

The Real Reasons Clients Buy

Clients are motivated by a variety of factors in their decision to choose a professional to help with a need. Some of those factors are obvious, and some less so.

The more obvious ones are usually above the surface. They can be described as rational motivators. The less obvious ones are usually below the surface, and can be described as emotional motivators.

Examples of rational motivators are:

- The expertise of the practitioner
- The cost of the service
- Ability to meet a deadline
- The availability of senior personnel
- The need to work within a budget

Examples of emotional motivators are:

- A need for comfort in a complex deal
- The need to feel in control
- The fear of being sidelined
- Ambition to advance their career
- Fear of being out of their depth
- Intense dislike of a colleague
- Pressure from the board or a business unit
- Saving face when a deal goes wrong
- Stamping their mark on the business
- Gaining respect of the business units
- Political manoeuvring
- Expanding their empire

Note that some motivators can be both rational and emotional. For instance, meeting key performance indicators (KPI's) for someone's role may appear rational. However, if a decision maker has to meet a KPI of, say, cutting consultant costs by 20% over a year, it's possible that the decision maker may make decisions that have negative long-term implications for the business but that meet their short-term KPI.

Research informs us that approximately 80% of business decisions are based on emotional motivators. Inexperienced business developers tend to focus purely on a client's rational motivators and miss the important emotional motivators that are really driving the client's decisions.

It's an easy trap to fall into. Clients perpetuate the myth of the importance of rational motivators by forcing service providers through tender processes (such as for

legal services panels) that only talk to rational criteria. Clients also don't want to talk about their emotional motivators because it "gives too much away". Also, practitioners avoid asking clients about their emotional motivators because it is personal, and intimate – and they are not comfortable in this zone.

But pushing through the discomfort can yield great results. A simple way to elicit the information is to start with asking the client about their rational reasons to buy. Then move into the emotional zone by simply asking the question "what's important to **you** in this deal/project/transaction?" Or, "what will a successful outcome look like for you?"

The key take-away's for you from this lesson should be:

1. The client's emotional motivators are more important than their rational motivators.
2. You will need to get out of your comfort zone a bit to get to the client's emotional motivators – but it's worth the effort.