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Combatting Real Estate Professionals' Insecurity

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Combating Real Estate Professionals' Insecurity

Nawar N. Chaker, PhD, David W. Schumann, PhD, Alex R. Zablah, PhD, and Daniel J. Flint, PhD

Have you ever felt insecure in your career? Have you ever doubted your ability to fulfill your job duties? Or have you felt uncertain about your future within your company? If so, you are certainly not the only one in your field experiencing these emotions. While most are unwilling to admit their insecurity or discuss their self-doubt with their peers, insecurity is common among sales professionals. With time and intentionality, insecurity can be reduced by limiting exposure to stressors and through training to cope with stressors when they inevitably arise.

Stress in Sales

Real estate professionals utilize specialized skills to meet the needs of clients and experience unique demands which can be emotionally taxing. The day-to-day agenda in real estate is dynamic, unpredictable, and tenuous. Such a variety of tasks leads to a rewarding, albeit high stress, career. Buying and selling real estate is a complex transaction with a long sale cycle where real estate professionals are paid upon the closing of the



transaction, months after the sales process is initiated. Uncertainty about when the next client will initiate the process and any delay in closing the sale can lead to significant financial stress for the agent. The system of commission-only payment combined with the extended time-period until payment is received creates a breeding ground for stress which is truly unrivaled.

What exactly is stress, and how can its negative effects be minimized? Stress is a process set into motion when demands in the environment tax or exceed an individual's resources or emotions (LePine, Zhang, Rich and Crawford 2015). When stress threatens your natural balance of emotions, strain and discomfort are the result (Jex, Bliese, Buzzell, and Primeau 2001).

The transactional theory of stress discusses in detail how emotional reactions are evaluated in a two-step process (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). First, one evaluates whether an external occurrence has a positive, negative, or irrelevant impact to your personal welfare (Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roehling, and Boudreau 2000; Crawford, LePine, and Rich 2010). If the impact is positive or neutral, no stress occurs. If negative, then the second step evaluates whether one can

cope with the stress. If unable to cope, stress and discomfort arise as a threat to the natural balance of emotions.

Maintaining the natural balance of emotions should be our goal, and thus discomfort should generally be viewed as undesirable. Two prominent coping strategies exist (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). Problem-focused coping encourages the individual to actively confront the source of stress when it presents itself. In contrast, emotion-focused coping aims to avoid the source of negative feelings prior to discomfort occurring.

Insecurity

When stress arises, the individual will either consciously (cognitively) or subconsciously (chemically) experience discomfort. Insecurity can arise as a response to the felt discomforts when the emotions cannot be reconciled with past beliefs and experiences. Every individual responds differently to this discomfort, with some becoming insecure while others dismiss the discomfort and return to their natural emotional state. (Kramer 1999).

Insecurity can be both a personality trait and a state of mind. A trait of insecurity is a continuous pattern of thought, feeling, and behavior (Hogan, DeSoto, and Solano 1977). Experiencing insecurity as a trait in one area of life typically morphs into insecurity in all areas of life. For example, continuous insecurity at work would negatively affect your emotional balance with friends and family.

A state of mind differs from a trait in that a state is transient, fluid, and arises only in specific situations (Fridhandler 1986). Normally a state of insecurity in one area would not negatively affect all emotional areas. For instance, temporary insecurity due to fear of job loss would not create insecurity in personal relationships away from work. Whether you are prone to insecurity as a personality trait or as a state of mind, it is reasonable to assume that anyone who experiences either type of insecurity longs to return to emotional balance.

Sources of Discomfort

Insecurity in the sales industry can arise from various sources and present itself in multiple ways. To avoid entering a state of emotional imbalance or to enable a return to balance, learning the common factors that create insecurity is vital. The most common factors which potentially lead to discomfort and insecurity are: uncertainty, self-doubt, low self-esteem, and external threats.

Uncertainty

When real estate professionals experience a lack of information about important external circumstances, discomfort is likely to occur (Yair 2008). For instance, insufficient information about a potential economic recession, unsubstantiated rumors about future layoffs, or uncertainty

about the closure of a sale and subsequent payment may result in a state of uncertainty. This uncertainty may sprout into insecurity and inhibit focus in the daily work routine. Often, agents become accustomed to a lifestyle supported by their sales success, and that life style may become part of their self-identity (Hogg and Terry 2000). Whatever the lack of information may be, uncertainty about future income or career opportunities may distort self-identity and produce insecurity.

Self-Doubt

Self-doubt typically leads to discomfort in one of two ways: when a real estate professional questions his/her own abilities or when an agent questions the quality of the product being sold. While low self-esteem is based upon an evaluation of the complete self, self-doubt differs from self-esteem because it is related to negative feelings about a select few important abilities (Hermann, Leonardelli, and Arkin 2002). During a survey conducted about sales professionals' insecurity, one sales professional discussed self-doubt associated with ability by stating, "What will happen to me is that if I do fail with a customer, I start questioning myself with every other customer." Insecurity arises from doubt when sales professionals incessantly evaluate their own ability, with a focus on specific imperfections and shortcomings in their ability to perform necessary work (Oleson, Poehlmann, Yost, Lynch, and Arkin 2000). Perceiving yourself as incompetent in key areas in your work often leads to insecurity and may ultimately result in a lack of motivation combined with a generally negative mood. The second type of self-doubt occurs when sales professionals question the quality and competitiveness of the product or home they are selling. This doubt can develop into personal insecurity from their inability to meet client needs. Typically, feelings of self-doubt are recurring and do not dissipate with time or experience unless the source of discomfort is intentionally addressed.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is a global evaluation of one's overall self-worth (Baker and McNulty 2013; Libby, Valenti, Pfent, and Eibach 2011). Sales professionals may experience discomfort related to low self-esteem when their perceived inability to perform multiple tasks overflows into an insecurity that permeates into all areas of life. A perceived failure in one event can lead to a chain of negative feelings and result in low self-esteem. For example, one event in which the sales professional reveals a lack of knowledge to a client may result in a decrease in how s/he values his/her whole self, or a chain of negative feelings may sprout from failing to meet expectations and grow into a fear of losing a client and a fear of ultimately losing management's trust. In this way, negative events develop into a low self-esteem.

Felt Threat

Threats arise when external events call into question one's positive self-regard (van Dellen, Campbell, Hoyle, Bradfield 2011). Secure individuals typically are able to shrug off the effect of

an external threat to remain emotionally positive (Ein-Dor and Tal 2012; Rom and Mikulincer 2003). However, external threats can compound and increase the insecurity of an already emotionally sensitive individual. (Cameron, Stinson, Gaetz, and Balchen 2010; Leary and Baumeister 2000). External threats present as a situation that is outside of the control of the threatened individual, such as a competitor having access to superior products with higher consumer demand. Sales professionals' discomfort may arise when their performance and results are effected negatively by external threats (Krishnan, Netemeyer, and Boles 2002; Ingram, Lee, and Skinner 1989).

How to Reduce Insecurity

To excel in the real estate industry, which produces so many emotional highs and lows, it is vital to acknowledge that discomfort may arise from many sources. One professional surveyed described how “the emotions run the gambit... there’s not a profession out there... that provides the amount of emotional roller coaster that a sales professional runs on day in and day out” throughout an entire career. If negative emotions become insecurity, this may affect the professional’s attitude toward clients and result in insufficient focus to maintain productivity and positive relationships with customers. For example, one professional discussed the negative effects of insecurity as follows: “If you’re not excited about what you’re doing, then you’re probably not going to do it real good... the people you’re trying to sell to will know that, they’re probably not really going to want to buy from you.” To maintain emotional stability and career success long term, it is of the utmost importance to develop the ability to prevent discomfort from morphing into insecurity, as well as the ability to fight to suppress insecurity so that you may return to emotional stability.

Reducing the Source of Discomfort Before it Arises

As an individual, become aware of the source of discomfort that particularly affects you. If necessary, you may need to avoid the source of stress altogether by withdrawing from the environment (Lewin and Sager 2008). Seek out information to reduce your uncertainty. Ask for both positive feedback and critiques from coworkers and clients to reduce your self-doubt and boost your self-esteem. Take control of your own effort and emotional responses to avoid the negative effect of external threats.

As a manager, realize your potential to positively affect your employee’s emotions and job productivity (Evans, Schlacter, Schultz, Gremler, Pass, and Wolfe 2002; Wortuba and Simpson 1992). Provide validation when your employees succeed to boost their self-worth and debunk their self-doubt. When they underperform, provide proactive feedback on how employees can improve and emphasize their value to the organization. Persuade the team member that you are on their side and create a positive work environment to reduce perception of external threats.

Addressing Discomfort After it Occurs

When discomfort is felt and insecurity results, it is important for individuals to be able to diffuse their own insecurity and return to emotional stability by using coping mechanisms. To diffuse your insecurity, you must attempt to identify the source of your stress. Aim to understand what led to the increase in stress and address the root cause. Seek the advice of others, create a support system, and openly discuss your feelings. By actively confronting the source of stress, you may reduce the impact the stress has on your emotions (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). By understanding your emotions, you may be able to change your emotional response to regain control and return to a secure state of mind (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, and Tice 1998; Chan and Wan 2012; Schaufeli and Bakker 2004; Singh 2000). As one example of coping, frontline employees who routinely interact with customers have been observed using surface acting (modifying facial expressions) and deep acting (modifying internal feelings) as means to regulate their emotions when customers induce stress (Chan and Wan 2012).

When team members experience insecurity, managers can diffuse the negative emotions if they have the emotional intelligence to recognize the insecurity. Managers should become aware of the predominant sources of stress and discomfort. During particularly strenuous times when a team member loses a client or experiences a sales slump, knowledge of the sources of stress enables the manager to help that individual return to emotional stability.



Conclusion

The selling profession is filled with stress and emotional discomforts. To remain productive in your career, it is important to remain emotionally secure. Common sources of stress and insecurity include uncertainty, doubting your abilities, a low self-esteem, and external threats. By gaining awareness of prevalent stressors, you may be able to reduce insecurity by addressing the source of discomfort prior to insecurity arising, or reduce insecurity by actively confronting discomfort when it inevitably occurs.

Recommended Reading

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Friends vs. Strangers: How Closeness Impacts Social Sharing

David Dubois, PhD, Andrea Bonezzi, PhD, and Matteo De Angelis, PhD



The art of being a successful real estate agent largely depends on the need to interact socially. How you interact with your own clients indeed affects their opinion of the services you provide and ultimately shape their opinions about you or your company. In turn, clients may share their opinion with others which could potentially lead to positive referrals or negative reviews.

This article explores the likelihood that clients will take the next step to share positive reviews with others or to tarnish your reputation with a negative review. In brief, we dive into a key factor shaping the likelihood of sharing positive or negative information – the extent to which the client feels close vs. distant with the real estate agent. Across several studies, we find that people share more positive information with people they feel distant from but negative information with people they feel close to. As a result, strongly connected social media networks are more conducive to sharing negative information with friends, while social networks with weak ties between users tend to facilitate sharing positive information among strangers.

Motivation to Share

Why does this effect occur? It boils down to how talking changes the motives of the speaker which, in turn, carries over the extent to which a speaker shares positive vs. negative information.

On the one hand, if the speaker lacks an emotional connection with the other person, often the motive to self-enhance prompts the speaker to emphasize positive information. During the conversation, it is common for each party to wonder how he compares socially with the other, and to ask, “Am I better than him?” (Argo, White, and Dahl 2006). When social comparison begins, the sharer may engage in behaviors to enhance her own self-worth and project a picture of perfection to the stranger (Brown, Collins, and Schmidt 1988). Due to self-enhancement efforts, the sharer may avoid talking about her own negative experiences (Sedikides 1993). By discussing positive news and avoiding complaints, the sharer subconsciously hopes that the listener’s opinion of the sharer will increase (Berger and Milkman 2012; Hamilton, Vohs, and

McGill 2014). By sharing positive information, the sharer subconsciously hopes that the listener will think highly of the speaker.

On the other hand, if the speaker has a strong emotional connection with the other, the motive to protect the listener incentivizes the speaker to share negative information. In this situation, the sharer becomes more focused on the other's wellbeing and less worried about the impression he is making on the other (Clark, Fitness, and Brissette 2001). Being other-focused leads the sharer to feel a sense of responsibility towards his friend and results in behaviors aimed to protect the friend from harm (Heine et al. 1999). For an easy example, we can look to the parent-child relationship. Because parents feel a strong sense of closeness with their children, parents share information about their own negative experiences with their children to protect the child from harm (Elder et al. 1995). Through conveying negative information, the speaker aims to prevent the listener from undergoing a negative experience.

What causes Relational Connectedness?

Feeling like a friend vs. a stranger can alter the motives of the sharer and the content of the discussion, but what influences those feelings of relational connectedness? Existing relationships often have defined their level of connectivity. Although you speak with a co-worker or neighbor on a regular basis, this does not mean that the relationship has reached a final level. The development of a relationship into a friendship may take time or may be instantaneous. For example, the nature and depth of a conversation, or even the mere physical proximity between two individuals, can influence feelings of connectedness (Sedikides et al. 1999; Vohs, Baumeister, and Ciarocco 2005). Realtors may move quickly from the level of stranger to friend due to the depth of the conversation by discussing personal things such as family, house design preferences, and finances. In addition, relational connectedness may arise from incidental factors which influence the perceived similarity between two people, such as sharing the same birthday or the same name (Jiang et al. 2010).

Social Transmission by Recipients

What is true offline also has implications for online information sharing. The less relational connection on social media – for instance, the less the overlap in connections between two people, the more positive the information shared. For instance, in one study we asked managers to share a message featuring the pros and cons of a service on LinkedIn with either a close friend or a distant acquaintance and found that they shared more cons than pros with their close contacts but more pros than cons with their distant ones. In fact, we found that the number of overlapping connections positively predicted message valence: the more friends in common between a sender and a recipient, the more negative she tended to be.

Building on this study, we asked young adults to share a message featuring pros and cons of a product to someone they knew on LinkedIn vs. Facebook. Within this consumer group, Facebook is typically used to foster and maintain personal connections whereas LinkedIn is used for professional connections. We found that participants, overall, included a greater number of pros than cons when sharing on LinkedIn but the reverse pattern when sharing on Facebook – confirming our hypothesis.

Real Estate Implications

In real estate, the best compliment an agent can receive from a client is a positive referral of his/her services. How do you create the greatest likelihood of a positive referral occurring? This may depend on how you want to market your services. If you desire to expand your geographic footprint, it may be best to build a vast network of relationships with relative strangers. Our findings suggest that a network of people with low



connectedness may be unlikely to share negative information about your services due to enhanced activation of their need to self-enhance. It would also disseminate information swiftly to distant groups of other strangers. However, the information shared may be only surface-level and the recipient may place little value on the information due to hearing it from a stranger.

Alternately, a strategy to strengthen your existing footprint may prove beneficial. By building a network of friends, the information shared would not be conducive to expanding your regional footprint due to the probability those friends may refer your services to a few, close others. While the network would not expand rapidly, the information shared would be received by friends as valuable and memorable. However, of importance, an enhanced motive to protect recipients may make them particularly sensitive and likely to share any negative information about your services in an effort to prevent their friends from experiencing a negative service. This might prove a particularly effective strategy for high-end real estate services that deliver exceptional services and limit potential negative information about these services.

Conclusion

Overall, the level of perceived relational connectedness with potential prospects or clients may have great effect on outcomes for a realtor. In fact, the development of a network of referrals is pivotal to the growth of a realtor's business. It is important to understand when interacting with

clients how you project yourself, how the client perceives your services, and the likelihood the client will provide a positive or negative referral. While it is important to understand how and when positive vs. negative referrals occur, it will be more effective to provide outstanding customer service to all to avoid negative reviews being shared through any network.

Recommended Reading

Dubois, David, Andrea Bonezzi, and Matteo De Angelis (2016), “Sharing with Friends Versus Strangers: How Interpersonal Closeness Influences Word-of-Mouth Valence,” *Journal of Marketing Research*, 53(October), 712-727.

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Do Past Preferences Indicate Future Selections?

Kate Barasz, PhD, Tami Kim, PhD Candidate, and Leslie K. John, PhD

Predicting others' preferences can result in a distinct advantage for a salesperson, especially through creating choice sets based on clients' implicit and explicit wants and needs. Oftentimes, these predictions must be made with almost no information about the client's preferences, so the salesperson may have to rely on previously observed behaviors. Therefore, what someone has chosen in the past generally becomes the piece of information that is used to predict what that person will choose in the future. We suggest that when someone is faced with the decision of predicting the consumer's preference regarding a particular choice, s/he will follow a systematic, predictable evaluative process.



Initially, a person will evaluate the consumer's past preferences. Then, the person will compare the new selection to prior choices. Finally, the person will predict that the consumer will react favorably if it is similar to a prior choice and unfavorably if it is dissimilar to a prior choice. These choices can encompass a variety of selections from what car someone drives, what food a person enjoys, to what home a person will live in. Observers, in general, will

then conclude if someone chooses a certain car, s/he likes similar kinds of cars, but will dislike dissimilar cars.

We suggest that this occurs because people tend to believe others' preferences are more homogenous than they actually are. While we know that our own preferences are varied and diverse, we do not recognize this diversity in others' tastes. Consequently, we anchor to past choices others have made and believe that their other preferences must be similar.

The surprising aspect of this conclusion is not that people predict others will like similar selections, but rather that people will dislike dissimilar selections, even if it has desirable features. This, we suggest, is a fundamental misperception because others underestimate the range and diversity of people's tastes.

Our findings demonstrate that, while you may enjoy dissimilar options for yourself, you will routinely predict that others do not enjoy dissimilar options. In our first two experiments, we determined that after someone learns of someone else's choice, s/he will expect the other person to like similar options and to dislike dissimilar options. In our third and fourth experiments, we discovered that people will select dissimilar options for themselves — especially when the

dissimilar option is of higher quality than the similar option — but they will fail to predict this choice for others. This occurs even if there is a monetary reward involved by correctly selecting what another person will select. Our fifth study showed that inferring dislike from dissimilarity correlates to a belief that others have narrow and homogenous preferences.

What Do People Predict?

Our first experiment was structured to compare predictions when an observer knows a previous selection to when the observer doesn't know the person's previous selection. In this experiment, observers either knew or didn't know that the target vacationed at a lake and had to predict the target's preferences for other kinds of vacations. The two other destinations were either the mountains or the city. Interestingly, when the prior vacation selection was not known, only 9.8% of people predicted that the city vacation would be disliked; however, once they knew that the target had chosen a city vacation, 33% of people predicted that the city vacation would be disliked. The second experiment extended the first using minimalist conditions about similarity and dissimilarity of objects, resulting in the same conclusion.

Our third and fourth experiments investigated the accuracy and strength of belief that others will dislike dissimilar things. For these studies, we collected actual and predicted preferences where participants would either indicate their own preference or predict the preference of another person: participants had to choose between a three-star movie in a preferred genre versus a five-star movie in a dissimilar genre. Additionally, observers would be given a monetary bonus if they were able to accurately predict the movie selected. We found that 68.5% of the self-participants chose the higher quality, dissimilar option, whereas 39.3% correctly predicted the choice of their partners.

The final study involved two tasks: the first measured individual's general beliefs about others preferences (i.e., how varied — or not — did people believe others to be), and the second examined their preference prediction. The results found that the more homogeneous people believe others to be, the more likely they were to predict that dissimilar options must be disliked.

Implications for Real Estate

Prediction of consumers' choices has several important applications for real estate because selecting a home is ultimately the choice of one option over another. One basic question a realtor might ask him/herself is whether to show a client a home even if it does not meet the specifications of the client's demands. For example, say your client has expressed interest in traditional homes, should you show the client a modern home with an open-floor plan? What if the open-floor plan modern home is well-priced? Our results indicate that you should show the open-floor plan home because the client had not expressed dislike of open-floor plan homes. If traditional homes carry an additional cost, the open-floor plan home may actually be preferred.

Choosing between homes can be seen as a tradeoff of attributes. Rather than framing a question to a client as “would you rather have attribute A or attribute B,” it is more important to understand what the client likes or dislikes about both attributes. This gives a clearer picture of what characteristics to look for in a potential home. Further, it is essential to clearly understand the attribute itself from the client’s point of view. Say you are beginning to show houses to a buying unit that desires to live in a neighborhood. At first glance, you may begin deciding on which homes to show in the suburbs, but neighborhood can have several connotations depending on the person. One buyer may interpret neighborhood similarly and desire to live on the end of a cul-de-sac with a white picket fence. However, a different buyer may interpret neighborhood as close proximity to people and would rather live downtown, where interactions with neighbors occur frequently. Instead of a binary choice set, you now have characteristics that help define what the client is looking for.



Conclusion

Predicting someone’s preferences may appear straightforward based on the decisions s/he made in the past, but this is often not a clear indication of future preference. Rather, people are complex, have diverse tastes, and tend to seek quality over homogeneity. Our findings show the utility of giving the consumer a choice of dissimilar options, even if you predict the preference of one option over the other. What someone likes isn’t an accurate predictor indicate what s/he dislikes.

Recommended Reading

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Building a Winning Sales Presentation

Charles Fifield, MBA

Delivering an effective sales presentation to a prospective real estate client will impact attaining your desired outcome for most client interactions. Every sales presentation is a compound of



both form and substance. The form is the structure or process of how you plan to offer your presentation. The substance is about the essence of your recommendation in terms of how it will work for the prospective client and enable the client to meet his/her needs, be those needs of a more functional or emotional nature, or both. In other words, the substance is your answer to the client's number one question, "What's in it for me?"

In the business of selling, form is easily as important as substance. It's like answering the question, "Which is more important, the client liking the agent or the client respecting the agent?" Without both, the client-agent relationship will ultimately fail. The real estate agent's challenge in the sales presentation definitely begins with form and ends with substance. That's because your recommendation must satisfy the client's expectations and be value-adding.

The Purpose of a Sales Presentation

Your sales presentation is the engineered bridge for change between the client's "as is" situation, including disappointments and pain with their current real estate situation, and the client's "to be" resolution and new found value. The principal reason for a sales presentation is to show the client in a problem-solving or solution-building fashion your most relevant capabilities, including yourself, your company and your recommended property(ies). The presentation should successfully address all three sets of capabilities, not simply the property, and address the client's perceived challenges or desires.

By successfully matching capabilities to the client's situation and validating the positive impact, real benefits are created. WIIFYs -- *What's in it for you* -- or benefit statements, should be delivered and incremental value must be engendered for the client. Simply stated, the presentation, which, for real estate agents is often a property showing, is the means by which the agent moves a client from interest-to-change to a conviction-to-change, thereby clearing a path to a commitment-to-change and a win-win outcome.

The Recommended Framework of a Sales Presentation

In terms of process management, the typical sales process will have four phases that you might picture as the four bases and related base paths on a baseball diamond. As in baseball, the sequence is important. The sales process commences at home plate and after hitting a ball into the field of play (the introduction), the runner, or in our case, the agent, must run to first base. To successfully score a run or gain an order, the agent must then subsequently run in correct order to second base, third base and finally home without being put out.

1. **Phase 1 (the base path between home plate and first base)** is termed the preliminaries. This phase is highly relationship-driven, and the agent must pass the client's likeability and trust test or the sales process is, for all intents and purposes, over.
2. **Phase 2 (the base path between first base and second base)** is termed the diagnostics or investigative phase. During this phase, active listening is emphasized to determine such key factors as who is involved in the buying decision (i.e., the buying center), what the client wants and why, a budget if available, how the current situation is prompting a change (perhaps the current property – commercial or residential – is underperforming) and the financial and emotional consequences of not making a change.
3. **Phase 3 (the base path between second base and third base)** is termed the presentation or demonstration, and during this phase we desire to build on our progress gained through phases 1 and 2 in order to gain a client's conviction to pursue a change or make a decision.
4. **Phase 4 (the base path between third base and home plate)** is termed gaining commitment or closing. This phase should prove the least challenging if phases 1 -3 were professionally accomplished. In fact, the best close and our goal is to have the client actually close the agent with a statement such as, "This looks good, what do we need to do in order to get it implemented?"

Although the presentation represents only one part in the recommended four-phase selling process, obviously the quality of the presentation is very dependent on the effective development of the preceding phases. Successful presentations don't act independently to the other phases. Quite the contrary, the presentation is formulated as an interdependent piece of the whole. For example, if the relationship factors are not positively developed in phase one or the preliminaries, the presentation will most certainly be difficult due to limited likeability and trust.

Also, if you don't define during the investigative phase who is participating in the purchase process and what the client wants and why, the presentation is directionless, prone to feature dumping, lacks emotional and/or value appeal, and the agent doesn't know how to close. Finally, if you don't have a clear desired end in mind, which is the focus of phase four and largely

defined by the client during phase two, then the agent will tend to commence phase four less assertively and not know when the client is seemingly ready to buy as the client and agent interactively progress through the sales call journey to its logical next step.

At a minimum, the agent should have a clear understanding of four critical pieces of buying decision information before ever commencing the presentation:

- What the client wants and why
- How the agent plans to strategically present (form and substance) the offering to this client
- How the agent will later deliver a value discussion (benefits minus cost) with this client
- How the agent will later close this client

Nothing in an effective presentation format is magical; however, having a standard format works to the agent's advantage because it enables the agent to be more client-focused and less self-focused. Employing a standard format for sales presentations should greatly simplify the process and cause the agent to be more relevant in the presentation's client-driven content or substance. In sales presentations, the devil should be in the details or substance, not in the form of the presentation.

The recommended sales presentation should have three key components:

1. *Tell the client what you are going to show.* This should be very consistent with the agenda which you probably outlined during the preliminaries phase.
2. *Show the client your recommendation(s) and explain how it will work in terms that can be well understood by the client.*
3. *While showing your recommendation, reinforce the benefits of what you are showing in order to achieve relevance for the client. Provide third-party evidence, if possible, to validate key benefits.* If you claim that the neighborhood has strong connectivity, show the client the *Next Door* chatter (a social media app) for the neighborhood.



validate key benefits. If you claim that the neighborhood has strong connectivity, show the client the *Next Door* chatter (a social media app) for the neighborhood.

A suggested format for the delivery of a specific “reason to buy” is feature, benefit or WIIFY, evidence and client agreement (FBEA). This sequence is frequently called a “unit of conviction.” The agreement element is vital in order

to be always trial closing so that the agent understands what has or has not been accomplished and buying momentum is being fostered. Through this format, the agent assumes nothing.

The Recommended Substance of an Effective Sales Presentation

Focus on making the substance of the presentation creative and tailored to the client's personality and response mode. If you view the selling process as storytelling, then it's during the presentation that you introduce the protagonist of your story. During the investigative phase, the antagonist to the client's story is introduced, including the challenges, disappointments and pain that the client is suffering, both financially and emotionally, with his/her current real estate situation. It is almost as if the protagonist is being introduced in the presentation to do battle with the antagonist, and the agent's job is to enable or assist the client to prevail and become the hero or heroine as a consequence of overcoming the antagonist.

An effective sales presentation or real estate showing should have many substance ingredients, including:

- Be strongly client-focused in terms of delivery style and content.
- Build a collaborative working relationship to invite client participation in shaping the proposal, and if possible, work physically side-to-side versus across a desk, table or any form of territorial barrier. (Note: Should the client choose to physically lead the presentation or property showing process, then the salesperson must adapt to be a capable facilitator, not the guide.)
- Be a hands-on learning experience for all parties, and have planned opportunities to invite as many questions or objections in order to build "want to buy" momentum (Note: Objections should generally be treated as buying indications or signals and not disagreement or resistance.)
- Be warm and engaging, and demonstrate a wanting to serve and a commitment to helping the client.
- Employ as many human senses as possible (touch, hear, visual, smell and taste) to strengthen realness and the client's ownership.
- Communicate with emphasis on client understanding, and simplify the message of why your real estate recommendation works.
- Tailor matchmaking units of conviction (maximum 3 – you, your company and your recommendation) consistent with previously noted "hot buttons" or buying motivators to minimize feature-dumping waste and maximize value building.
- Impact the client both logically and emotionally, because the ultimate decision is definitely about both (Note: The final decision is largely emotional, and your presentation should be designed to gain clear emotional verbal and non-verbal buying indicators.)

- If possible, get the client actively involved (real or imagined) in owning the solution being co-developed.
- Be win-win minded, and before exiting the presentation summarize what has been learned.

Summary

Being able to design and deliver a quality presentation is a critical component in an agent's success potential. The effective presentation begins with "form" and ends with "substance." The agent who understands and masters this will be more productive. A good structure simplifies the selling process and enables the agent to perform the role of being a guide or facilitator as opposed to being the classical salesperson. Good substance brings the presentation or journey to life for the client. The agent should want to foster the client to take action, and both form and substance should be consistent with that end. Before an agent makes a sales call, one question that should always be asked is, "If I was the client, would I buy from me based on what I plan to present?" If the answer is "no," then you haven't sold yourself, and the meeting should be cancelled until a more compelling recommendation is identified.

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Looking Back: Key Themes in Sales Research

Keith A. Richards, PhD, Wyatt Schrock, PhD, Yanhui Zhao, PhD, and Douglas E. Hughes, PhD

In every field of study, there are moments when *looking back* helps us better understand where we are now and the path forward. In an effort to uncover key takeaways for salespeople, we reviewed the lessons gleaned from the past 35 years of sales research in the *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management (JPSSM)*, the premiere journal focused on sales-related issues.



The research themes that surfaced in our study point toward key issues professionals face today and will continue to face in the future. What we learned may confirm many things top agents already know, but some ideas will challenge you to think about your career in new ways. What follows is a journey through three decades of research – join us on the journey and discover the insights that will help you!

What We Studied

In our research, we analyzed over 700 published articles across three decades (1980s, 1990s, and 2000s), uncovering important issues for both academics and practitioners. We began by recognizing that other scholar teams previously reviewed the literature for insights (Bush and Grant 1991; Leigh, Pullins, and Comer 2001; and Williams and Plouffe 2007). To differentiate this study, we used a technique that allows us to evaluate a large number of studies while minimizing subjective judgment. We employed a quantitative method that examines article citations. A bibliometric review of close to 36,000 citations allowed us to uncover important topics (through citation analysis) and identify topics that are related to each other (through co-citation analysis). The recommended reading at the close of this article provides a complete description of the methodology. Suffice to say, the central goal for our work was to identify articles deemed important by many sales scholars and to examine how those articles related to each other.

What We Learned – Motivation and Performance Matter Most!

The bibliometric analyses revealed two central issues across time: salesperson motivation and salesperson performance. Consistent across all three decades was the search to understand salesperson motivation and salesperson performance, suggesting that salesperson performance

has remained scholars' key outcome of interest. The chief explainer-and-predictor of performance across the decades was salesperson motivation.

The most-cited article in both the 1990s and 2000s was Churchill et al.'s (1985) study of the causes and consequences of salesperson motivation. As any professional will tell you, staying motivated is critical to success. Much of the research uncovered in this study revolved around motivation and the connection is clear in the themes below.

In addition to motivation and performance, our study also revealed four key themes and the developmental history of each theme across the decades: (1) relationship marketing; (2) sales force technology; (3) sales force control systems; and (4) salesperson role stress.

First, the term "relationship marketing" was coined in the 2000s, but theme emerged in the 1980s as buyer-seller interactions, and grew in the 1990s under the study of both adaptive selling and salesperson knowledge. The idea that good agents and salespeople adjust their approach based on the knowledge they have of a given situation underpins relationship marketing. We also see research patterns providing evidence that buyer-seller relationships build over stages and depend on mutual trust and commitment to last.

The **first takeaway** for real estate professionals is to continue to build relationships to support your business growth. Focus on adjusting your approach to fit each person you work with and build trust to help the relationships last.

Second, sales force technology emerged as a key theme during the 2000s as companies implemented sales force automation systems and customer relationship management software. As companies sought to build stronger relationships with customers, they began to employ software to help in that effort. Early on, a reluctance by salespeople to adopt these technologies spurred work on technology acceptance and technology usage by salespeople. However, as the practice of using software to track customer relationships became more mainstream the focus shifted to how technology enhances performance. Clearly, technology has a growing importance in selling and this trend will evolve even further with increased use of social media and specialized software to connect buyers and sellers.

The **second takeaway** is to embrace technology. Whether that technology is used to track your customer interactions, network virtually, or list available properties, the best agents will stay on top with the help of technology.

Third, we uncovered a stream of research on sales force control systems in the 2000s linked to studies from the 1980s which examined salesperson performance and salesperson job satisfaction. From the 1980s, and into the 1990s, salesperson performance evaluations moved to the center stage. Specifically, studies of evaluation criteria (how should we measure salespeople's performance?) and managerial actions (what should managers do?) to improve

both performance and satisfaction were critical to the formation of this theme. Ultimately, we see scholars wrestling with the question of when to use behavior-based control systems (rewarding activity) and when to use outcome-based control systems (rewarding sales).

The **third lesson** to consider is how pay and job tasks are related to salesperson motivation and ultimately performance. As more agents work remotely and use technology to connect with their clients, these control systems will continue to evolve over the coming decades.

Finally, role stress emerged as a theme in the 1990s and continued into the 2000s. Studies of salesperson turnover and the work environment preceded this work (1980s). By the 1990s, research focused on the nature of the salesperson's job, revealing the changing nature of the sales job itself. In these studies, we found scholars linking role stress with lower sales performance.

Our **final takeaway** relates to the job stress we all feel. Anyone who has ever sold for a living can relate to the types of stress generated by commission-based work. Studying this stress helps us better reduce the causes and the impacts of job-related stress in sales. Managing this stress can be the difference in success or failure for both agents and agencies.

Putting It All Together

Taking all of these findings together, we can suggest some actions for agents.

First, check your own level of motivation. We all find ourselves feeling less-than-motivated from time to time. Use your motivation level as an early indicator of your future successes and work to stay on track. Second, embrace technology. Be thoughtful in the types of technology that you employ and invest in areas that will have the biggest payoff for you.

Third, carefully consider how your day-to-day activities are influenced by your pay structure. It is easy to get distracted and focus on activities that don't yield results. Stay focused on tasks that lead directly to you meeting your goals and to the rewards you seek. Finally, manage your stress. Missed deadlines, fickle buyers, and unprepared colleagues can all lead to stress. Find ways to manage your stress levels so that you stay calm and collected. It will pay off in both personal and professional ways!



Recommended Reading

Schrock, Wyatt A., Yanhui Zhao, Douglas E. Hughes, and Keith A. Richards (2016), “JPSSM Since the Beginning: Intellectual Cornerstones, Knowledge Structure, and Thematic Developments,” *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 36 (4), 321-343.

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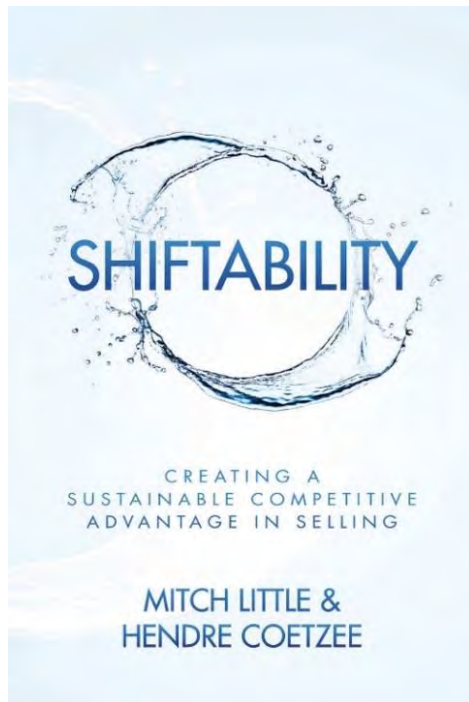
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Dr. Douglas Hughes' (PhD – University of Houston) research focuses on sales force management, salesperson performance, customer relationships, and the marketing-sales and sales-service interfaces. Hughes serves as Editor-in-Chief of *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management* and has published articles in the *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *Marketing Letters*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, and *Journal of Service Research*. He was honored for the best doctoral dissertation (2009) and best published articles on a sales topic by the American Marketing Association (2011, 2016) and is also the recipient of the 2013 Withrow Emerging Scholar Award and the 2016 James M. Comer Award for the Best Contribution to Selling and Sales Management Theory. Prior to his academic career, Dr. Hughes served as CEO of a business services firm, as a senior executive in both marketing and sales at Fortune 100/500 consumer products firms, and as a consultant to a variety of companies across multiple industries.

INSIDER: Shiftability

Luke Smith, MBA



Deepak Chopra, an American author and speaker, once said, “I am not a human thinking, I am not a human doing, I am a human *being*.” Throughout our daily lives, we have many options. We can change our jobs, our bosses, our cities, and try endless news sales methods. However, unless we undergo personal transformation ourselves, external changes will not propel us where we want to go or help us become who we need to be.

Throughout Mitch Little and Hendre Coetzee’s *Shiftability*, the reader is introduced to six core mindset shifts that sales professionals should adopt to achieve success. While not directly written for the real estate professional audience, the book’s numerous applications present valuable insight for sales professionals of all career fields.

THINK POINT #1: That was Then... This is Now

It’s no secret that the sales profession of yesteryear is strikingly different than the sales profession of today. Before the dawn of the Internet, sales professionals held the secret key to a vault of information that would otherwise remain hidden.

But that was then... and this is now. Today, clients have access to limitless information via the Internet. Prospective homebuyers spend hours poring over potential homes, neighborhood information, and informational forums. Before realtors meet with their clients, clients often have a good idea of what they desire already – for better or for worse.

According to a CEB study of more than 1,400 B2B customers across different industries, 57% of purchasing decisions have been made before a customer talks to a supplier. Some naysayers are even decreeing the death of the sales professional.

With a seemingly negative outlook, realizing the value of a salesperson is pivotal. As a real estate professional, you hold valuable tools in your metaphorical tool belt. You know the area, know the market itself, and know the home-buying process better than your clients – and your skills are desired. You are the voice of reason when emotions run high and clients worry about committing to such a large purchase. You are an expert and coach that the Internet cannot replace.

It's undeniable that the sales world has changed dramatically. But change is inevitable – it's a fact of life. What's more important is how we deal with changes that are thrown at us – how we respond to the challenges we face. Only then will we be able to succeed.

THINK POINT #2: Be a Doer *and* a Believer

Back in elementary school, we learned the order of operations for mathematics. While seemingly innocuous, these rules build the foundation of math in our daily lives. In much the same way, there is an *order of operations* for sales that often is mistakenly reversed.

As salespeople, we often believe that if we **do** certain things, we will then be able to **have** the things we want or need, and then will **be** successful (DO-HAVE-BE). Instead, it's imperative that we shift our thinking and adopt the more transformative model of **Be-Do-Have**. According to the authors, “what we believe about our world and ourselves in the core of our **being**, determines what we will **do**, and ultimately the results we will **have** (**Be-Do-Have**).

Unfortunately, in the search for this shift, we often find ourselves facing limiting beliefs – beliefs that hold us in our current way of doing things. While not necessarily always bad, limiting beliefs hold us back and keep us fixed to a certain frame or set of variables.

Limiting beliefs can be organized into a few broad categories. *Fear-based beliefs* are rooted in our fears – fears of hurting people's feelings or damaging relationships. As real estate professionals, we may fear hearing “no” and never ask for business from potential client.

Misguided or false beliefs are as simple as believing things that are not true – holding onto “conventional” wisdom without questioning it. As real estate professionals, we may hold onto antiquated selling methods dating back to our training long ago and refrain from adopting new technology or selling methods that could dramatically benefit our careers.

Misjudgment or overconfidence also limits us, especially as we interact with new clients and work to build relationships. Finally, *experience-based beliefs* lead us to doubt what we are selling or the resources we have available.

When we operate from these *limiting beliefs*, we will prove ourselves right. However, it is not until we counter these limiting beliefs that we can truly shift to being doers *and* believers. In order to accomplish this, we must recognize and expose the belief, explore the consequences of holding the belief, find alternative beliefs, and design new behaviors based on new beliefs.

THINK POINT #3: Be Like Water When it Comes to Client Engagement

One of the most influential martial artists of all time, Bruce Lee, initially trained in the tradition of Wing Chun as a young man. Later in life, Bruce developed his own integrated martial arts philosophy that contrasted with the often rigid and formal disciplines of traditional martial arts. His new system – *Jeet Kune Do* – emphasized practicality, flexibility, speed, and efficiency. According to Bruce, *Jeet Kune Do* “utilizes all ways and is bound by none and, likewise, uses any techniques which serve its end.”

In one of his most famous quotes, Lee describes what flexibility in form looks like: “Don’t get set into one form, adapt it and build your own, and let it grow, be like water. Empty your mind; be formless, shapeless – like water. Now you put water in a cup, it becomes the cup... Be water, my friend.”

As a real estate professional, you’ve likely been told that there is only one right way to sell. But, as you likely know, the variation among clients almost instantly makes this a falsehood. In applying the principles of *Shiftability*, Bruce Lee’s concept of being like water rings truer than ever.



In order to stay relevant and effective in selling today, one should seek to employ one of four different styles of client engagement depending on the time, role, and circumstances. These four styles move from simpler engagement to more complex interactions:

1. **Product Selling**: The most basic level of engagement, product selling involves offering simple product answers to basic product requests. While the Internet has effectively made this level obsolete in many ways, it remains the backbone for many sales interactions and can assist in moving to more complex interactions.
2. **Solutions Supplier**: Being a solutions supplier requires more knowledge of your company’s ecosystem and how to assist clients in accomplishing their goals. For a real estate professional, this may be the initial step in the selling process – helping a prospective buyer or seller understand the real estate market and providing initial options.
3. **Trusted Advisor**: As a trusted advisor, clients seek us out for input and ideas to help them solve business or personal problems. This may or may not be outside the realm of

the sales professional's knowledge. As a trusted advisor, clients will reach out and call on you to help them with matters that are not even related to services that you provide.

4. **Insight Provider**: While an insight provider is similar to being a trusted advisor, the role is more proactive, requiring significant research and preparation work before you offer up what you have created. In order to be prepared, one must understand, create, and deliver the first insight offering.

By utilizing an engagement technique conducive to the needs and goals of a client, sales professionals can build trust and rapport while demonstrating value for myriad clients.

THINK POINT #4: Tailor Your Insight

Of course, in order to become a proactive Insight Provider, one must understand how to best tailor one's insights to the needs of the client. According to the authors, insight is information-unique knowledge that you can bring to the client that teaches them something new that may reframe what they are already thinking or open up a new train of thought.

For a real estate professional, providing valuable insight is the hallmark of a good sales relationship. Providing worthwhile ideas and suggestions to clients will undoubtedly result in returning clients and referrals as you look to grow your network.

In order to be effective, insight should bring something new to the client, should point to a solution that you can actually provide, and should lead your clients to making a decision. Highly personalized insight tailored to your specific client will lead to a strong bond and a positive sales relationship.

Personalized insight is highlighted by three key drivers. First, personalized insight is *discovered* – it must arrive through two-way conversations filled with thorough listening. In a similar fashion, personalized insight is *co-created* with the client through effective communication. This involves careful listening, asking good questions, and a genuine curiosity to explore. Finally, personalized insight is *tailored* to a specific person or client company. This involves a deep understanding of what the client values and where they are in the decision process.

Providing personalized insight to real estate clients doesn't need to be difficult. Remember, you are the expert. No real estate website can provide the valuable information you hold about the real estate markets of your adopted cities. Your only task is to work collaboratively with your clients to discover – through listening – what their goals are and work hard to help them accomplish them.

Conclusion

Whether we want to believe it or not, the world is changing before our eyes. While we respond well to present changes, we must discover how to adapt to continuously changing conditions in the world of sales. By shifting one's mindset and understanding the changing climate, we can remain meaningful contributors in a dynamic sales environment.

Recommended Reading

Little, Mitch and Coatzee, Hendre (2016), *Shiftability: Creating a Sustainable Competitive Advantage in Selling*, North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

About the Author

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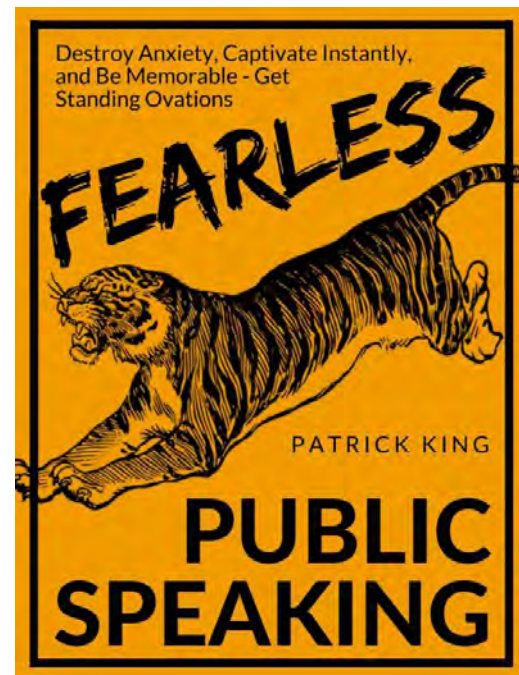
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Originally from St. Louis, Missouri, Luke earned a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Economics from Baylor University in 2014 and a Master of Business Administration in Healthcare Administration in 2017. Before beginning graduate school, Luke served as Special Assistant to the President at Baylor University. Luke currently works for Kaiser Permanente Health System in San Francisco, California.

INSIDER: Fearless Public Speaking

Courtney A. Harris, MBA Candidate

Social interaction specialist and international bestselling author Patrick King deems social, conversation, and communication skills the “greasy crowbars” of life, as they give you access – access to others and access to opportunities. In his book, *Fearless Public Speaking*, King explains exactly what it takes for you to confidently prepare for a talk or presentation and command the stage once you’re there. Most real estate professionals are tasked with addressing a local community group and/or business networking group along the journey of building their clientele. If you consistently apply King’s tips, you will undoubtedly overcome fears, learn to captivate an audience, become a memorable and impactful speaker, and build a strong base for generating business.



THINK POINT #1: Nail Your Opener

Scientific research shows that a person’s memory tends to fixate or anchor on two points in time: the beginning and the end. This anchoring means that your audience will tend to remember the beginning and ending of your talk more than they remember the middle. During the beginning of your presentation, King claims, you have approximately thirty seconds to make a first impression. In these thirty seconds, often before you have even uttered a word, your audience is making decisions regarding your credibility, competence, and trustworthiness.

Therefore, it is crucial that you have a strong opening, and a strong opening begins with a strong biography. If you are given the opportunity to submit a biography to be read prior to your talk, use it as a chance to amplify excitement before you even take the stage. King provides the following basic structure to create a compelling introductory biography:

- Two sentences explaining your work, why you’re speaking, and what makes you relevant. Keep in mind that other professionals are in the audience and want to be connected to important others. Be that person in your opening.
- One sentence about your background and your most pertinent and impressive credentials. Again, now is the time to reflect your best person. Position yourself as positively as possible.

- One sentence about something unique or interesting from your personal life. This interesting element can help the audience personify you and connect to you at an interpersonal level.

In addition to an interesting brief biography, successful openers employ at least one of the following five methods:

1. A Shocking Statistic
2. A Personal Story
3. A Rhetorical Question
4. A Direct Question
5. A What If? Scenario

Not only can you utilize these methods to grab your audience's attention at the beginning of your talk, but, King says, you can also use them to ensure that you close your presentation on a high note. Your closing must answer the question, "what was your main point?" and must be catchy and memorable. Think about your closing as giving those in the audience a sense of urgency for doing business with you. You may find mirroring your introduction in the close to be a useful and compelling approach.

THINK POINT #2: Don't Be Boring

If you're going to ask people to give you their undivided attention for more than five minutes, you have a duty to deliver value and not bore them. Beginning with a strong, exciting opener will make your audience curious and ready to hear more, but one major key in not boring your audience during the *middle* part of your presentation is to **MOVE** because motion creates emotion. Real estate – particularly residential real estate -- is an emotional topic. Move from behind the podium and work the stage as much as possible, making sure to walk over and address the people to your left, to your right, and in the middle. Consider even leaving the stage entirely and walking into the audience. Moving around will add excitement and energy to your voice and provide you audience something interesting to look at besides your slide deck. Lastly, you can combat being boring by remembering this acronym: D.E.M.O.-T. **D**emonstrate, **E**ntertain, **M**ake it Brief, be **O**utrageous, **O**riginal and/or **O**ver the Top, and **T**ell Them What to Do Next.

THINK POINT #3: Visualize, Rehearse, Memorize, and Get in the Zone

But, before you can D.E.M.O.-T, you must visualize, rehearse, memorize, and get in the zone. King asserts that one of the most powerful, yet underrated, rehearsal techniques is visualization. With effective visualization, you can mentally rehearse every single step necessary to reach your goal. The value in visualization is that exercising your mental pathways prior to actually performing the tasks allows you to spot and correct any mistakes and inconsistencies you would

have otherwise missed and ultimately made. King offers two main ways to effectively use visualization to mentally rehearse:

1. **First-person perspective** - Walk through every step required to achieve your goal. Evaluate every nuance and perform every minute part. Mentally and emotionally place yourself in your presentation.
2. **Third-person perspective** – Walk through every step required to achieve your goal, but, this time, perform each action from a third-person perspective. This will allow you to focus on the technical steps involved and remember the *feeling* of doing it correctly.

However, King notes, all your visualization and mental rehearsal will be for nothing if you fail to memorize your material. To prevent this, King offers an easy, low-resistance technique to memorize your material called a memory palace. To build your memory palace, follow these steps:

1. Visualize your home. Walk through it in your mind. This is your memory palace. Choose a route to take upon entering, such as going to the kitchen or your bedroom. Do not change the route.
2. Next, identify six specific items along your route. These will be “storage locations” in which you’ll place memories to be picked up later.
3. Next, assign things you want to memorize to these “storage locations” using symbols, drawings, or other vivid concepts that are associated with what you wish to remember.
4. Lastly, walk through your memory palace taking the route you chose earlier. Along the way, you will encounter your six storage locations. Seeing them and the vivid imagery you assigned to them will inevitably evoke what you wished to memorize.

The last tip King provides to aid in preparing for your presentation is to create a pre-performance ritual. Creating this ritual is all about identifying your optimal state for presenting, and asking yourself the right questions to determine how to get yourself to this state prior to your talk. Consider everything from your food choices, activities, superstitions, social interaction, and final rehearsal. Evaluate and decide what best gets you in the zone and ready to perform.

THINK POINT #4: Ace the Q&A Session

So, you’ve managed to successfully visualize, rehearse, memorize, get in the zone, and D.E.M.O.-T your way through your presentation. Congratulations! Now, you’re all finished, right? Not even close. According to King, you should never think you’re off the hook once you finish your talk, instead *always* expect a Q&A session.

Q&A sessions are unpredictable by nature, as you will never know for certain what will be asked. However, you can avoid being blindsided by an unanticipated question by being well-versed in the common concerns, questions, contrasting arguments, and relevant research

regarding your topic. Prepare a *common questions sheet* for yourself that includes the common arguments that oppose your position, frequent clarifications you've had to make in the past and/or any you anticipate having to make, as well responses to each. By considering and answering likely questions and opposing arguments prior to your Q&A session, you will be more polished and less likely to be caught off guard.

THINK POINT #5: Overcome Fear and Anxiety

But, alas, all the preparation you put into your talk can all be for naught if you allow anxiety and fear to consume you. King states the first step in defeating any fear of speaking you may have is to adjust your perspective. Your perception of your role, the role of the audience, and the context of your talk has an incredible influence on your comfort level and your approach. Therefore, King suggests using the following reality as a sense of comfort – the audience is there for you, to learn from you, and to see where there might be mutual benefit in working with you. They want to see you succeed and aren't looking for perfection. In fact, according to the *Pratfall Effect*, the more vulnerable you appear, such as stumbling or stuttering just a little, the more likable you will be. So, as long as the imperfections don't make you seem incompetent, a few errors are ok and will actually enhance your charisma.

Although overcoming your fear and anxiety is important, according to another principle King talks about, the *Yerkes-Dodson Law*, you actually don't want to eliminate 100% of the stress or pressure you may feel about speaking. The *Yerkes-Dodson Law* states that there exists an ideal level of stress that directly corresponds to peak performance. To apply Yerkes-Dodson, try finding which levels of pressure allow you to perform highly in different situations. Optimal levels of stress will give you sufficient motivation to work hard but not so much pressure that you feel overloaded and struggle to perform.

THINK POINT #6: Learn from Yourself

It's no secret that becoming a great presenter is a process that involves continuous evolution and learning. You must always be on the lookout for ways to improve and become more polished.

King writes that the best way to accomplish this is to record your presentations, watch them, and perform objective postmortem analyses on them. During your analyses, don't focus on your material, instead, focus on your presence, measure your speech rate, check your emotions and energy level, critique your body language, and observe the audience's reactions to your stories and key points. Take extensive



notes on your observations. From your notes, you can determine if you are speaking too fast or too slow, if your energy level is too low or too high, if you are accurately and effectively conveying the emotions you wish to convey, if you are using filler words or repeatedly stumbling over certain phrases, and if, and when, you are boring your audience. Your postmortem analysis is your tailor-made roadmap to improving your presentations.

Conclusion

Implementing the above insights to achieve sustainable improvement will take some time, practice, and plain old trial-and-error. Fortunately, King also offers five easy, quick, and actionable tips you can adopt RIGHT NOW for the very next time you have to speak in public. These five easy and quick tips are to use props and/or visuals, speak as if you're speaking to a single person and not a crowd, observe and learn from the masters, don't overcorrect your stumbles or errors, and, most importantly, don't take yourself too seriously. Becoming a more effective, entertaining, polished, and relaxed public speaker can seem like a daunting task, but, by applying King's tips, it can be done. You can move from just existing on the stage to commanding standing ovations. You can take on public speaking fearlessly.

Recommended Reading

King, Patrick (2017), *Fearless Public Speaking: Destroy Anxiety, Captivate Instantly, and Be Memorable- Get Standing Ovations*, Lexington, KY: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

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