

Sandler Brief[®]

Your monthly thought leadership newsletter.

VOLUME 22 – ISSUE 6

No One Gets into Your Head Without Your Permission

- Have you ever granted a price concession – or made any other compromise to a buyer – because you didn't want the buyer to think less of you or disapprove of you?
- Have you ever volunteered a price reduction before someone asked for it?
- Have you ever felt personally validated because someone decided to buy from you?
- Have you ever felt less than okay about yourself because somebody *didn't* decide to buy from you?

If the answer to any of these questions was “Yes,” you should be aware that you let your buyer into your personal headspace, where the buyer didn't belong. You chose to become emotionally involved in the sales process. And you know what? That usually doesn't end well.

When we give buyers permission to get into our head, we can't do our job as sales professionals effectively. Once we allow ourselves to become emotionally involved in a discussion with a buyer, we give that buyer control over us. This control typically limits what we do in the relationship to the most familiar behaviors... and the most familiar behaviors – like discounting on command and damaging our company's margins in the process -- very often do not support us or our team.



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All too often, we give buyers permission to manipulate us. How? By allowing ourselves to become emotionally involved with the outcome of the sales call. Every time we see another person's decision about whether to buy as a measure of our worth as a person, we put ourselves at a strategic disadvantage. When our sense of self is invested in the outcome, it's much, much harder for us to perform the parts of our job that may push back against the buyer's comfort zone. For instance: asking a tough but fair question, then waiting for the answer ... instead of nervously filling the gap in the conversation.

We may fill in that silence because we are accustomed, from long practice, to seeking approval and validation from buyers. Whether we realize it or not, we are granting them permission to get into our heads. And each time we do that, we're far less likely to make good choices.

David Sandler had a famous piece of advice he would share with salespeople who routinely gave buyers permission to get into their heads. He used to say: "Keep your belly button covered." That may sound like a strange piece of coaching to give to a professional salesperson, but the core idea, once you get your head around it, makes a whole lot of sense.

Think of it this way. Let's pretend your boss asks you to attend a meeting with a prospective buyer who represents, potentially, several hundred million dollars to your organization. Would you show up for that meeting in a skimpy bathing suit that showed off your belly button, and a lot of additional real estate too? No. Why not?

Because some things are personal. They just aren't meant to be shared in a professional setting. As professional salespeople, we have the right, and the duty, to draw a line between our private self and our public (professional) self. That's just as true when we are implementing our sales process as it is when we are deciding what to wear to a big meeting. We get to draw the line and defend the line that protects our personal self. And we get to choose *not* to let buyers manipulate us. We get to notice and step around the trap of looking to the buyer for approval or validation.

If a buyer tries to manipulate us, and succeeds, that's not on the buyer. It's on us! Why? Because we made the mistake of letting that buyer into our head. If we'd kept our belly button covered, we would not have gotten manipulated.

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The key takeaway here is pretty simple: The sales process is not the place for us to get our emotional needs met. Someone can say “No” to us, sure. But no one can use that “No” to undermine who we are as a human being – unless we give them permission to do so. We can’t let the possibility of a “No” response affect us on a personal level. Once we realize this reality, and act on it, we will find that are where we belong in our interactions with buyers: in the driver’s seat.

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