

# 6 Weird Facts about Decision Making That Will Change the Way You Sell



Sales are all about decisions.

As a salesperson, you have to be deliberate about who you spend your time with, how you position your product, how to negotiate with prospects, and everything else. Obviously, prospects have choices to make as well.

On the surface, decisions seem easy. You weigh your options, measure them against your preferences and goals, and choose the option that'll bring you the most benefits.

Of course, nothing's that simple. Everyone values different things, has different decision making frameworks, and has different preconceptions and worldviews that shape the ways they evaluate a situation.

But all of us fall prey to similar decision making quirks. You can never enter a situation knowing exactly what your prospect is thinking, but taking advantage of the six patterns below can turn around your entire sale.

## 6 Facts That Affect How Buyers Make Decisions

## **1) Emotions trump logic.**

A study by neuroscientist Antonio Damasio found that decisions become almost impossible when they're only reduced to logic. Damasio studied subjects who had brain damage in areas that generate their emotions, and found that they couldn't make even simple decisions, despite being able to logically talk through the pros and cons of different options.

When speaking to prospects' don't just give them the facts. Go above and beyond and paint them a picture of the new life they'll live if they choose your product -- one where a certain aspect of their job is easier, where they're receiving recognition for moving a metric, or they're able to crush the goals they've struggled with for a long time. Combine facts with appeals to their hope that things will get better, their fear that they won't, and their excitement about finding a solution to bring a sale home.

## **2) The more choice we have, the worse off we are.**

In her TED talk "How to make choosing easier," Columbia Business School professor Sheena Iyengar describes an experiment she conducted with different varieties of jam. She set up a booth in a grocery store that displayed six or 24 types of jam. Under the six-variety condition, people stopped less frequently than during the 24-variety condition. However, six times as many people bought jam when fewer varieties were displayed.

The take away? While you may be excited about all the different features or products your company offers, overloading your prospect with a list of what they can buy will be overwhelming. Ask a few questions about what your prospect is looking for first, then walk them through a pared-down list of options that'll make it easier for them to digest and buy.

## **3) It's harder to make choices at the end of the day.**

In a 2011 study, researchers at Ben-Gurion University found that parole boards granted parole to about 70% of cases heard in the morning, but less than 10% of cases heard in the afternoon. This pattern held true regardless of the prisoners' ethnic backgrounds, crimes, or initial sentences.

This pattern is due to a phenomenon called "decision fatigue." As the day wears on, it became harder for the parole board to consider every aspect of a case thoroughly, so they defaulted to what seemed like the safest choice -- keeping prisoners in jail, or the status quo.

Your prospects are subject to decision fatigue, too. If you're dealing with a particularly difficult deal or hesitant prospect, try to schedule calls earlier in the day, when your prospect's resistance to change isn't artificially high.

#### **4) We can make complex choices if we're eased into it.**

While Iyengar did find that giving people too many options was overwhelming, we are capable of making extremely complex decisions -- if our options are presented to us correctly. Iyengar used the example of customizing a car to illustrate her point: If choices with fewer options are shown first (for example, one of four types of engines), people are more likely to stick with the entire selection process than if options with a wide variety of choices (between 56 car colors, say) are presented first.

Follow the same pattern when you're working with a prospect. Start with having them make simple choices before you get into heavy customizations.

#### **5) Information overload is real.**

Information overload describes our inability to process more than a certain amount of information when we need to make decisions. As a result, we make mistakes and are paralyzed by indecision. Information overload has been greatly exacerbated by the sheer amount of information available on the internet today and the high volume of email we're used to receiving.

The take away? Keep things simple. There may be 17 good reasons for your prospect to buy from you, but highlight the most important three or four to start. Don't overwhelm them with a laundry list of benefits, lest they end the sales process just to relieve their brains.

#### **6) Smaller groups make better choices.**

A 2014 study by Princeton University researchers found that that the smaller a decision making group is, the more likely the group is to make the right choice. That's because group decisions are made based on two types of information: Correlated (things accepted by or known to all members) and uncorrelated (facts perceived only by some group members). They're equally important, but the larger the group, the more likely it is that correlated information will outweigh uncorrelated information.

While it's important to have all stakeholders who actually have decision making power in the room when you're making a sale, try and limit that number. The most accurate groups in the study fell between five and 20 members. Reps selling to smaller businesses probably won't run into this problem, but it's certainly a possibility that selling to large corporations could involve dozens of stakeholders.