

Hey sellers, are you as persuasive as you could be?

Bob Hatcher, Founder, BetterSell Solutions

(Second in a series of how behavioral economics affects the world of big-ticket, B2B selling. This article is adapted from the white paper Moneyball Selling available [HERE](#). The first article on loss aversion and selling against the status quo is available [HERE](#).)

People facing lung cancer have a dilemma, should they have surgery or not? It's a very important question and most patients listen closely to their surgeons. But, it's interesting that not all surgeons explain the risks the same way.

When behavioral psychologists looked at the data of those who chose the surgery versus who did not, they found something interesting. They found that surgeons explained the risks in one of two ways (paraphrasing):

- If you have this surgery, there is a 90% chance you will survive at least five years.
- If you have this surgery, there is a 10% chance you will be dead in five years.

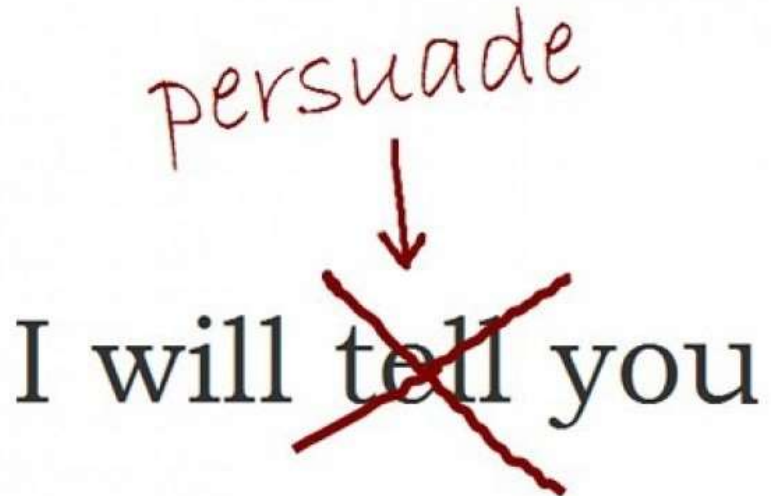
Same data, just two ways of presenting it. What's surprising is that when surgeons explained it in terms of survival, 84% of the people elected the surgery. When explained in terms of death, only 52% chose it. (If you were a surgeon trying to maximize revenue, which way would you explain it?)

Or, how about this on cancer statistics? If I told you that the 5-yr survival rate of breast cancer in country A is 85% and in country B it is 90%, at first blush you would think they are close, only five percentage points apart.

Now, how about if I phrased it this way: "If you have breast cancer in country A you have a 50% greater chance of dying from it than in country B". Or, worse, "...of every hundred women with breast cancer in country B, FIVE more will die?"

The reason is profound and affects all customer-facing people: people do not respond to information; they respond to how the information is presented.

Think about how often you communicate with clients and prospects and in what forms. There's email, telephone, in-person, blog posts, etc. If you're like most people, you probably think most about the accuracy of the information you present. (Of course, you also thought about grammar, punctuation, etc. We're leaving that aside for the moment.) But, you probably don't give much thought to HOW you present it. Doing so in the most persuasive manner can make or break you.



In short, how you present information will hugely affect your success. For example, look at these two ways of phrasing the value of your product or service.

- If you use our product/service, you will be 10% more efficient, vs,
- If you don't use our product/service (i.e. stay with the status quo) you will 10% behind where you could be.

Which way is more likely to sway a potential buyer?

It's not only data that we're talking about. It's everything you say or write. Look at these descriptions and tell me whom you like better:

- Jordan: intelligent—industrious—impulsive—critical—stubborn—envious
- Blake: envious—stubborn—critical—impulsive—industrious—intelligent

If you are like most people, you like Jordan better. About two-thirds do. Why? Well, he's intelligent and industrious! But, look closely, both lists are the same. Only the order of the characteristics is reversed!

So, why do most like Jordan better? It's because of the way the information is presented. You see, whether you like it or not, when presented with information, you infer an order of importance. We subconsciously think things presented earlier have more importance than things presented later.

Where is this important? Where should you pay attention to this?

In every conversation you have, any document you write, or any presentation you make, make sure you present the information in the order of your intended importance. Make your important points first. Make them clearly and present the information in the most persuasive manner.

In every bulleted list you make, make sure the bullets are in their intended order of importance. Leaving your most important points to the end of the list is a pathway to disaster.

Being persuasive means overcoming many biases that have huge effects on selling. Stay tuned for more topics. If you are interested in reading more on this and other behavioral economics topics, download the white paper Moneyball Selling at www.bettersellsolutions.com/resources.

Good selling!

Bob

Founder and President, BetterSell Solutions – the only sales consulting company focused on applying the science behind human decision-making and the field of behavioral economics to the world of big-ticket B2B, complex sales. If this is your world and you aren't applying these techniques you are leaving money on the table.

We offer keynote speeches and workshops on how to apply the concepts of behavioral economics to the world of selling. In some cases, there are things you must be aware of in your own behavior, and in other cases, there are concepts (as presented in this white paper) you can leverage to your advantage.