

# Provocation Deep Dive

## Why educating customers isn't effective

with Jeff Molander

Founder 



Markus Spiske

Welcome to lesson 5 in our Provocation Deep Dive -- Why educating customers is less and less effective lately -- and what to do instead. Whether you're working warm leads from trade shows or inbound marketing... or reaching out to cold contacts. Conventional wisdom is educating prospects is the best way to nurture them toward a buying relationship. We've got to add value in order to get them to engage... consider buying and finally buy. But again, effectiveness of your education relies 100% on you have an interested student. Your customer should have asked you to educate them. If they haven't asked you really have no business educating them. With inbound leads they often have shown interest in being educated. Or are open to being educated. But with cold outbound leads you will do better by focusing energy on helping prospects feel an urge to ask you for that education. It's not as easy as just shoving education at them. If it was you wouldn't be here right now would you!?



Whether you're going in cold or courting a warm inbound lead... create a Pattern Disrupt. Avoid doing what customers expect. Break the pattern they've become conditioned to expect. So... you have the ability to educate customers--in ways that help them. Often in ways that warm them up to becoming your customer. But when most customers sign up for a webinar or download a case study they know what to expect -- to start receiving persuasive marketing messages. And ultimately, they expect us to attempt to sell to them. So... with this in mind we educate ...

# “Education”



We engage in what they often see as “education”... faux education. Because we have the selfish outcome of a sales in mind our education is often seen as having an ulterior motive. Instead, what if you helped them ask to be educated? There are two reasons to consider this strategy: First, it breaks the pattern. It’s different than what prospects are experiencing from other marketers and sellers. If you avoid pushing selfishly motivated education at them... and, instead, help those who need the education to ask for it... that’s just plain different. It disrupts the pattern. Stands out. The second reason you should consider this is this. Because giving customers space.. so they have the chance to become curious enough to ask to be educated... is supported by the experience of our Academy community. This is also supported by behavioral science. So, let’s use an example... and using this example I’ll take you deeper into the psychology. And this is important if you’re going to successfully transform your outreach -- to get more conversations started, with less frustration.

### **Sample from student selling to top HR & C-level executives**

In uncertain times, employees are relying more and more on their employers to support them with caregiving needs, whether for a chronically ill or disabled loved one or to meet schooling needs for a child at home. Not sure if this is an issue for you and your employees but if so have a few ideas for you.

Would you have 30 minutes of availability to discuss some solutions?

I have attached some information on our offering. We look forward to connecting.

Regards,  
John



Here's an example from a student selling an innovative, new way to bring caregiving needs to a variety of employees at businesses who employ them. The target buyer is someone at the top of the Human Resources function... making benefits decisions... and/or CEOs or Managing directors of mid to larger organizations.

**Sample from student selling to top HR & C-level executives**

*Educational or journalistic tone.  
Also sounds like radio ad script.*

In uncertain times, employees are relying more and more on their employers to support them with caregiving needs, whether for a chronically ill or disabled loved one or to meet schooling needs for a child at home. Not sure if this is an issue for you and your employees but if so have a few ideas for you.

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Now I want to read this with you... here goes: "In uncertain times, employees are relying more and more on their employers to support them with caregiving needs, whether for a chronically ill or disabled loved one or to meet schooling needs for a child at home." Now let me re-read that... in the tone an average reader uses. "In uncertain times, employees are relying more and more on employers to support them with caregiving needs, whether for a chronically ill or disabled loved one or to meet schooling needs for a child at home." So... do you hear and feel how ... well ... it sounds like a radio or TV ad script. But do you hear, also, how it's attempting to educate? To inform. Do you also see how this talks down to readers? Almost like a parent talks to a child. I want you to keep that in your mind... like a parent talking to a child.

In uncertain times, employees are relying more and more on their employers to support them with caregiving needs, whether for a chronically ill or disabled loved one or to meet schooling needs for a child at home.

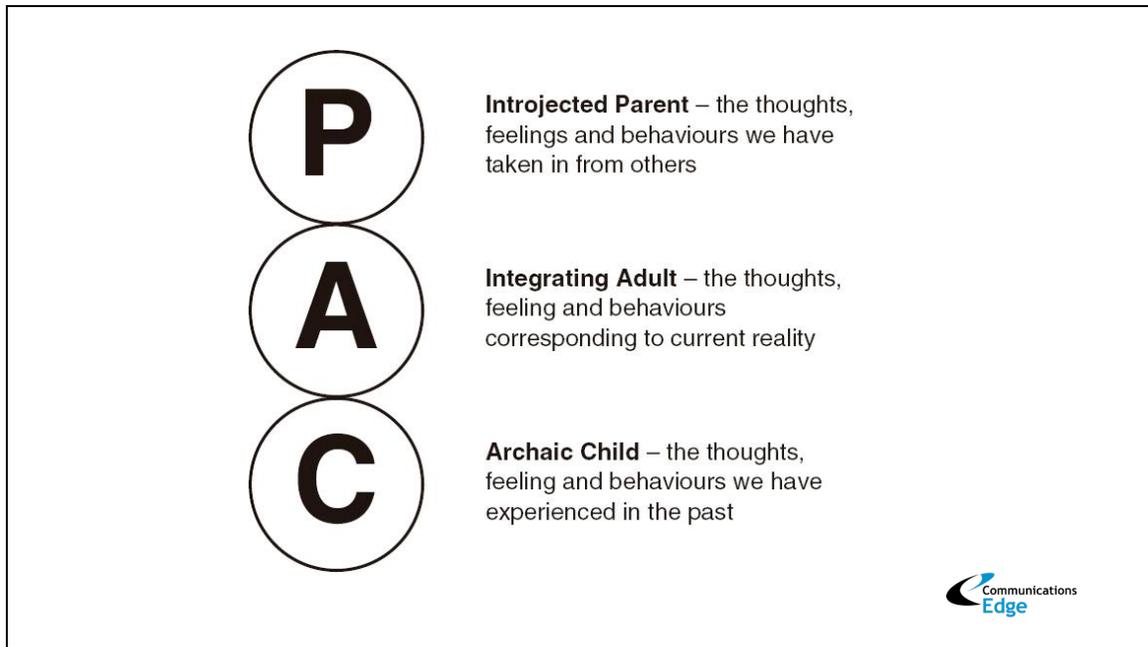


Let's focus on these words. And as I speak consider pausing the video... and re-reading these words. Do you see how these words... this type of writing... assumes the reader does not know... how we live in uncertain times and employees rely increasingly on employers to support them. Now... do you see how this tone comes from a higher place? How this talks down to the reader in a way indirectly communicating -- "I'm ok... but you are not." I'm above you. Specifically, the indirect message here is this: "You're not doing the right thing -- so let me show you."

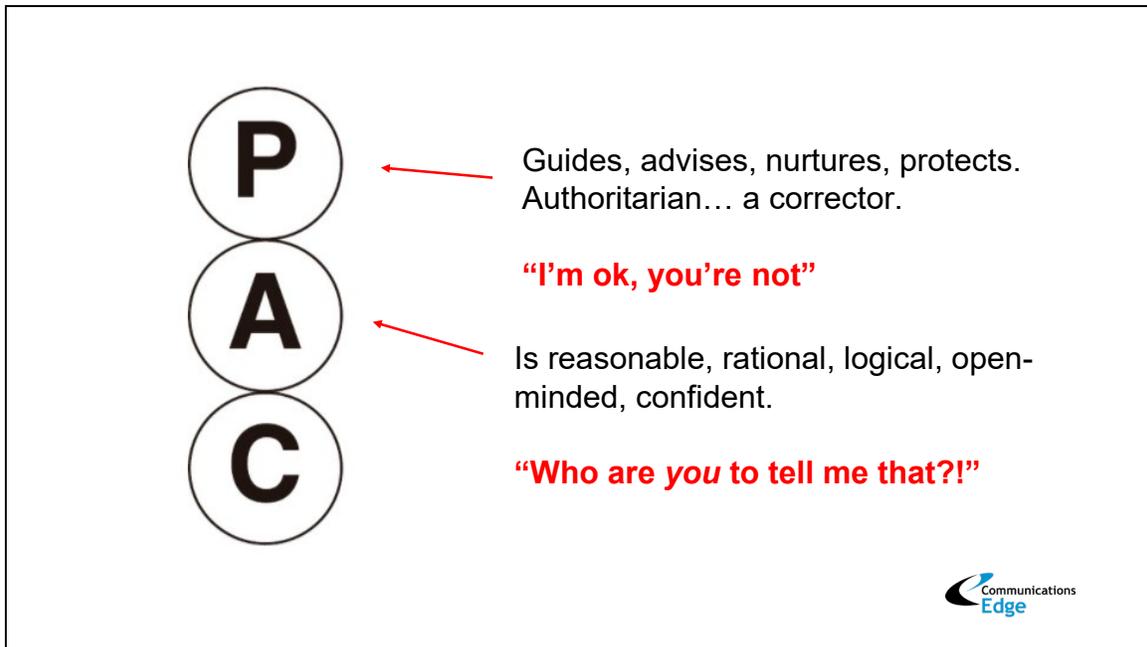
Hi {{first\_name}} -98% of employers say they offer development tools. 12% of their employees say those tools are helpful.



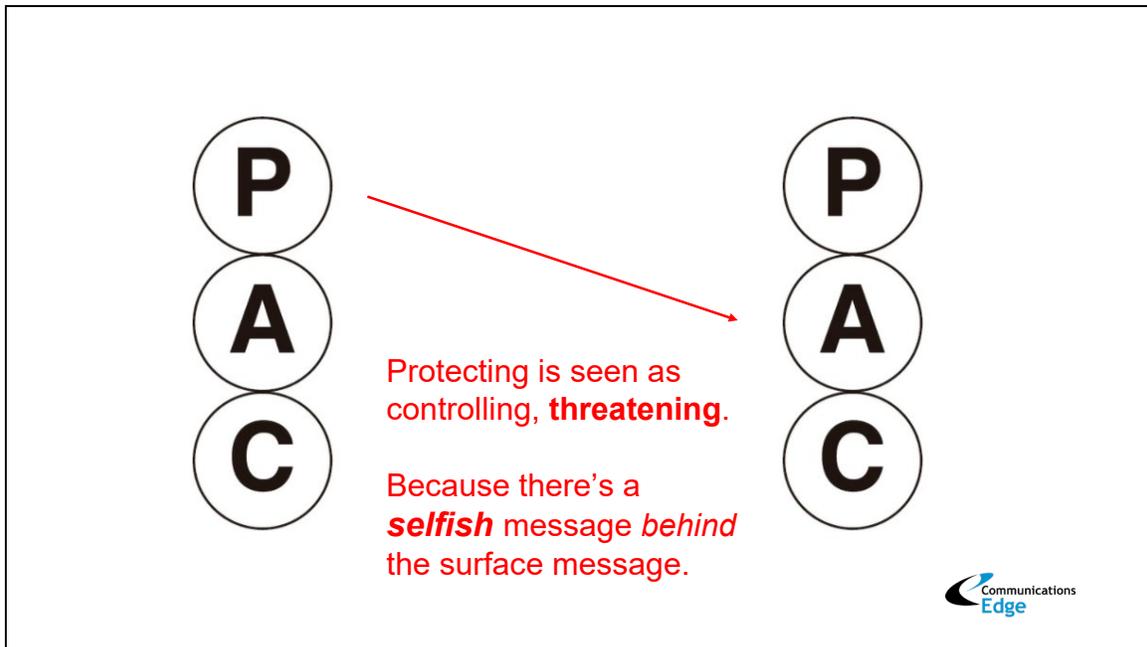
How about this one? Hi... 98% of employers say they offer development tools. 12% of their employees say those tools are helpful. Do you feel where this is going next? It's a tee-up to a sales pitch... which uses this psychology: "I'm ok... but you are not." I'm above you. I'm going to explain something to you -- with an end goal in mind. MY end goal. The indirect message is "You're not doing the right thing -- so let me show you." So, here's the science: A guy named Eric Berne discovered and developed the concept of what he calls Transactional Analysis. Transactional Analysis is a body of science ... human behavioral analysis... which helps us understand human personality type.... and how personalities interact productively or unproductively. We can predict the reactions of others better by understanding this. Sandler teaches Transactional Analysis also... it's very useful. Because with TA we can predict how buyers and sellers will most likely interact based on their natural Ego States.



I'm only going to scratch the surface here with you... so here goes: There are three Ego States humans naturally find themselves in. The Parent ego state. The Adult ego state and the Child ego state. Typically, a Seller is tempted to speak or write in Parent ego state. Nurturing. Educating. Marketing tone. And most often this is not a match with prospects who are, naturally inclined, to be in Adult ego state. This mismatch creates distrust because 1) The tone is "I'm ok... you are not... let me help you" without having been asked. And, also, there's an ulterior motive behind the education... the nurturing tone. In other words...



When we speak to customers from a parent ego, we assume the role of a guide... someone who advises, nurtures and is here to protect them. We have authority... and we are here to correct them. But the "them" is an adult. Someone who is reasonable, rational thinking, logical... yet open minded. And also confident in their abilities. Now, they may know they have a problem. They may know they're not OK at moment. But when being approached by a seller who assumes they (the customer) is not ok.. we can predict trouble.



Because when the parent speaks to the adult this “I’m above you... but I’m here to protect you -- let me explain” is seen as a threat by the Adult... your customer. It is seen as you trying to control -- without being invited to. Because there’s a selfish message behind the surface message. There is an ulterior motive on your part... the marketer or seller. Ok. Let’s forget about your business for a moment. Another way of looking at this is this.

**OPEN Message:**

“What are you cooking, Jeff?”

**HIDDEN Message:**

“Get your ass in the kitchen and start making dinner!”



Let's say my wife may say to me... “What are you cooking, Jeff?” When what she really means... the hidden message... behind the open message is “Get your ass in the kitchen and start making dinner!” See the ulterior motive. It's not educational or nurturing. But it is parent-like -- my wife is attempting to correct by behavior. “She's ok... and I'm not ok.” But she doesn't want to be direct. She's going to tell me what's best for me -- but not in an open way. And as you probably know being direct is preferred. Now does that mean you should be direct about what you want -- when reaching out? Sometimes yes. But being direct about what you want is too risky... when what you want is biased to an outcome you want... like a meeting or purchase consideration. It's what we are direct about wanting that makes a good provocation--- where curiosity is sparked.

Indicates ulterior motive.

In uncertain times, employees are relying more and more on their employers to support them with caregiving needs, whether for a chronically ill or disabled loved one or to meet schooling needs for a child at home. Not sure if this is an issue for you and your employees but if so have a few ideas for you.

Would you have 30 minutes of availability to discuss some solutions?

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So, do you see how this kind of tone... this kind of strategy... indicates an ulterior motive? And how everyone is using this false “education” approach? With persuading the prospect in mind. See how this is a clear set-up to a sales pitch? Not to mention other weaknesses in this message.

This IS a timely, important issue.

(problem to be resolved)

How much can you rely on them understanding without educating?

In uncertain times, *employees are relying more and more on their employers to support them with caregiving needs, whether for a chronically ill or disabled loved one or to meet schooling needs for a child at home.* Not sure if this is an issue for you and your employees but if so have a few ideas for you.

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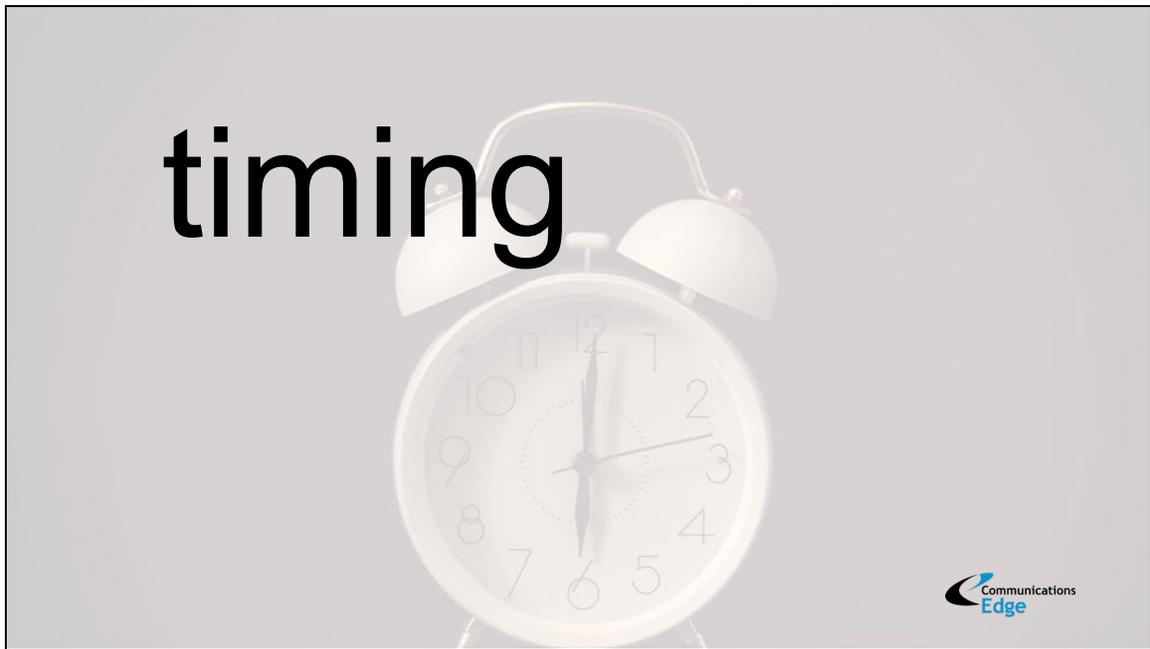


That said, this is a timely, important issue... a problem to be solved. But how much can John rely on the prospect understanding this... without educating them? Probably he can assume they do understand as much. Ok. Just like with storytelling... our last workshop's topic... we demonstrate value... we educate potential customers... based on their problem. Because they're not ok. And we are. Plus, we want to show them how to become better... become ok. We are a Parent of sorts. But we don't want to communicate this way. Because it threatens.

“education”



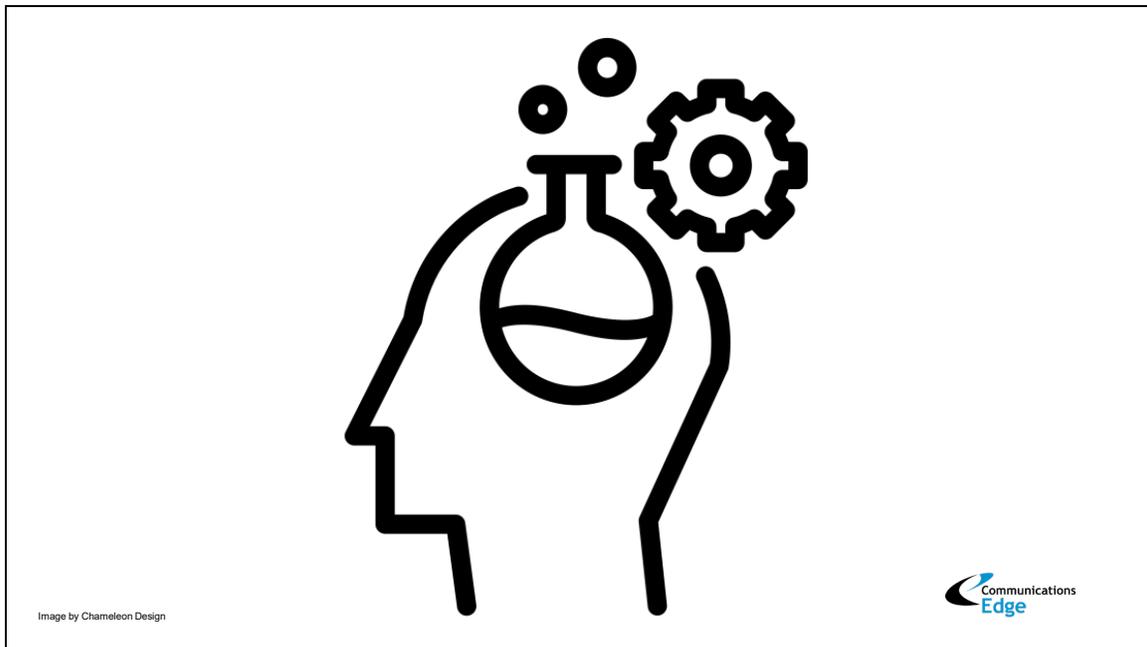
Ultimately, we educate because we want customers to consider investing. Fine. But prospects usually see education as a sales trick... rather than helpful advice. So, we cannot rush into educating. We need to create enough curiosity for them to want to be educated. To see this as real, worthwhile education. To ask for us to educate them. So, next I'll ask: when do you start educating clients? Because when you start educating often determines how much behavior you'll motivate. Your education may be falling on deaf ears because of your timing.



Here's why this is important to you: Let's say you start teaching prospects -- making deposits first as they say -- right away... as part of your cold follow-up email sequence. Or LinkedIn outreach. This is probably hurting more than it's helping. So, let's examine how to best start conversations in situations where your clients need to know what it is they don't know -- before they can buy.



Maybe they need to be educated on the status quo situation -- to understand just how bad it is. Even though it's comfortable. Maybe your customer needs to learn how bad change is needed. Or they need to be educated on a concept which is new -- and vital to their success. Much like what I do in our marketing at Communications Edge. We educate -- as a means to earn our customers' consideration to invest in themselves.... to create change. Change which is uncomfortable and can be a little scary. Whether you are sending sales outreach -- or demand generation marketing messages supporting outreach -- you are told we must "give to get." So, you give and give and give. Right away. You start giving. marketing style. But this is sales. Where we need to earn the conversation. This gets back to timing.



Here's what's going on in your customer's brain... even when you share information that is useful and relevant... offering right away in the relationship scores negatively in their brain. "Making deposits first" can backfire. Because they see your education as a trick. Instead, you'll start earning more conversations by helping decision-makers feel an urge to request your knowledge.... request your education. Your PDF, your video. Whatever. Helping your prospect request to be educated -- by provoking their curiosity -- starts more & better conversations. Consistently. Because this leverages fundamental human behavior. Human beings value information they ask for more -- they value less information we offer freely. In addition to what Transactional Analysis teaches us... you can also think about it this way:



The first thing someone does when you sign up for their newsletter or connect on LinkedIn is offer you their ebook or video or whatever it is. You didn't ask for it. Thus, you don't value it. But they don't care. They push their education it at you. Why? Because they don't have the skill developed. They only know how to assume you're not ok -- and push what they consider to be valuable education at you -- and hope for the best. Which is what low-skilled marketers do. Instead, start enticing customers to ask. Help them develop a little curiosity. This way your prospects will value your educational tool. They'll be more likely to want it, use it and extract the value. Bottom line... how do YOU experience this in your life. When you're the potential buyer. Or you're trying to understand something. The more people offer you education -- that you didn't ask for -- the less you value it. It's a law.



In fact, when someone offers you their know-how online before you ask for it -- the more you resist their help! The less you value their education and see it as a ploy. Not just because the way they approach you is talking down to you... they have an ulterior motive. Also, because their timing is off. They offer too quickly. Now... it takes skill to provoke curiosity. To slow down and help customers want to ask. It takes guts to slow down -- give the customer enough space to see your education... advice... as authentic and genuine. So, here's what to do: Help the customer want to be helped -- then help. They'll value your offer more... and want to talk more. Because it was their idea.

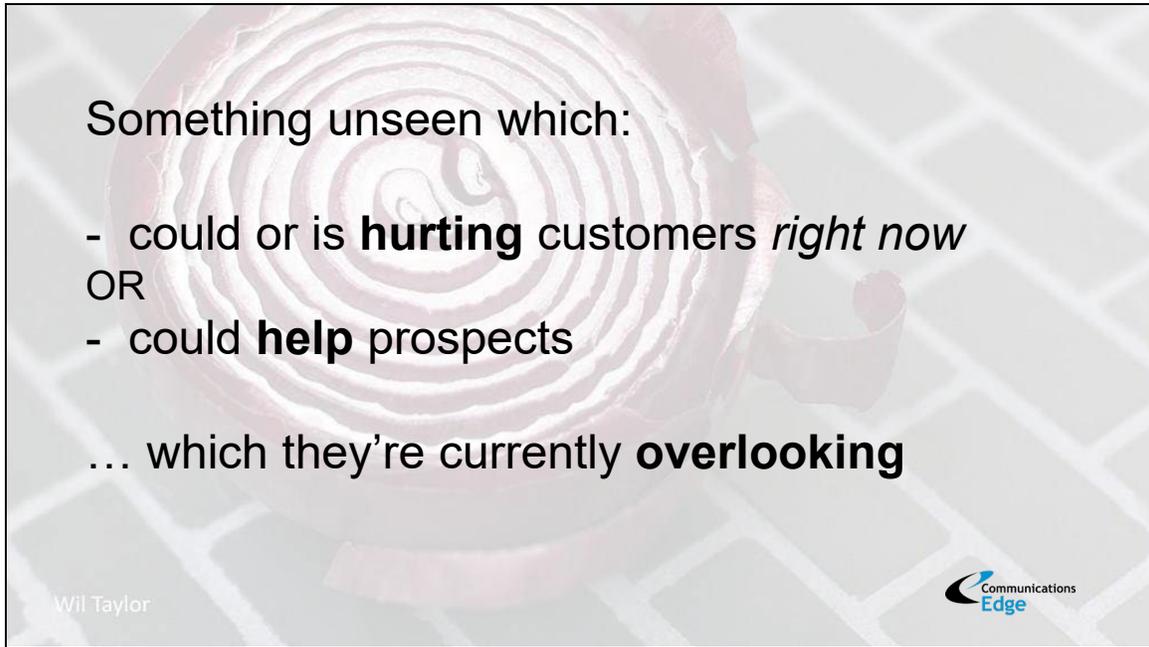
help customers want  
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Help customers want to be helped -- then help. Help the decision-maker feel an urge to request your knowledge. This always starts more & better conversations. They'll value your offer more... and want to talk more. Because it was their idea. And -- the best part -- because it's a fit for both sides. Qualification -- on both buyer and seller sides -- is built-in to the model. Ok. Ok. So, let's have a look at an example... One of our members is courting HR execs with a workman's compensation solution. Her product is doing amazing things for business owners & employee health.



Cheri is her name, and she is helping business owners & employees on the health front. She's calling on businesses whose employees get seriously hurt on the job... and she's got a better way to get them healed-up, happy and back at work. Seriously innovative and unknown to most business owners and HR execs... people who want their employees to recover faster to reduce costs to them and improve productivity and keep employees happy. I'm going to show you the message we worked-up for her. But first...



Something unseen which:

- could or is **hurting** customers *right now*

OR

- could **help** prospects

... which they're currently **overlooking**

Wil Taylor



Think about your situation. I want you to identify, today, something unseen that could -- or is -- hurting customers right now. But... beware: The temptation is to think of common pain points. Broad pain points are commonly used in lazy, spammy messages. Your competitors and others are pushing pains and flooding customers' inboxes with pushing on common pains. Instead, we need to peel back the onion. Go deeper to describe a more niche pain ... in more specific language. Start drilling into the blood-and-guts language used to describe challenges. This will help you stand out from all the other pain-pushers. Ok. That's option 1: Warning them about something that can hurt them -- which they don't see -- in a way that doesn't give away too much information. Less is more. We don't want to start educating, unsolicited. We want to provoke. Option 2: Identify something that could help prospects...which they are currently overlooking. This is less provocative. So, let's see an example on the first option.... from Cheri....

Subject: WSIB surcharges?

Mimi,  
Seeing an unpredictable pattern in your WSIB surcharges. This short-term pattern could have long-term detrimental effect.

You open to reducing this risk?

Cheri



So, here's the message. Remember: We peeled back the onion... to find an issue that isn't being focused on by sales reps vying for Cheri's attention. We settled on WSIB surcharges. These are government penalties issued to companies who file workers compensation issues late or improperly. Most businesses see these penalties as a cost of doing business. But actually, if they start building up there are serious consequences most organizations don't know about... issues that can hurt them in the future. "Seeing an unpredictable pattern in your WSIB surcharges. (which she can see thanks to a subscription to a database available to her) This short-term pattern could have long-term detrimental effect. You open to reducing this risk?" Now there's a half dozen reasons why this ended up provoking replies for Cheri. But the main idea is to surface, quickly, an issue the customer isn't aware can hurt them... that is putting them at risk right now. It could put the business at risk and/or the person whose job it is to prevent unnecessary risk. And not getting into the educational process yet. Instead of explaining how this short-term pattern will have a bad effect on Mimi's business we're holding it back. We're earning the right to educate first.



Ok. Are such warnings valuable? Heck yes. The trick is to make the value you provide provocative. It's got to spark curiosity in clients. And that's where most of us are failing. We're rushing in to educate. So always remember please...



**Wrong mindset = wrong tactics**



If you're in the marketing mindset... the wrong mindset... you'll use the wrong tactics. Your habits will sabotage you. You need to break conventional thinking, or your message won't provoke conversations. You'll blend in with everyone else -- shoving what you think is good education down the throats of potential customers... until they're ready to buy. Because you don't know what else to do. And because it's what you heard some marketing guru say works. Consider throwing away your marketing mindset when prospecting. The baby and bathwater must both go... in many cases with your messaging. Now I know you have seen this kind of reasoning before. But I'm asking you to consider the weaknesses of this logic.

“Adding value will win trust and catch their attention in **a much different way than 99% of other sellers.**”



The experts claim: “Adding value will win trust and catch their attention in a much different way than 99% of other sellers.” Look... it’s just not true anymore. I know you’d like to believe you are the only person able to send valuable insights to customers in emails. But the truth is you are probably not going to stand out by pushing value. Here’s why: Most of what you believe your customers should know is being, right now, pushed at them by 99% of sellers! Example of a spammy value-added tactic: Sharing articles of interest with prospects. Odds are high your competitors are pushing the same articles at decision-makers. You don’t stand out. You blend in. So, don’t let some “expert” tell you you’re standing out. Second: Odds are a majority of your prospects already know the information you’re sharing. So, beware: In most cases, sitting down at your desk with the goal of adding value in a series of email messages is dangerous. Because it results in persuasive writing -- pushing pain points and remedies without, first, piquing the customers’ interest in a conversation with you.

- Sequences feel like “campaigns”
- Usually feels like a newsletter
- Ends up feeling like spam
- No context



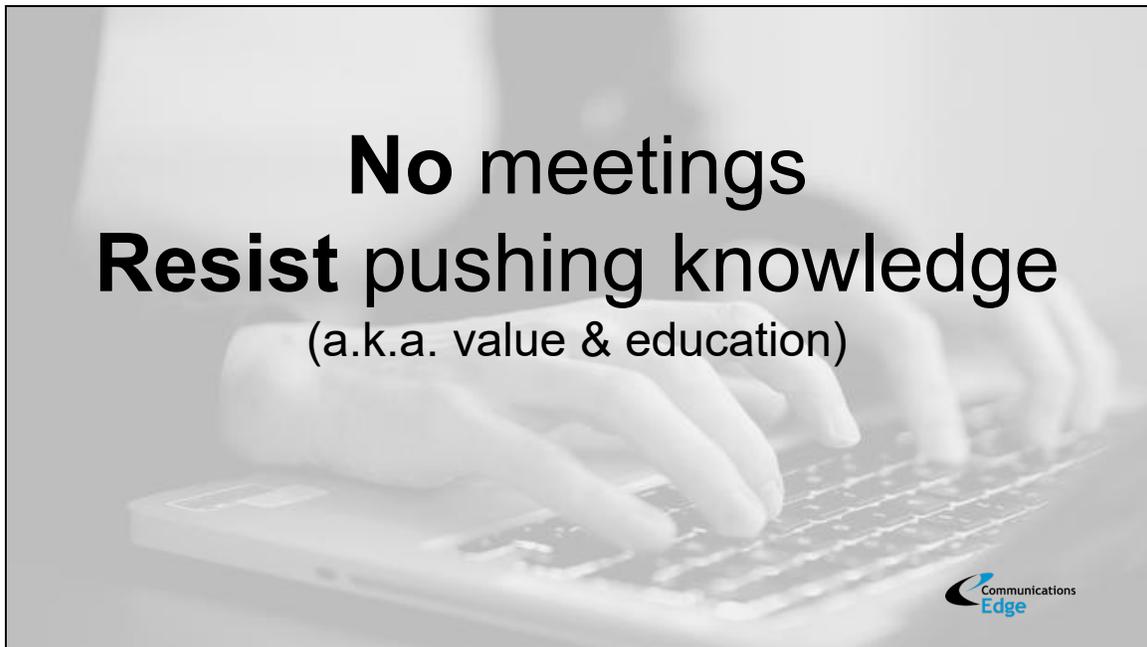
A few additional words of caution: Beware: When sending sequences of messages, they often feel like campaigns. The challenge is to make your email messages avoid looking like part of a pre-planned campaign... an automated sequence. Because everyone is sending automated sequences. The moment your sales emails feel like part of a mass emailed marketing sequence it's over. Point #2: Educational sequences usually feel like newsletters. People generally opt in to receive marketing newsletters, right? But no one chooses to get cold emails. It ends up feeling like spam. Cold emails arrive without context. Think about it: If you opted into marketing emails, you generally expect to receive information. Whether you attended a webinar for example. You already have some context as to who this company is. People sending sales emails don't have this advantage. A cold email is the first time the recipient is ever hearing about you or your company. So, when designing your follow-up message technique, avoid thinking of it as a blast or campaign. It's not a campaign. Take the marketing hat off and leave it off. Put the sales hat on. And lean in the direction of personalizing. So, coming back to our success principles... sparking curiosity is all about attracting candidates & customers to the idea of talking to you. Ok. So, let's come back to the main success principles to close out.



We are not out to convince people. Not out to persuade them. Instead, to attract them to the idea of having a short conversation to see IF having a longer conversation makes sense... or not. Instead of persuading you'll see better results by provoking curiosity in the prospect. Then you're in a position to -- if it's right for the customers -- help them begin to persuade themselves... persuade themselves that a face-to-face meeting or call or demo is the best next step.



You cannot push education at them. Instead, you've got to pull them.. help them want to be educated. And to pull you've got to a) Stand out from the noise and b) Provoke curiosity. Think about the last time you made a big decision. Think back to a big purchase like a house or a car. Were you persuaded by someone to do something. Did you let them persuade you? Or did you find a way to persuade yourself to make the decision? That is what I'm talking about. Good, neutral sellers help you persuade yourself. So this means changing the rules:



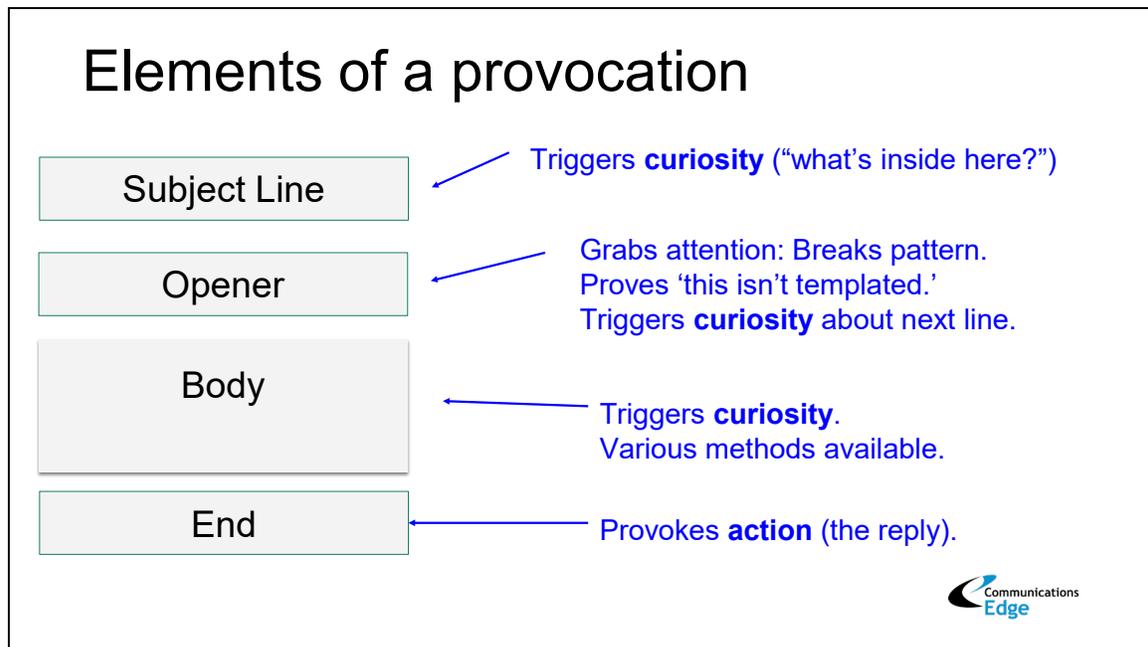
No asking for meetings. Get comfortable with removing meeting requests... in your cold email. It's not my opinion, it's our experience telling us: Don't ask for meetings from go. Be at peace with their saying no... and write it into the tone of your email. Let the prospect know you're at peace with their decision--no matter what it is... to delete or reply to you. And acknowledge their right to choose. Use words that put them in control. It's a huge mental trigger... acknowledging the customer's right to choose a conversation – or not. Because so few do it. Letting them know you're ok if they don't want to talk, quickly, is a huge way to stand out in the inbox.



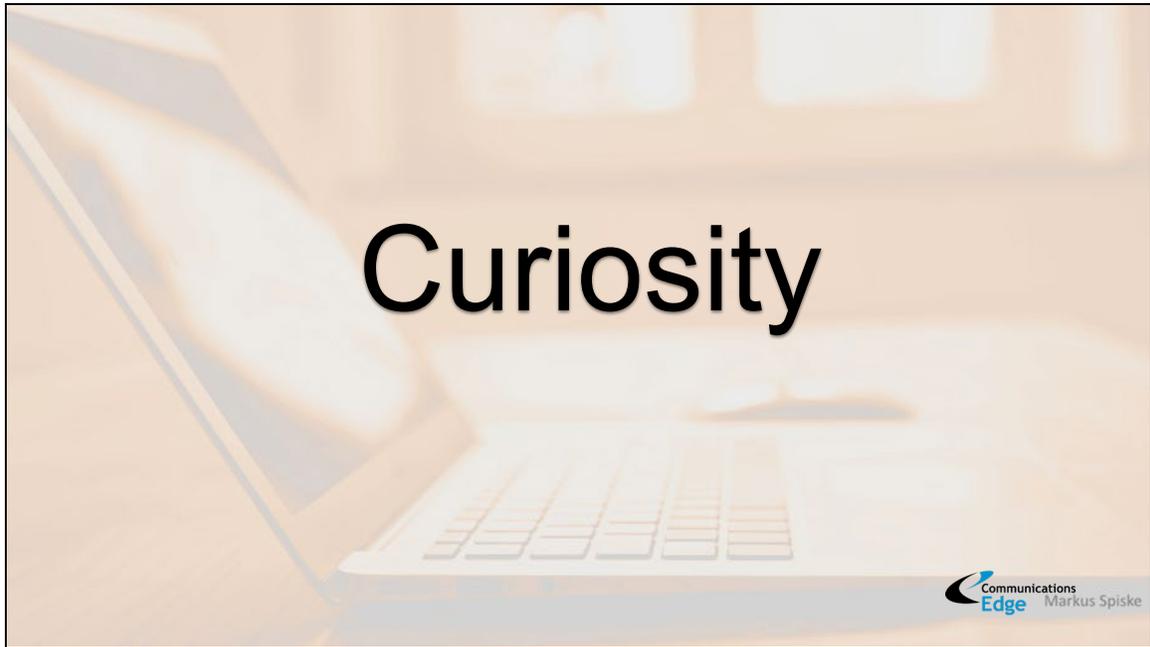
Create a  
**pattern disrupt**  
(ZAG when customers expect a zig)

Communications  
Edge

Whether you're going in cold or courting a warm inbound lead... create a Pattern Disrupt. Avoid doing what customers expect. Break the pattern they've become conditioned to expect. You have the ability to educate customers--in ways that help them. Often in ways that warm them up to becoming your customer. But when most customers sign up for a webinar or download a case study, they know what to expect -- to start receiving persuasive marketing messages. TOO SOON in the process. And ultimately, they expect us to attempt to sell to them. So, it's best to slow down.

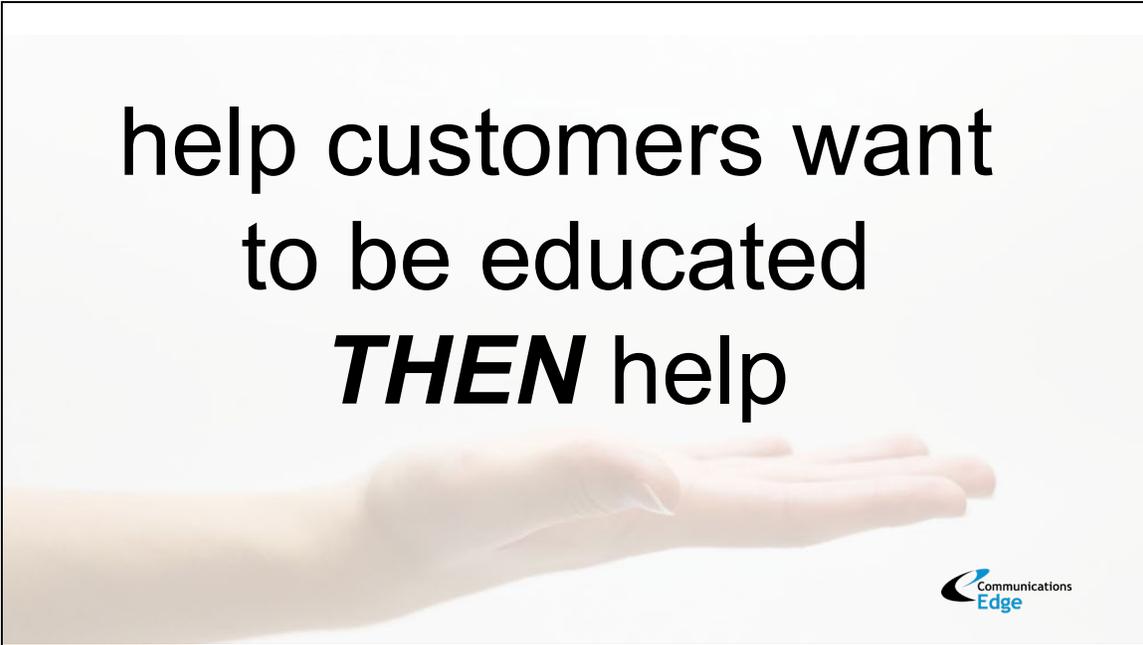


Now there's a lot more to the Spark Selling methodology. It's not brain surgery but there's a lot to learn and practice. Especially practice. If you're not active in the member Forum you should be. Practice makes perfect. Plus, we release proprietary Vanishing Reports in the Forum too. These reports are only available to members and only in the Forum. If you don't know where to find the Spark Selling community Forum get in touch. But you should have been invited to get inside, immediately upon investing in this course.

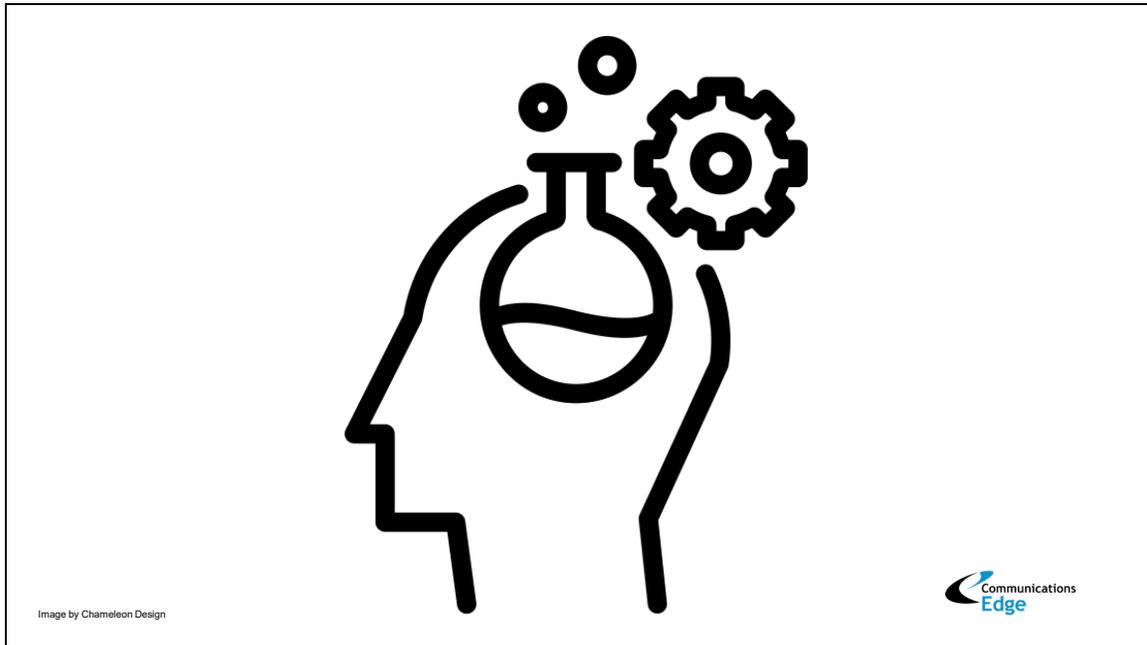


Sparking curiosity requires sending totally different messages.... messages that stand out from 98% of what everyone else is sending. Likewise, what you should expect to get back from customers is also different. And in this course, we discussed typical responses you can expect to get back.

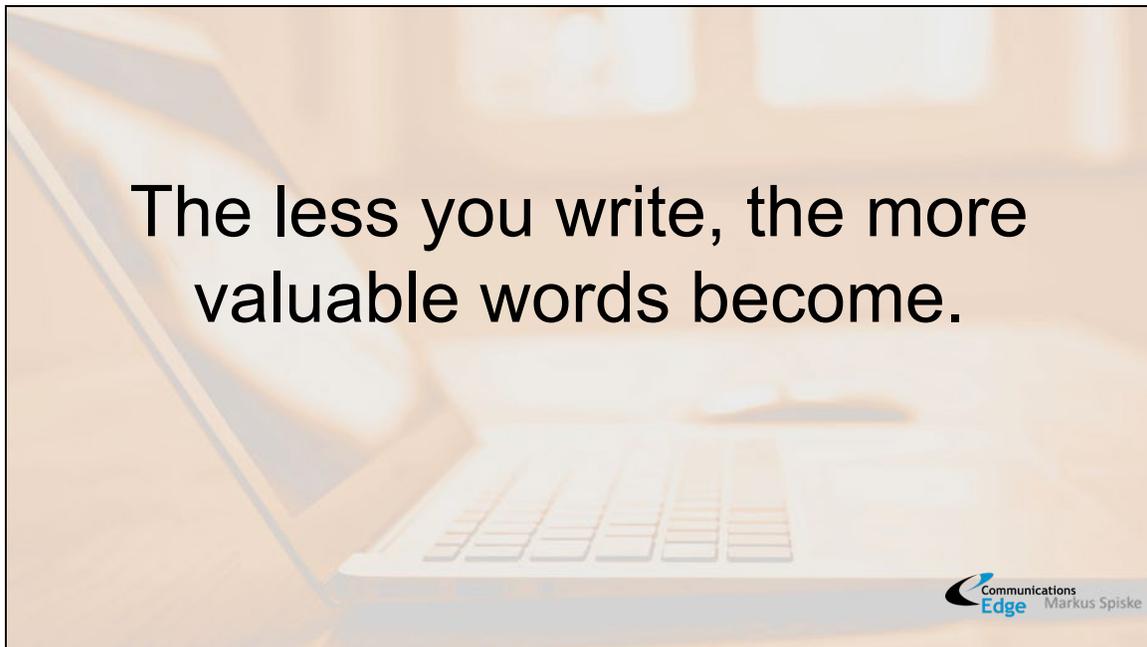
help customers want  
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Remember: Help customers want to be educated, first... then help. Instead, help your decision-maker feel an urge to request your knowledge. This always starts more & better conversations. Because human beings value more what we ask for, less what is offered freely. Just like in dating. If you are sitting across from the other person and think, “gosh, I want to go out with him or her again...” the more you should consider holding back. Because the more interest you show the less interested the other person is inclined to be. Likewise, the less interest the other person shows you -- the more you want them. It's human nature. It's a dance. The more you can, instead, help the other person do the asking the more you know you're not about to waste your time. That's really what prospecting is about -- investing time in good prospects. Cutting the others free. Helping customers ask you for help is mutually beneficial. It's a proven, everlasting concept which good copywriters know how to apply. Help the customer want to be helped -- then help. They'll value your offer more... and want to talk more. Because it was their idea. And because it's a fit for both sides.



This is a mental shift... a transformation in how you think. And it requires a commitment to a new belief system. and it's not for everyone because what we do in the Academy is a practice. It's a never-ending experiment. It also evolves over time.... what piques customers' curiosity today won't tomorrow. So, you've got to have an endless supply of better ways. I'm giving you the basis of the better way. But you must be willing to understand the psychological reasons -- why your message won't start enough conversations. Then you can take concepts we (in the community) show you and apply them. Successfully. If you do, you'll be able to evolve the practice over time. But applying the better tactics requires, first, being able to a) see weaknesses in your message... and b) understanding the psychology behind why those weak spots are weak.



Remember: The less you write, the more valuable words become. And the more provocative they become. It's also not about telling them "I can help you kick more ass" or "get a job done better, faster, for less cost." Or telling them you have value to contribute --- and how you can contribute it. Your success depends on what customers suspect you may be able to help with. I need to repeat that: Today's customers engage when they suspect you might be able to help them. It is not what you know about them that causes response. It's not the amount or quality of what you know about their business environment. It's about the scent of value... the possibility they may have just found something they need to know more about. This is why 98% of sellers fail. They don't know how to skillfully do this. Consistently. Now you can join us in the top 2% who do know.

**See you online!**

**Jeff Molander**  
Founder 

Markus Spiske

Ok with that we'll wrap. See you in comments below and online in the user Forum and Mastermind workshops. Cheers. All the best to you.