reveals *all* the components of their decision making process *that matter* in this context.

Armed with this knowledge, the marketer now has a truly objective and scientific benchmark to aim at. It is now *easy* to determine – *in advance, before precious time and dollars are wasted* – whether the advertising messaging, positioning, value proposition and marketing strategies "match" the decision strategy of the audience. If they are off-track, the decision strategy is like a "north star" or GPS coordinates, in that you know specifically how to easily get back on-track.

Virtually Any Advertising Or Business Objective Can Be Achieved

Since language is a scientific, operational, rule-based system, our methodology *cannot not* get the correct story. Language experts identify the persuasive linguistic features within decision strategies much like an English teacher clearly identifies the use of nouns and verbs.

Our fail-safe linguistic process can help you achieve virtually any advertising or business goal because a linguistic method based on decision strategy analysis *gets the whole story in its natural state so your communications connect with the entire decision strategy of your audience, not just fragments of it.*

Certainty vs. Hope

Typical customer insight tools result in a collection of bits and pieces of information through man-made categorizations. Like Humpty Dumpty, once those methods break apart the person into mostly non-relevant characteristics like demographics, psychographics, personality or buyer types, you cannot ever reassemble their decision process back again into its natural, holistic state. This results in critical and relevant information falling through the cracks and being lost forever.

With our Language Analytics™, there is no need to create man-made, arbitrary categories *because all the "categories" that matter already exist naturally in language (and therefore*

thinking). Language analysis covers everything you need, and it holds the decision together as a whole, without fragmenting the audience's decision process into verbal shrapnel. Even when prospective customers are "all over the place," there is a linguistic way to easily understand them.

Strategic Knowledge vs. Information Overload

You may have collected a lot of information about your prospective customer, but is that information *really* giving you a strategic competitive edge? As a marketer, you can know lots of things about your prospective customers – their age, income, race, geographic location, gender, net worth, shopping preferences, shoe size, marital status, number of children, websites they like to visit, religious affiliation, etc. – but this information does not necessarily help you position your product and persuade your audience unless you know the rules of the game you are playing.

One of our clients compared her "information overload" situation to the story of the 5 blind men who described only the part of the elephant they had found in their grasp. One describes the trunk as a snake, another thinks the leg is a tree, the ear is a fan, the side is a wall, and the tail is thought to be a broom. None of them are able to piece together the whole story, so they are left to make sense of things based only on the fragment in their grasp.

To get a perceived edge, marketers often put a lot of pressure on the creative powers of their advertising agency to solve the problem. But seasoned experts know that creativity alone offers *little* advantage if the message is not lucky enough to be on the same page as the buyer. Creativity that is out of context of the customer's "decision game" simply does not work, just as it makes no sense to bring a hockey stick to a baseball game.

Sales and market share grow *only* when you play by *all* the rules of your prospective customer's game. No matter how intensely a marketer or its agency wants to achieve a goal or pursue a given path, the prospective customer holds the keys to the sale. If you play by the wrong rules, you will be disqualified from the prospect's game, and your offering will be deemed invisible and irrelevant by your audience. The danger occurs when a marketer *assumes* the prospective customer's rules are obvious just because lots of information has been gathered.

A linguistic approach lets you know the rules of the audience's game in advance – rules that people can't consciously verbalize; rules that are operating for everyone *all the time* whether your advertisements, positioning and marketing programs match them or not. Knowing these rules in advance, the agency and the marketer can be as creative as they wish – within the framework of the audience's game – to score a certain goal.

Language Reveals The Entire Decision Process

Language is an automatic process. You are not meant to be aware of it. For example, when you are speaking in ordinary conversation, you never notice if you have dangled a participle or split an infinitive. People cannot tell you anything meaningful about their language process because they are caught up *in* the process. Only a trained outside observer can identify the important parts that matter and that drive persuasion.

People's language choices represent a copy of reality as they see it, in the same way that GPS road maps are a copy of the actual roads. Language choices condense real experiences and transform the meanings from deep structure (the mental images, sounds, feelings, and other sensory representations that are stored in our nervous system) to surface structure (the words, signs and symbols we use to describe our primary sensory experience).

Once you are able to reliably decode the language and dig beneath the surface structure to understand the complete experience of a customer, then it is no longer necessary to guess or

interpret the audience's decision strategy. The audience will identify for you *exactly* what you need to know, if you know how to listen for it.

But Isn't Everyone Different?

Often we are asked about how we can identify a primary decision strategy for an audience of millions of consumers. The answer is simple – every context in which we decide has rules or constraints that limit our choices in that context. We all look and act a little differently from each other, but in similar situations or contexts, we all pretty much behave the same.

Take driving, for instance. Even though we are all different, at closing time we all go out to our cars, turn them on, drive down the road in the right lane, stop at red lights, go at green lights, turn our left turn signal on to turn left, etc. During your drive home, you may see a few people getting ticketed by a police officer, but that's what happens when you break the rules.

In decision making, we call these rules or constraints The Funneling Phenomenon™. Think of a funnel – the top is wide and the bottom is narrow. We all enter the funnel at the top and work our way to the bottom for every type of decision, behavior or choice. The sides of the funnel represent the constraints that limit our choices and “push us” into similar behavior. We won't all decide precisely the same, but we will all decide very, very similarly indeed.

If you grouped similar people together (say, based on economic factors, age and gender) for a specific context (say, buying jogging shoes) and compared the components of their decision strategies, you would find they would all be very similar. There may be minor variations – and our technology will capture them if they exist – but overall, there will be universal patterns in how the decision is made. This is why a single message is able to work for a segment – perhaps all segments. The only way to know for sure is to identify the decision strategy of each segment and compare them for common elements.

How We Do It

Some have the false impression that all linguistic analysis is the same. It is not. Only our technology is able to specifically *diagnose and prescribe* the parts of a decision strategy that will change your audience's decision to your advantage.

Our methodology can use many of the customary tools, such as on-line surveys, focus groups and telephone interviews. Our difference is in knowing the questions to ask and being able to recognize what matters to achieve the client's objective.

The data is captured in a 3-dimensional manner that allows complete thought freedom across numerous planes, so all information critical to the given context emerges. Thinking is transparent to Language Analytics™. All aspects of the answers are cross referenced to the well-known parameters of the audience's decision making game plan. Participants find their interactions with our process pleasant, easy and interesting.

The resulting output reveals the entire decision strategy (i.e., the diagnosis) of the audience, including the conscious *and* unconscious parts of the rationale. Through our data gathering process, we are simply capturing the information the participants can and cannot consciously articulate, including the layers of linkages.

Armed with this information, we present the results and show the client how to match the decision strategy using examples, sequences, role and positioning (i.e., the prescription).

Conclusion

Simply being “in front of” your customer at the right time does not guarantee a sale. Success will always rely heavily on your proper positioning, value proposition and messaging. The tools you use to gain insights into the conscious and unconscious buying motivations of your customers and prospective customers will *always* weigh heavily in assuring your future success.

Other customer insight approaches may have given you just one piece of the decision strategy puzzle, but how do you know what to do with that piece unless you know what the rest of the puzzle looks like?

Our approach identifies all the components that comprise a decision; it elicits all the puzzle pieces in an objective and non-biased manner. And most importantly, we know how to leverage those components to drive customer behavior (both in terms of marketing strategy and messaging).

Not only will our research give you the bird's eye view of the key factors that drive your customers' decisions, it will also provide a specific, actionable and straightforward roadmap to guide your future marketing strategy and communications... and it may even help to shed new light on the findings from some of the other approaches you have tried in the past.

Ultimately, to successfully change a decision, choice or behavior, you must know *both parts* of the equation:

- 1) the *diagnosis* of how your target thinks and decides through identification of the complete 8-part decision strategy;
- 2) the *prescription* of how to match that decision strategy in a way that actually changes a mind from “no” to “yes”. Our approach has been doing both for over 20 years.

The common theme is this – use a *better* tool than your competition to understand how your audience thinks, decides and becomes motivated to buy. Then, reap the rewards.



For more information about the services of Yeager Technologies, including their revolutionary Ultimate CRM model that focuses all touch-points of your organization on your audience's decision strategy through a unique combination of their customer insight and selection technologies, please contact Gordon Filepas, CEO of Yeager Technologies sales and marketing partner – TGM Partners at gf@tgmpartners.com. Case studies are also available by request.

Dr. Joseph Yeager is founder and Chairman of Yeager Technologies, the only company able to reliably extract and apply all conscious and unconscious components of a decision strategy. He is a licensed psychologist and is considered by many to be the world's leading expert on persuasion and behavior change using linguistic, psycholinguistic and rapid-change behavioral methodologies on an individual, group and mass audience scale. His corporate years were spent as a senior executive of Pfizer, US Air and Educational Testing Service (ETS) before founding his own company. He has spent over 40 years researching, testing, applying and writing about his methodologies, including helping Fortune 500 companies successfully use these methodologies in their advertising, sales, marketing and selection efforts over the last 20 years. He has written numerous books on behavior change and has authored countless peer reviewed articles on these subjects. He is a Diplomat of the American College of Forensic Examiners International (ACFEi) and a national board member of the ACFE division, the American Board of Law Enforcement Experts (ABLEE). He is also a member of the American Psychological Association and a charter member of the American Psychological Society.