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Editorial Staff

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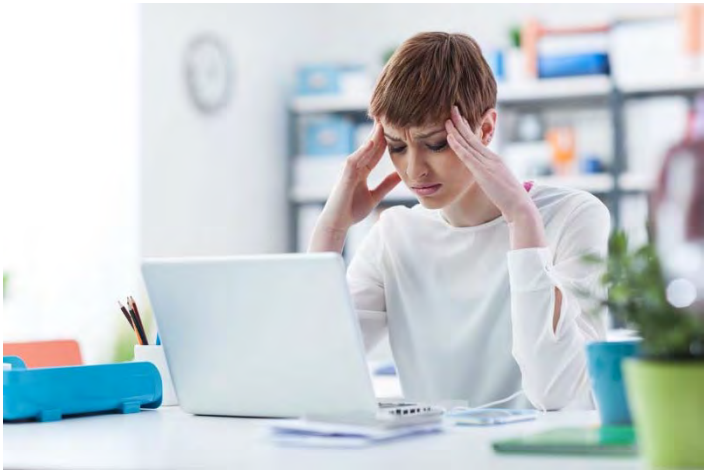
Sidestepping the Home Buying Process

Ashley S. Otto, PhD, Joshua J. Clarkson, PhD, and Frank R. Kardes, PhD



Decision making is all too often an aversive experience. In fact, work in cognitive neuroscience shows that decision making is often interpreted in similar ways as actual pain—evident by the finding that the area of the brain activated when people make decisions is often the same area activated when people experience physical pain (Kitayama, Chua, Tompson, & Han 2013). Yet despite the aversion associated with decision making, individuals are all too often confronted with decisions where they have to make a choice. Cars break down, birthdays present must be purchased, dinners need to be planned—and, in each situation, decisions must be made. These situations present an interesting paradox to decision makers, as they must somehow balance the aversive process of decision making with the *need* to make a decision. In our work, we focused on one means by which individuals strategically resolve this decision aversion by engaging in *decision sidestepping*—a reliance on decision strategies that allow individuals to bypass (i.e., streamline) the decision-making process.

Decision Sidestepping

Central to this research is the proposition that a variety of different decision-making strategies allow individuals to streamline the aversive nature of the decision-making process. Specifically, we argue that by relying on a default option, delegating a choice, maintaining an established status quo, or sticking with a prior decision, an individual has the opportunity to essentially bypass the decision-making process while still making a choice. That is, by electing to allow another individual to make the decision on one's behalf (i.e., choice delegation) or by continuing to select the same alternative when presented with new options (i.e., repeat decision making), individuals are able to bypass the typical grappling associated with the decision-making process, all while arriving at a decision.

Sidestepping to Reduce Decision Aversion

Yet, which individuals are most likely to engage in sidestepping? In other words, which individuals are most likely to view the decision-making process as aversive? In response, we hypothesized that this inherent aversion toward decision making was driven by an individual's

motivation to achieve cognitive closure. The *need for cognitive closure* is defined as *the fundamental desire to achieve resolution on a decision* (Kruglanski 1989). This motivation encompasses the desire for a definite answer and, as such, individuals motivated to achieve closure favor order and predictability, are decisive and close-minded, and find discomfort with openness (Webster and Kruglanski 1994). Given that those motivated to achieve closure are fundamentally aversive to openness, we hypothesized that the innate openness of decision making would be particularly bothersome to these individuals. Consequently, we predicted that those seeking closure would engage in decision sidestepping to reduce the bothersome nature of decision making to arrive at a decision.

Key Findings from our Research

We conducted five experiments to test our proposition that individuals seeking closure engage in decision sidestepping to reduce the aversive nature of decision making. All studies followed a similar design where participants were presented with a decision-making context and asked whether they would like to make their own decision or whether they would like to resolve the decision with the sidestepping option presented (e.g., a default option, a prior decision). Importantly, in each study we either measured or manipulated the motivation to achieve closure.

To illustrate, in one experiment participants were told that they would be receiving candy for their participation in the study. Importantly, participants were given the option to select something of their own liking from the "variety bag" or go with the default option that would be given to them (if they chose to not make the decision). The findings of this study revealed that participants who scored higher on the need for closure scale were *more* likely to go with the default option than were those low in need for closure. Interestingly, it did not matter if the participants knew what was in the variety bag or not (i.e., it was left ambiguous)—those seeking closure persisted in sidestepping the decision by relying on the default option. Further studies revealed that those seeking closure were more likely to go with a sales associate's recommendation (i.e., choice deferral), a restaurant "favorite" (i.e., status quo option), or a previously made decision (i.e., repeat decision making).

Furthermore, we tested a critical assumption of this research—that those seeking closure are averse to decision making. Consistent with expectations, those seeking closure did in fact rate decision making as more bothersome, prompting them to engage in sidestepping. Interestingly, when the bothersome nature of the decision was reduced, so too did the desire to sidestep the decision by those seeking closure. Finally, we tested the ubiquity of the effect in the context of suboptimal choice. That is, would those seeking closure sidestep decisions even if sidestepping led to sub-optimal choices? The findings revealed that, indeed, individuals sidestep decisions even at the expense of more optimal options.

Implications for Making Home Buying Decisions

We believe that this research sheds important light onto how individuals make decisions, despite being averse to the decision-making process. Importantly, in the context of the home buying process, a real estate agent can serve as a critical catalyst by which to facilitate sidestepping.

Indeed, there are many ways by which buyers might be inclined to sidestep the home buying process when motivated to achieve closure. For instance, buyers could resolve the decision by relying on the recommendation of another such as a real estate agent or a family member. Alternatively, those motivated to achieve closure might sidestep the process by purchasing a home in a neighborhood they already live in—engaging in repeat decision making. Conversely, these individuals might also look for simple cues to indicate the status quo such as the prestige of a neighborhood, where friends live, or the ratings of local school districts. We believe that being aware of the different means by which buyers sidestep decisions gives the agent an opportunity to facilitate decision sidestepping, when sidestepping is the goal.

Finally, given that individuals are most likely to sidestep when aversive to decision making, we anticipate that sidestepping is most likely to occur in situations that are particularly aversive. For instance, the decision-making experience should be especially bothersome in an unfamiliar (e.g., buying in a new city) or unstructured (e.g., too many options) purchasing contexts. Again, the role of the agent is particularly important in providing avenues to allow for decision sidestepping.

How to Tell if a Person is Averse to Decision Making?

A critical issue to effectively using this research is identifying those who are motivated to achieve closure. In response, there are two means by which one can assess an individual's motivation to achieve closure. First is the *need for cognitive closure* scale which assesses closure as an individual difference variable (see sample questions). Agents could have clients fill out a brief survey during the initial information gathering phase of the home buying process. Second, there are situational factors that have been shown to temporarily increase one's motivation to achieve closure. For instance, time pressure (e.g., being under a time crunch), changes (e.g., downsizing) and distractions (e.g., viewing homes with children in tow) are all likely to increase

one's motivation to achieve closure. Being aware of these factors is critical to understanding when individuals are likely to (temporarily) be motivated to achieve closure.

Conclusion

Decision making can all too often be an aversive experience. This research highlights how individuals averse to decision making—namely, those seeking closure—make decisions by sidestepping the decision-making process. In particular, a variety of distinct decision-making strategies—the default bias, status quo bias, choice delegation, and repeat decision making—all allow individuals to arrive at a decision, while streamlining the decision-making process.

Recommended Reading

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About the Authors

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Subset of 10 Items for the Need for Closure scale	**Never**	**Sometimes**	**Always**
I don't like situations that are uncertain.			
I dislike questions which could be answered in many different ways.			
I find that a well-ordered life with regular hours suits my temperament.			
I feel uncomfortable when I don't understand the reason why an event occurred in my life.			
I don't like to go into a situation without knowing what I can expect from it.			
When I have made a decision, I feel relieved.			
When I am confronted with a problem, I'm dying to reach a solution very quickly.			
I would quickly become impatient and irritated if I would not find a solution to a problem immediately.			
In most social conflicts, I can easily see which side is right and which is wrong.			
I almost always feel hurried to reach a decision, even when there is no reason to do so.			

From: Roets and Van Hiel (2011).

Full 15-item version of the Need for Closure Scale. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/224961598_Item_selection_and_validation_of_a_brief_15-item_version_of_the_Need_for_Closure_Scale [accessed Dec 14, 2016].

Partner *Phubbing*: How Cell Phones Impact Romantic Partnerships

James A. Roberts, PhD and Meredith E. David, PhD

Your partner just walked in and you can tell from her facial expression that something is weighing heavy on her mind. You ask what's wrong, and right as she begins to tell you, your phone rings. You answer the phone. It's a client asking about a listing. You talk with the client briefly, hang up, then ask your partner to start again. Your partner begins talking only to be interrupted again a few minutes later when your phone pings. This time it's an email. You begin to respond to the message but tell your partner to keep talking and assure her that you are listening. Suddenly, your partner asks you what she should do? In that moment, you realize you hadn't heard anything she said. You just phubbed your partner, twice.

Phubbing is a portmanteau of the words "phone" and "snubbing" and occurs when your conversation with someone is interrupted by him or her attending to a cellphone or when you are in the presence of another but he uses his cell phone instead of communicating with you. *Partner phubbing (Pphubbing)* is the extent to which this behavior occurs between significant others.

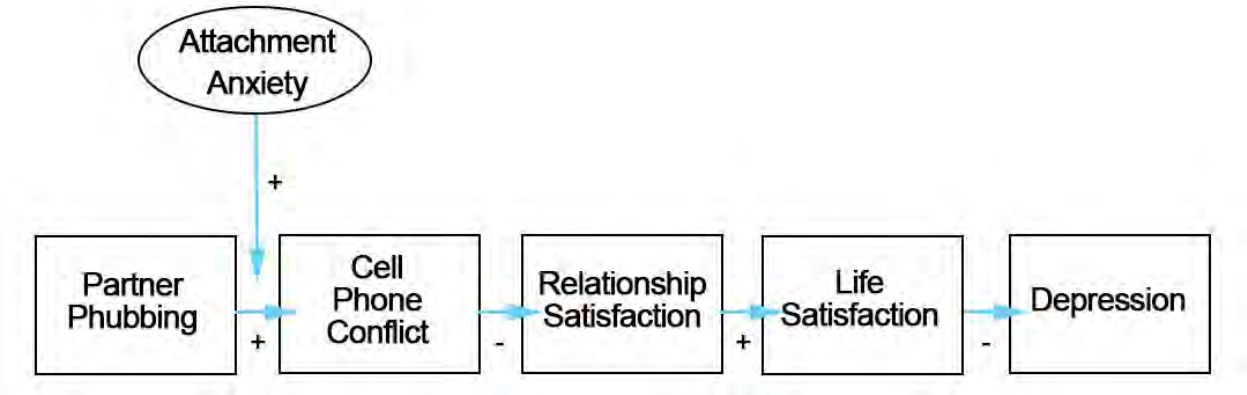
The presence and use of cell phones is ever-increasing causing the boundaries that separate our work and other interests from our romantic relationships to become more and more blurred. As a result, the occurrence of *Pphubbing* is nearly inevitable. In fact, from a sample of 143 individuals involved in romantic relationships, seventy percent responded that cell phones "sometimes," "often," "very often," or "all the time" interfered in their interactions with their partners.

Our Study

The present study primarily sought to investigate the prevalent behavior of *Pphubbing* and its impact on both relationship satisfaction and personal well-being. Secondary objectives were aimed at better understanding the process by which the behavior impacts relationship satisfaction by researching the potentially mediating impact of cell phone conflict and moderating effect of attachment anxiety. *Attachment anxiety* is the degree to which an individual fears abandonment and worries whether he or she will be accepted in relationships. People high in attachment anxiety seek self-validation from others, while those lower in attachment anxiety do not require

such external validation from others. *Cell phone conflict* is simply arguments over cell phone use.

The investigation was divided into two smaller studies. The first study was a pre-test to build and validate a measure of *Pphubbing (partner phubbing)*. The second study assessed the proposed relationships summarized in this model:



For study one, an initial pool of over 100 items was generated to measure *Pphubbing*. Items were drawn from the academic literature and popular press sources, as well as from approximately thirty-five-item lists made by individual marketing research students. The initial pool was then screened for redundant or unrelated items, resulting in a reduction of the pool from 100 plus to only 19 items. The resulting 19 items were then included in a pre-test given to 308 US adults who were asked to indicate how frequently their partner engaged in each of the 19 behaviors as it relates to his or her cell phone use. The data was then analyzed through exploratory factor analysis and resulted in the reduction of the 19-items into a 9-item *Pphubbing* measure. In study two, 145 US adults first responded to the 9-item measure of *Pphubbing* developed in study one, and to other measures.

Our Findings

It is clear that distractions caused by *Pphubbing* undermine relationship satisfaction. Our study found that *Pphubbing* has a significant and positive effect on cell phone conflict, and cell phone conflict, in turn, has a significant negative effect on relationship satisfaction. Results also supported mediation. That is, the indirect effect of *Pphubbing* on relationship satisfaction is significant.

Our study also demonstrated that there was a significant interactive effect of *Pphubbing* and attachment anxiety on cell phone conflict. *Pphubbing* increases conflict among both individuals with low attachment anxiety and with high attachment anxiety. However, among individuals who experience high levels of *Pphubbing*, those with high attachment anxiety had greater cell phone

conflict than those with low attachment anxiety. This research indicates that *Pphubbing* and cell phone conflict are significant predictors of relationship satisfaction. In summary, our study found that cell phone conflict mediates the relationship between *Pphubbing* and relationship satisfaction, and this mediating effect is stronger among anxiously attached individuals.

Furthermore, our work indicated a significant positive effect of relationship satisfaction on life satisfaction and a significant negative effect of life satisfaction on depression. Results supported a sequential moderated mediation, such that, overall, the indirect effect of *Pphubbing* on depression is significant via relationship satisfaction and then life satisfaction.

Simply stated, our study found that *Pphubbing* creates conflict over such use of one's cell phone which in turn decreases relationship satisfaction, and ultimately personal well-being through decreased life satisfaction and increased depression.

Implications for Real Estate Professionals

So, what does all this mean for real estate sales professionals? Since nearly every real estate professional carries a cell phone, the potential for *phubbing* is ever present for those in romantic relationships. The after-business hours temptation to respond to emails, take phone calls from overzealous clients, or update a social media post on a listing is strong, but, ultimately, giving in to such temptation while in the company of one's partner is detrimental not only to the relationship but also your partner's overall well being.

When you allow your cell phone to interfere with time spent with your partner, it sends an implicit message about your priorities. Responding to emails or stopping to answer a client's call during a conversation with a romantic partner sends a message that interacting with your romantic partner is not as important as what is on your cell phone.

Even the mere presence of cell phones has been shown to decrease perceived closeness, connection, and conversation quality between partners.

The displacement hypothesis helps to explain the deleterious effects of *Pphubbing* on relationship satisfaction. According to the displacement hypothesis, time spent on cell phones may reduce (displace) meaningful interactions with one's significant other. Conflict over cell phone use may then arise not because of the cell phone use itself but because it usurps time available for meaningful and enjoyable interactions with your partner.

As a real estate professional, you're inherently working with several listings at once and are undoubtedly tackling several tasks at a time throughout the day, so you feel you are a great multitasker. However, multitasking is a common way cell phone use interferes with relationships. Attention is such an important factor in healthy romantic relationships, and one cannot be fully present in a relationship and give their partner adequate attention when distracted by their cellphone.

Conclusion

Cell phones, originally designed as a communication tool, may actually, ironically, impede rather than cultivate satisfying communications and relationships among romantic partners. With approximately 40-50 percent of all marriages ending in divorce, the institution of marriage and romantic relationships in general are under attack. With that being said, the findings of our study regarding how cell phone use impacts relationships is critical. Given that marital/relationship satisfaction is a cornerstone of both individual and familial happiness and well-being consider assessing the occurrence of *phubbing* in your own relationship. Although dialing back your total cell phone usage may be difficult, especially if you use it to work away from the office or on the go, a good place to start is with reducing your cell phone usage around your significant other. Developing the self-control to put away your cell phone in favor of meaningful, distraction-free interactions with your romantic partner will yield benefits that far outweigh that one missed call, unread email, or unchecked listing.

Recommended Reading

Roberts, James A. and Meredith E. David (2016), "My Life has Become a Major Distraction from My Cell Phone: Partner *Phubbing* and Relationship Satisfaction Among Romantic Partners," *Computers in Human Behavior*, 54, 134-141.

About the Authors

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James A. Roberts is the Ben H. Williams Professor of Marketing at Baylor University (Ph.D., University of Nebraska-Lincoln) and has been a member of the marketing faculty since 1991. He has had approximately 80 articles published in numerous academic journals. He is also the author of two books, *Shiny Objects* (Harper Collins) and *Too Much of a Good Thing: Are You Addicted to your Smartphone?*

Dr. Roberts is a nationally recognized expert on consumer behavior and has been quoted extensively in the media and has appeared on the CBS Early Show, ABC World News Tonight, ABC Good Morning America, NBC The Today Show, and has been quoted and/or featured on The O'Reilly Factor, The Doctors on CBS, Time.com, *US News & World Report*, *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, National Public Radio, *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, *Glamour*, and many other newspapers, magazines, websites, and television appearances.

Current research interests include the pursuit of happiness through money and material possessions and investigating the antecedents and consequences of smartphone addiction and its impact on personal happiness and professional productivity.

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Partner *Phubbing*: Assess Your Relationship	**Never**	**Sometimes**	**Always**
During a typical mealtime that my partner and I spend together, my partner pulls out and checks his/her cell phone.			
My partner places his/her cell phone where s/he can see it when we are together.			
My partner keeps his/her cell phone in his/her hand when s/he is with me.			
When my partner's cell phone rings or beeps, s/he pulls it out even if we are in the middle of a conversation.			
My partner glances at his/her cell phone when talking to me.			
During leisure time that my partner and I are able to spend together, my partner uses his/her cell phone.			
My partner does use his/her phone when we are talking.			
My partner uses his/her cell phone when we are out together.			
If there is a lull in our conversation, my partner will check his/her cell phone.			

Outperforming Whom? Performance-Prove Goal Orientation

Bart Dietz, PhD, Daan van Knippenberg, PhD, Giles Hirst, PhD, and Simon Lloyd D. Restubog, PhD

Many people are driven to perform and succeed, especially when that drive comes from competition to outperform others. Competition and personal performance can be beneficial traits to people in performance-driven professions. But, how do people alter their drive to compete when they become members of a team? Performance-prove goal orientation defines people's focus on performance as their ability to outperform and look better than others (Fisher, Minbashian, Beckmann, and Wood 2013). The higher a person's performance-prove goal orientation level is, the greater that person's performance actually becomes (Jelinek, Ahearne, Mathieu, and Schillewaert, 2006). One key insight in understanding performance-prove goal orientation is that its motivating potential relies on the person identifying different targets for competition. Individuals with high levels of performance-prove goal orientation are constantly comparing themselves to others around them to try and outperform anyone who is competition. This phenomenon can be problematic in a team environment where performance is assessed by individual goals, because the members within the team itself become competition for the person with high performance-prove goal orientation.

In an increasingly team-based sales context, we need to understand how performance-prove goal orientation can potentially benefit performance at the team-level and individual-level. We surmised that shared team identification may lead individuals to include fellow team members as an inclusive "we." As a result, those other team members would no longer be seen as targets for competition. The sense of "we" also shifts the individual's priority to team performance and performance-prove goal orientation is then directed at other teams. Therefore, we set out to show that performance-prove orientation can help team performance, but only if the individuals of the team have a shared team identification.

Performance-Prove Goal Orientation and Shared Team Identification

A person's goal orientation reflects the underlying goals that person is pursuing in achievement situations (Harris, Mowen, and Brown 2015). The goal orientation that we analyzed in our

research is that of performance-prove goal orientation, which is an individual's motivational disposition to strive to outperform others (Elliot and McGregor 2001). People with high performance-prove goal orientation strive for success and favorable judgments of their performance from managers and peers (Sujan et al., 1994). As a result, social comparison is an inherent component of performance-prove goal orientation because high performance-prove goal oriented individuals need to prove that their performance is superior to the performance of others. The constant comparison of the individual's work with others' work creates a level of competition between the individual and those they view they are striving to outperform. In an individual performance-based context, the person can compete against anyone. However, in team-based working environments, we set out to explore the impact of performance-prove goal orientation when a person has both individual goals and team goals.

While performance-prove goal orientation is an individual characteristic, it can also be considered as a factor in the team composition. Mean performance-prove goal orientation is not the shared team state, but rather the mean level of the individual team members' performance-prove goal orientation levels (Chen et al., 2004). Therefore, teams with high mean performance-prove goal orientation have an average individual disposition to strive for success. While no prior research has been able to establish the effect that mean member performance-prove orientation has on team performance (e.g. LePine, 2005), we proposed that the association between mean performance-prove goal orientation and team performance was contingent upon the team members having a shared team identification.

Social identification, the self-definition of social group membership (Mael and Ashworth 1992), affects the level at which social comparisons are made (Tafjel and Turner 1986). Therefore, to whom high performance-prove goal oriented individuals compare themselves depends upon their own social identifications. We proposed that shared team identification is particularly important because it determines the extent to which team member see other teams as relevant comparison targets for performance competition (as opposed to their fellow team members). If a team has high levels of shared team identification, then the shared sense of oneness, the "we" of the team, may urge comparison with other teams. Conversely, when shared team identification is low and the sense of oneness within the team is absent, other teams are unlikely targets for performance competition.

In essence, we proposed that as self-definition revolves more around a sense of oneness with others in a group, the individual's performance goals with take a backseat to the prioritized team goals. From these proposals, we predicted and tested that high shared team identification results in team performance is the priority and that when there is lower shared team identification, individual performance-prove goal orientation motivates individual performance. Through our research, we tested our proposals and predictions among sales people who make up a sales team and replicated our findings in tests that involved student groups. Our first study of sales performance in sales team operations yielded clear support for our hypotheses, and led us to

conclude that shared team identification channels the performance-motivating influence of performance-prove goal orientation either toward team performance, in high shared team identification instances, or toward individual performance, in low shared team identification situations.

It is important to note that we were able to replicate the results in the second sample involving student groups. Therefore, we are able to generalize our findings that shared team identification impacts who individuals identify as competition and which performance goals are identified to measure success under the individual performance-prove goal orientation. The more an individual identifies as a member of a team, the more important the team competition and team goals become and the less important the individual goals and individual competition is for the individual.

Real Estate Perspective

Real estate can be a very competitive industry because it is performance- and commission-driven. Performance is what drives an individual's income, and therefore, performance becomes the most important gauge of an agent's success. Because real estate is a performance-driven industry, real estate agents may be more inclined to be high performance-prove goal-oriented individuals. Therefore, understanding the impacts that performance-prove goal orientation can have on individual performance, as well as team performance, can be beneficial for real estate agents and their leaders, especially as real estate companies shift towards more team-oriented sales structures.

If a real estate firm wants to ensure that individual performance remains the focus for success, then the firm is better off avoiding team structures, or creating the structures in ways that affirm the importance of "I" performance as opposed to "we" performance. However, if a real estate firm wants to leverage team structures and avoid intra-team competition, the teams should be formed in ways that focus on recognizing the team's performance above the individual members of the team's performance. This could be accomplished through team commissions that may be split equally or otherwise incentivizing and rewarding an individual's shared team identification. It is only through building a strong sense of shared team identification that teams can truly shift the competition from other team members to other teams. This is especially important in the performance-driven real estate industry because, as our research suggests, if the individual agents on the team don't have a strong sense of belonging to the team, then they will always prioritize

individual performance and goals over team performance and goals and continue to view other agents as competition, even if those agents are teammates.

When the priority is to optimize the performance of individuals, our results indicate that managers ought to organize people high on performance-prove goal orientation in teams with weak shared team identification. For a real estate firm, where agents are gauged more on individual sales performance, teams with low levels of shared team identification could actually create greater competition and drive to improve individual agent performance. However, real estate firms should be wary of lone-wolf type mentalities that turn that constructive intra-office competition into aggressive and destructive tactics.

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Prior to joining ANU, Giles was Associate Professor within the Department of Management at Monash University, where he contributed significantly to their research and teaching programs over the last decade, and was awarded four Vice Chancellors awards for unit excellence. He received his PhD in Management at the University of Melbourne, has worked in management consulting and in the UK at the Aston Business School.

Giles is also a leading researcher in the areas of creativity, innovation and social and organizational networks, and has been awarded over a million dollars in government ARC grants and industry funding. He has published in the top management journals including *The Academy of Management Journal, The Journal of Applied Psychology* and *The Leadership Quarterly* as well as being invited to take part in a renowned scholars symposium at the Academy of Management conference.

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His research focuses on antecedents and maintenance of psychological contracts, measurement and prediction of destructive leadership and dysfunctional work behaviors, and barriers and supports for career development. He has won the best paper (micro/OB research) in *Group & Organizational Management* and best paper awards at the Annual Conference of the US Academy of Management (AoM, Social Issues in Management Division, 2011; Organizational Development and Change Division, 2007) and the Australian Industrial/Organizational Psychology Conference (2011) and was a 2012 and 2013 Best Paper Finalist in the AoM - Managerial and Organizational Cognitions and Careers Divisions. In terms of teaching, he was a recipient of the ANU Student Award for Top Supervisors and the ANU College of Business & Economics Award for Excellence in Research Supervision.

His work has been published in leading psychology and management journals such as the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Management Studies, Leadership Quarterly, Journal of Organizational Behavior, Organization Studies, Journal of Vocational Behavior, Human Resource Management, British Journal of Industrial Relations*, among others.

Don’t Overcomplicate -- Adapt and Simplify

Sven Mikolon, PhD, Anika Kolberg, PhD, Till Haumann, PhD, and Jan Wieseke, PhD

Professional services sales encounters are a two-way street between the client and the service provider. Such encounters require input from both parties to mutually find the best fitting professional service for the client. The effort a customer needs to invest in order to understand a professional service is mentally taxing for a client leading to lower satisfaction levels and lower loyalty intentions. Therefore, the service provider might be well-advised to lower the required levels of cognitive or mental input from the client by simplifying complex services. Through adaptive selling techniques, professional service providers can effectively lower clients’ mental input levels to ultimately raise both satisfaction and loyalty intentions.

The Study

The study examined factors over 300 professional service encounters involving responses from client and service provider. To tap the client-side of the process, clients were asked to evaluate perceived service complexity, the client’s cognitive capacity during the encounter, satisfaction with the encounter, and loyalty intentions using a structured questionnaire. Service providers evaluated their tendency to use adaptive selling techniques via a structured questionnaire.

The first goal of our study was to determine the effect of perceived service complexity on the client’s cognitive capacity. Cognitive capacity is defined as the part of working memory available to an individual in any given situation. This capacity is influenced by perceived service complexity, or the perceived difficulty in making sense of a service. The more complex or difficult a professional service is perceived, the more mental capacity a client will need to invest in order to understand the service and gain control of decision-making. However, this only happens up to the point that a client feels overtaxed, s/he will then change to simpler decision and sense-making strategies to be able to invest less effort to understand the service. Thus, at high levels of perceived complexity, a client may perceive the service as too difficult to understand and switches off and exerts low levels of effort. Therefore, moderate levels of

complexity require the greatest levels of exerted customer efforts. The level of effort exerted directly influences the satisfaction and loyalty intentions derived from a sales or services encounter.

The second goal was to determine the effect of the client's cognitive capacity on both satisfaction and loyalty. If a client is feeling overtaxed due to having limited cognitive capacity this will negatively impact satisfaction and customer loyalty intentions.

The third goal of this study was to investigate whether the relationship between perceived services complexity and the client's cognitive capacity changes as a function of adaptive selling. Since moderately complex professional services require the highest levels of cognitive capacity, service providers need a way to adjust the amount of cognitive capacity required from their clients. One such method is through a technique called *adaptive selling* in which sales presentations can be tailored to specific clients, thus creating specific solutions and added value for the client. This technique is not as useful for low-complexity situations because the benefits are minimal; it's also less useful for high-complexity situations because the initial barrier to understanding can be difficult to reduce.

Practical Implication: Reduce Complexity for your Clients

Purchasing a home can be an overwhelming process, so having a survey ready to determine what a client wants is an easy way to streamline the home-buying process. Some questions you can ask your client include:

1. What is the importance of the home's location?
2. How important is the overall size of the home?
    a. What number(s) of bedrooms and bathrooms are acceptable vs. preferred?
    b. How does the size and layout of the kitchen play into the overall home layout?
    c. Amount of storage and parking?
3. Which kind of home: new home, old home, fixer-upper, condo, new home construction?
4. What features and amenities are important?
    a. Office, fireplace, patio, laundry room, etc.?

These questions allow you to inquire what the client wants in a structured manner rather than asking the client to create a requirement list. The survey decreases the input requirements from the client by asking specific questions rather than having to frame his/her desires.

Practical Implication: Manage Information Presented to Clients

For many services, including real estate, complexity can hardly be reduced, so that weakening the consequences of high complexity is an important task. **The research shows that adapting the presentation to the customer can mitigate the detrimental effects of high complexity.** You can thus help your customers to more easily understand a service, despite its complexity, by asking yourself the following questions and acting accordingly:

1. Is my customer overtaxed?
In an interaction with a customer, you should always be able to determine whether the customer is mentally overtaxed. Yawning, increased blinking, squirming and fidgeting are signs of fatigue and mental exhaustion, to name just a few. You should be able to detect these in an interaction with a customer. Also, get some more information about the customer's knowledge of real estate and relevant aspects. Savvy customers are usually not as easily overtaxed as novice customers.

2. How should I approach my customer?
Based on what you know about the customer, you should adapt your selling approach accordingly. That is, if a customer lacks specific knowledge and will easily be overtaxed, you should help him to more easily understand everything. You can do this rather easily by using simple language instead of technical terms, illustrative language instead of hard facts, and adjectives instead of numbers. Put differently, if a customer has trouble making sense of what you are saying, do not provide more information, but *provide information in a different way*.

3. What type of other information does my customer need?
Oftentimes customers also receive other information, like company brochures, home brochures or flyers, and your service offerings. This type of information should also be adapted to the specific type of customer. You should have available at least two types of brochures – one version in easily understandable language, using tangible examples and illustrations for novice customers; a second version using more technical terms, numerical examples, and more detailed technical information for expert customers.

Conclusion

Purchasing a home can be an overwhelming, complex process, and your goal is to make the process as simple and easy as possible for the client. If successful, you will increase client satisfaction and client loyalty intentions. Not only is simplification important, but adapting the

selling process to each individual client has been proven to be impactful. Analyze your client and then provide the simplest solution that appeals to your client's intellectual, emotional, and personality profile.

Recommended Reading

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Dr. Sven Mikolon studied business administration and economics at the Ruhr-University of Bochum (Germany), where he also obtained his doctoral degree in business administration. In his research, Sven bridges the literature on organizational psychology with that on consumer behavior with a strong focus on the customer-frontline worker-interface. His research in this domain has been published in top-tier academic journals, such as the *Journal of Marketing*, the *Journal of Service Research*, and the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*. His work has been featured by the *Harvard Business Review*.

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What are People Saying about You? Using eWOM to Protect and Build Your Business

Ana Babić Rosario, PhD, Francesca Sotgiu, PhD, Kristine de Valck, PhD, and Tammo H.A. Bijmolt, PhD

Do you know that what people say about you on the Internet impacts your business? According to the National Association of Realtors, four in ten buyers use the Internet as a first step in the home buying process (NAR 2015). Additionally, 94 percent of millennials and 84 percent of baby boomers use websites in their home searches (NAR 2015). Having a strong online presence is becoming increasingly important. So, how do you accomplish that?

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM), or buzz, is rapidly replacing many face-to-face interactions. Nowadays consumers are able to share their thoughts with others at a much faster rate; they are sharing reviews, ratings, tweets, blogs, "likes," "pins," "snaps," images, and video testimonials. Consumers will use this information to consult with each other in an attempt to minimize functional and financial risks typically involved in a purchase decision.

The question is: how can a business positively affect such consumer-generated content to reduce client risk and subsequently increase sales? A number of factors will determine the effectiveness of eWOM, including the characteristics of the online environment where eWOM is displayed (various characteristics of online platforms), characteristics of the product (some products naturally carry more risk), as well as the ways in which eWOM is measured and collected on the Internet (different metrics reflect different mechanisms of risk reduction). You can track how your client perceives the offering to increase the likelihood of more client feedback (preferably consistent and positive feedback!) and the success of your business in terms of sales.

Our Study

For this study, we surveyed scientific databases and scholarly journals and collected 96 articles that examine the impact of eWOM on objective measures of firm performance, such as revenues and the number of product/service units sold. We compiled a dataset that was accompanied by time-varying information reflecting the nature of 40 online platforms and 26 different product categories at the time of original data collection. For instance, by doing this we acknowledged

that eWOM may have differently impacted the sales of digital cameras back in 2003 compared to 2012.

In addition, we distinguished between three major types of online platforms: social media, review and opinion platforms, and e-commerce platforms. Examples of these types of platforms relevant to the home-buying market are Facebook, Zillow, and Trulia, respectively. Similarly, we additionally analyzed the characteristics of products by recording their type (tangible good vs. intangible service), hedonic score (how much pleasure is derived from consumption), life cycle stage (newly released vs. mature products), and the level of financial risk (represented by the product price).

Finally, we investigated the effects of four key metrics of eWOM: volume, valence, composite valence-volume, and variance. Volume describes the quantity of eWOM; valence describes the nature of eWOM, i.e. whether it is positive or negative; composite valence-volume helps distinguish measurement in absolute terms (e.g., number of positive eWOM) from measurement in relative terms (e.g., ratio of positive eWOM). Variance describes the degree to which consumers agree on the product's quality; for example, if a product has a large number of positive and negative reviews, the variance would be high.

The Importance of Online Platforms

We find that, on social media platforms, eWOM receivers are more strongly influenced due to relatability of the consumer who posted eWOM. However, when looking at eWOM posted on e-commerce platforms, this sense of relatability seems to be less important and will not matter much for the business in terms of sales. Therefore, within the social media field, marketers should strive to increase the relatability between past customers and potential customers by giving past customers the opportunity to provide information about themselves in the form of a username, avatar, profile page, or geographic location. For e-commerce platforms, it would be beneficial to make eWOM information readily available and less structured by bringing it to the forefront of the e-commerce page for the consumer rather than embedding the information in subpages.

The Importance of Product Characteristics

Since services have a higher functional risk (i.e., uncertainty in performance) compared to regular products we can assess prior to purchase, eWOM is especially important to reassure consumers. It may be useful to emphasize one characteristic over the other depending on the consumer's priorities. A third area to emphasize is where a product falls within its product lifecycle. For newer products, eWOM is more influential have a higher correlation of eWOM to sales than mature products. Therefore, real estate professionals may want to carefully construct

approaches for building eWOM for newer properties, as potential buyers and renters will face more uncertainty due to lack of complete information.

The Importance of eWOM Measurement

In terms of metrics, eWOM volume and composite valence-volume are most important for sales. Both the total number of eWOM and the number of positive eWOM are more influential on sales than an average rating. Finally, variance of reviews jeopardizes sales because consumer disagreement creates uncertainty about the performance of the product or service, rather than helping resolve it for potential buyers and renters.

Implications for Real Estate Professionals

We believe that our research on eWOM suggests three key implications for real estate professionals: (1) provide a platform, (2) encourage more eWOM reviews, and (3) monitor and settle consumer disagreements.

Provide a Platform

eWOM is positively correlated with sales, so it may be wise to provide clients with a platform to provide feedback and review your services. One avenue for a testimonial would be on your official website, so that whenever a person wants to learn about your services, s/he knows where to go. eWOM that is displayed on e-commerce platforms has the highest correlation with sales compared to eWOM on other platforms, so this is a tool you should not neglect for generating and sustaining business. Another avenue is your social media page through a platform such as Facebook.

To utilize your website and social media page most effectively, it is essential that your clients find reviewers both relatable and trustworthy. Simple ways to enhance these characteristics include displaying geographic location, displaying a real name or username, allowing the client to upload avatars, and enabling interaction with the reviewer through email or private message. For example, on your own website, you should encourage reviewers to post their real names and general locations. Clients are most closely associated with friends and family, so provide your clients with a resource that allows them to share feedback or interesting offers on other websites such as Facebook or LinkedIn.

Another opportunity is to use Realtor.com (a platform with elements of e-commerce sites, review and opinion sites, and social media sites) because it is the first online real estate website to base ratings and reviews on guidelines for professional evaluation from the National Association of

Realtors (NAR). Through a membership with NAR, you will have access to a Realtor.com account.

Realtor.com recently announced agreements with three review and opinion platforms—Quality Service Certification, Inc. (QSC), RealSatisfied, and Testimonial Tree—which allows clients to access consolidated information about you and other potential real estate agents. So, after a client posts a review on one of these platforms, it is automatically recorded on your Realtor.com profile, which gives prospective clients a place to read all reviews of your services.

In addition, the QSC program strengthens your credibility because 95 percent of Realtors who have participated in the program are reviewed as "satisfied or very satisfied" in terms of service as compared to the national average of 58 percent satisfaction (Realtor.com 2015). Additionally, Testimonial Tree allows you to publish client testimonials to a Realtor.com profile or to your social media page, which further increases your visibility.

Encourage More eWOM Reviews

Don't hesitate to ask your clients to submit on-line reviews for you when you complete the home-buying process. Be confident and ask satisfied clients to post a review of your service, which the client can do by filling out a review on a mobile device. You may find novel ways to encourage reviews by including "review me" with hyperlinks in your email signature block, directing clients to specific review sites for immediate action. Another method to increase the number of your reviews is by providing your clients with an incentive to review you. This could be done, for instance, through gift card drawings: When a client reviews your service, enter his/her name in a quarterly drawing for something simple such as free carpet cleaning or lawn care maintenance. It doesn't have to be expensive, just something to reward the client for the time s/he spend reviewing your service.

Monitor and Settle Consumer Disagreements

You will want to actively manage the eWOM about your service, particularly if you are representing a real estate agency or an apartment complex, rather than a single-time property seller. For example, on your webpage or social media page, be sure to feature trustworthy and

relatable clients that provided the most positive reviews. In effect, you will influence what prospective clients will see when looking for a realtor. In addition, you may consider designing strategies to address any consumer disagreements online, directly on the page where negative feedback appears. For instance, you may want to emphasize positive changes, such as renovations, for properties where consumers have complained about the disadvantages of older builds.

Conclusion

For continued success, it is important to monitor eWOM and encourage clients to provide their feedback, especially the positive kind. Provide an opportunity for people to share experiences and influence how others perceive you. Your official website, review and opinion platforms, as well as your social media page all provide clients with the opportunity to contribute to your business. Finally, understanding where and why consumers disagree on particular aspects of your service will help you control the potential damage to your bottom line.

Recommended Reading

Babić Rosario, Ana, Francesca Sotgiu, Kristine de Valck, and Tammo H. A. Bijmolt (2016), "The Effect of Electronic Word of Mouth on Sales: A Meta-Analytic Review of Platform, Product, and Metric Factors," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 53 (3), 297-318.

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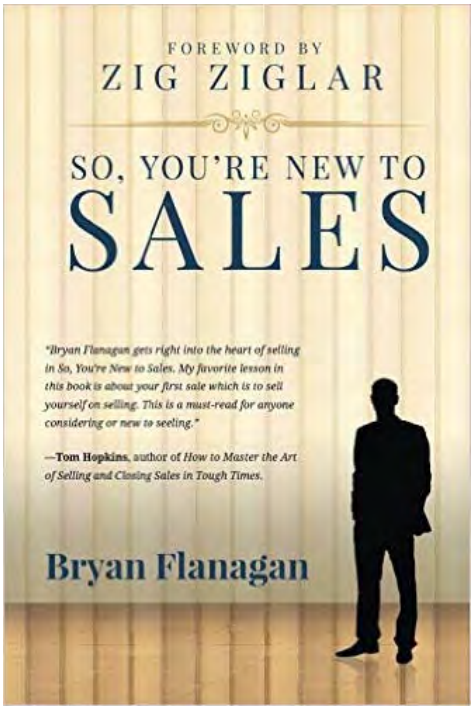
INSIDER: So, You're New to Sales

Austin Taylor, MBA Candidate



Every day, new real estate agents begin their journey to career success. While most have undergone some classroom training to receive their license, only a few have received excellent, practical advice about how to successfully begin and sustain their careers in real estate.

In his book *So, You're New to Sales*, Bryan Flanagan lays out every detail, step-by-step, that is necessary for the novice to become a professional agent. Specifically, Flanagan draws from his years of sales experience to inform the reader of the correct mental mindset for success, emphasizing the importance of forming relationships with prospects that are founded on trust. *So, You're New to Sales* encourages all new sales professionals to reach their fullest potential by taking pride in the higher calling of sales and through continuous development of your sales skills.

THINK POINT #1: Respect Your Profession - Sell Yourself about Selling

Before you can effectively launch your career, you must first sell yourself about selling. That is, you must have the proper motivation and desire to succeed. To do so, you must first make one foundational revelation about the act of selling homes.

Real estate is a helping profession.

While this may seem obvious, it is pivotal that agent understand they exist solely to aid their clients. In the mind of the professional agent, sales is not about the agent, but instead focus is placed solely on the needs of others. Flanagan repeatedly emphasizes this point by stating, "Sales is not about you."

Once you are able to take great pride in the work you perform for others, you are ready to respect your profession. Residential real estate is an honorable profession in which you help the client find an emotional home for his/her future. Simultaneously, most clients are selecting their largest personal financial investment. The work you perform on the client's behalf will bestow the long-term benefit of a place to call home, while you receive a commission that offers you short-term financial support. The client should always be the clear winner.

For success in your career, you would do well to respect your profession, and never be ashamed of the work you do. After all, real estate truly is a helping profession.

THINK POINT #2: Learn Your Profession - Never Stop Absorbing Information

Having cleared the first hurdle by finding the proper motivation and will to succeed, next you should apply your will by learning the skills necessary for selling success. Once you begin learning, you will never graduate…developing as a professional agent is a life-long process.

Develop your skills by absorbing knowledge about your profession. You should continuously study, read, listen, observe, and ask questions. Learn about the real estate industry, learn about your local housing market, learn about common home characteristics, and learn the art of selling. Be informed and acquire a great breadth of knowledge, so that you will be better suited to help the client make informed decisions.

Confidence comes from competence. As famous sales guru Zig Ziglar once said, "You cannot consistently perform in a manner that is inconsistent with the way you see yourself." If you view yourself as only a rookie agent or as unsuccessful at this point in your career, it will be difficult to perform at the high level you desire. If you are struggling with your confidence, then get serious about investing the necessary time to learn your profession. Once you achieve an expert level of knowledge in the industry, your confidence will undoubtedly soar with your newfound competence.

Flanagan encourages those who become disenchanted with the learning process to learn the following phrase: *If it is to be, it is up to me.* Set your goals before you, and find the will to do everything necessary to achieve those goals. If you desire to sell 40 houses in one year (undoubtedly due to your unselfish desire to help 40 families), your work ethic will be the key determination of whether you achieve such a lofty goal. You may not be able to affect the market or the decision-making process of your clients, but you are fully in control of your personal effort.

THINK POINT #3 – Sell the Value

Successful real estate agents sell the value of the home to the client, not just the features. When selling a home, it is essential to understand that you are not simply selling the location and characteristics of a house. Rather, you are meeting the foundational needs of the client. People buy what the product will do for them, not the features. For example, a client comes to you and says s/he needs a beautiful and grand home in which to raise a family. You would ***not*** sell the home by listing the features as follows: a two-story colonial with 4 bedrooms, hardwood floors, and great curb appeal for $250,000. Instead, you should sell the value of the home by indicating the unique benefits that meet the client's needs of the perfect place to raise a family. After establishing why the home has value to the client and peaking the client's interest, you would then explain the features and price. Once you have communicated the benefit, the client will be better able to interpret the features as adequate, or the price as acceptable or too high.

To convince the client a home has value, you must first be convinced of the benefits yourself. When selling in any industry, you must learn and believe in the benefits of the product. In application to real estate, the agent should be fully informed about every home you are showing. Aware of the needs and wants of the client, you should personally believe the home's benefits provide value to your client.

Selling is something you do with the client, not to the client. Be aware that each potential home buyer has a different set of needs and values in a home. A successful agent becomes aware of the needs and values of the client by a simple process of asking and listening. Be sure to ask valuable and detailed questions. Avoid yes and no questions, and seek to find the reasoning behind the client's stated preferences. With a greater understanding of what the client values, a successful agent will sell the value, and not the features of the home. Selling a home that provides great value to the client will lead to great customer satisfaction, rather than simply satisfying a checklist of features.

THINK POINT #4 – Build Trust

Developing trust between yourself and the client can be a painstaking and tedious process that takes an extended period of time. Sadly, the trust you are able to establish can be lost in an instant. Maintain and build trust by holding yourself to the highest standards of ethics, professionalism, and always prioritizing the needs of the client.

As discussed earlier, real estate is a helping profession and accordingly the client's needs must come first. Unethical behavior can be avoided by simply remembering to place the client's needs before your own. If it is apparent that you place the client's needs first, s/he will perceive your high ethical standards, and trust will begin to develop. The instant the client feels that you are not acting in his/her best interest, the client may perceive you as unethical and all semblance of trust will vanish.

As a successful real estate agent, you can be less than perfect, but you can never afford to be less than professional. Demonstrate your professionalism by taking the attention off of you and placing it fully on the client. As the agent, you should know more about the prospect's needs, profession, and personal life than the prospect knows about your own.

The most successful agents build trust by proving their effectiveness to the client. After all, the client only demands your service to be effective, not perfect. Rather than stress over perfection and portraying a fake personality, simply be authentic and genuine. If the client thinks you are fake, she/he will be disinclined to trust you -- your personality, your honesty, and ultimately your competence as an agent.

Ultimately, the goal of establishing trust is to build a relationship. Once a strong relationship is established, the client will continually return to you for all of his/her real estate needs. Furthermore, establishing a great relationship with one client increases the likelihood that the client will refer you to other potential home buyers in the community.

THINK POINT #5 – Prospecting

We have discussed how real estate must be viewed as a helping profession, but one glaring question remains. How do you find clients, and then convince them to select you as their agent? This process is known as prospecting.

The new agent must develop a list of prospects. To gather a list of potential home buyers, you must generate the leads yourself. Prospecting is a tedious yet vital task to your profession, and it is vital to your success that you maintain the proper attitude. It is important to develop a system of producing prospects. If your list of prospects is small, be careful to not place too much pressure on your list, or else the relationships may be damaged. If your prospecting system is not effective, simply alter your system and maintain a positive attitude.

Flanagan emphasizes that while you are not always selling a home, you should always be prospecting. If you only remember one thing about prospecting, remember this: ***Contacts lead to contracts*.** Find a method of contacting new prospects that works for you and implement it daily.

To find a qualified home buyer that will hire you to be his/her agent and ultimately close the deal, apply the four P's listed below.

1. **Prospect Filter**: Identify and target qualified decision makers. If the prospect has no decision-making power or no financial ability to purchase a home, then s/he should be placed at the bottom of your list.

2. **Product Filter**: Can a home be found that provides the value the client desires? If such a home is simply not available on the market, a sale is unlikely to occur.

3. **Process Filter**: Follow a prospect-centered approach to uncover the essential needs of a prospect. Generate understanding of the client's true desires.

4. **Person Filter:** If you simply are not the right salesperson, then a sale will not take place. Prospects buy the product and the sales professional, or in this case, the home and the agent. For this reason, it is important to build a relationship with the client founded on trust.

Conclusion

For an in-depth analysis and step-by-step guidelines regarding all aspects of sales, review *So, You're New to Sales* to begin your journey to becoming a successful real estate professional. Take the time necessary to master the art of selling. Learn how to prospect, sell the value, and build trust with your clients. Before all else, learn to respect your profession, and sell yourself on selling.

Recommended Reading

Flanagan, Bryan (2016), *So, You're New to Sales*, Washington: Made for Success Publishing.

About the Author

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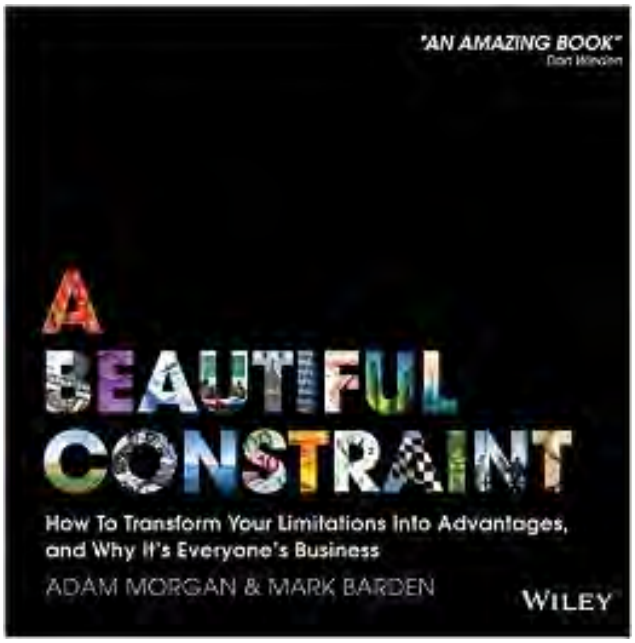
Austin Taylor is a graduate student from Austin, Texas. Austin is currently seeking an MBA degree with a specialization in Healthcare Administration and plans to work in the healthcare industry. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies with a focus in Politics and Diplomacy from Texas A&M University in 2014. Before beginning graduate school, Austin interned for a Federal Magistrate Judge in the Eastern District of Texas. In his free time, Austin enjoys spending time with his wife Jessica, and volunteering in the community.

INSIDER: A Beautiful Constraint – Turning Obstacles into Opportunities

Anand Vamsee Jonnabhotla, MBA/MSIS Candidate

Do your best Jagger is a famous internet meme today. Sir Michael Phillip Jagger, the man behind this meme, shot to fame overnight for his performance in a space about the size of a table. Jagger's success stems from a combination of *desire and restriction*, which helped him develop the unique *Jagger* moves. Mick Jagger saw an opportunity in an obstacle and realized the power of leveraging a beautiful constraint!



In the book, *A Beautiful Constraint*, the authors, Adam Morgan and Mark Barden, take us through a series of real-world examples that show how constraints can positively impact a project and, in turn, help develop successful sustainable solutions. We are no longer living in a world with abundant resources. The rate at which we are depleting our resources surely poses challenges. From the budget constraints that drove Google to start with a simple and easy-to-use user interface to the challenges of integrating industries in the world market to support the Unilever's sustainability initiative, constraints help people understand how beautifully they can aid in progress.

A world of too much data, too many choices, too many possibilities and too little time is forcing us to decide what we value. This is true even in the real estate industry. Increased competition, diverse customer preferences, and dependence of technology challenge agents to look for new customer attraction methods. To push through such times, we need challengers who have ambitions larger than their resources. That is when constraints appear beautiful.

Morgan and Barden begin by defining a constraint, which is a limitation, imposed by outside circumstances or by ourselves, that materially affects our ability to do something. The three fundamental factors that help turn constraints into resources are Mindset, Method and Motivation.

The following think points put these learnings into practice in the real estate industry:

THINK POINT #1: The Victim, Neutralizer and Transformer

Keeping one's ambition high in the face of a succession of constraints is very important for the real estate agent. Based on the way a person looks at ambitions and constraints, there are three categories of people:

1. **Victims**: Those who lower their ambition when faced with a constraint
2. **Neutralizers**: Those who refuse to lower their ambition but find a different way to deliver the ambition instead
3. **Transformers**: Those who find a way to use a constraint as an opportunity, even increasing their ambition along the way

Many people fall into the victim category in certain situations. However, for agents to be successful, they should learn to progress toward becoming transformers. It is always good to identify a specific goal or task and then impose a new constraint on the task. For example, if the specific goal is adding new clients, the additional constraint that the agent could impose is acquiring these clients in six months when others look at accomplishing this task in twelve months. Increasing one's constraints will be possible through greater self-awareness as it yields valuable insights into where you might need the most help to progress from one stage to the next.

THINK POINT #2: Break Path Dependence

Often, real estate agents follow habitual business practices that prevent them from seeing opportunity in a constraint. This path dependence leads into significant and disabling constraints determined by how open-minded and flexible an agent is. The solution to this problem is to identify the key steps needed to reach a goal. Then, the agent should name his/her natural tendencies and biases. The next step is to look at the processes and routines that one habitually uses. Once these habits are identified, the agent can move on to expected sources of solutions. Finally, the process ends at having key performance indicators (KPIs) and measures of success.

As an example, consider the time agents must wait for feedback after a prospective customer visits a property. Instead of waiting for the customer to give feedback, a smart real estate agent can save time by having a mobile app handy, allowing the customer to give immediate feedback. A tacit advantage of such a process is that the immediate opinion of a customer usually reflects his/her purchasing style and thought process, both of which are helpful for the agent's future communication.

THINK POINT #3: Ask Propelling Questions Followed by Can-If

Propelling questions help in building solutions that address more than just the problem at hand. For example, a real estate company that wishes to address environmental concerns should not

look solely at investments that help them save energy. It should look at those initiatives that are "bigger" such as building a completely green and sustainable eco-system. Such a thought process, as the authors believe, will produce amazing results. Propelling questions prompt you toward a bold ambition linked together with a significant constraint.

After posing a propelling question, an agent will need to have both the right tools and the right attitude to find breakthrough. To do so, the real estate agent's key challenge is not simply: *How do we answer this question?* Rather, *How do we create the controversial climate that gives us the best possible chance to answer this question?* The next step is to brainstorm for solutions. Begin with *We can if …* rather than with *is this possible?* This change in approach helps an agent focus on how it might be possible, keeping the oxygen of optimism alive in the process.

THINK POINT #4: Creating Abundance

Resourceful agents see that if they lack something (time, money, people, ideas) and that scarcity is one of their apparent constraints, it is an opportunity to create abundance elsewhere. One place to start the search for abundance is by tapping relationships with invested stakeholders. An agent could utilize the loyalty of existing customers to gain insights into spending habits and preferences to know the ways to attract new customers. On a larger scale, a real estate agent or even a company should consider ways of partnering with other industries. For example, a real estate company that wishes to identify new buyers in an area might partner with another organization for leads. In return, the company could offer a discount to the organization's employees for any new home purchases or leases.

THINK POINT #5: Activating Emotions

A personal commitment to remaining ambitious is very important to ensure that projects see successful closure. As a sales leader, a real estate professional's role is to communicate a clear sense of ambition and to elevate the emotional commitment to it within the team. As an agent, you must empathize with the customer's need. This empathy will be possible only by actuating emotions. When a propelling question meets a strong emotion, breakthrough results and that is exactly what is needed in this hour of increased competition in the real estate industry. One way to activate the emotions of the buyer is by adopting the method of storytelling (See *Keller Center Research Report* article, "The Power of Storytelling").

The authors emphasize that, in this world of increasing scarcity, constraints can lead to a success or a downfall depending on how an agent looks at them. Promoting a constraint-driven culture is as important as the constraint itself. Once an agent identifies which resources are scarce and which ones are abundant, the next strategic move will be to analyze the possible economic value of any partnerships. Finally, the emotional connection that an agent develops coupled with the tools and techniques mentioned above should aid faster, successful deal closures.

Recommended Reading

Morgan, Adam and Mark Barden (2015), *A Beautiful Constraint: How to Transform Your Limitations into Advantages and Why It's Everyone's Business,* John Wiley and Sons Publishers.

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AV is a first-year graduate student from India. He holds a B.Tech in Electronics and Instrumentation Engineering. Prior to starting his dual-degree program at Baylor, he worked for 4 ½ years with SAP. He also co-founded and managed the startup, DietOnClick in India.

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