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Career Development
The Five Key Principles of Influence[1]—Part 3

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No matter what you do, you are in sales in some way. The word, "sales" or "selling" brings up negative connotations for many people. It may be helpful to think of it as "influence." Whether you're a sales professional, coach, consultant or executive—there are key stakeholders in your world you need to influence.

To persuade successfully and non-manipulatively, it's important to understand **five key principles of influence**. We covered the first three principles in the November 2015 and February 2016 issues of *The Stepping Stone*.[2] Let's look at Principle #4 now.

PRINCIPLE #4
PEOPLE MAKE BUYING DECISIONS BASED ON EMOTION AND JUSTIFY THESE DECISIONS WITH LOGIC

Just think about the last major purchase you made: your home, your car, your flat-screen HD TV! Didn't emotion play a large part in your decision to go ahead and make the purchase? This isn't to say there weren't plenty of logical reasons why you bought what you did. But I think you'll agree that the more money you lay out for a product or service, the more "emotional payback" there needs to be.

You may feel this principle doesn't apply to your product, service or idea. The truth is that it does. Let's say you're selling a computer system to a corporation. What's emotional about that? The buyer will compare your product with your competitors' versions and see which one will do the best job (e.g., fastest performance, most comprehensive reports, most user-friendly, etc.). It seems purely logical, doesn't it?

But wait—think about the buyer: What does he or she want to accomplish? *Doesn't the buyer want to appear smart*—like he or she made a really great decision for the company? Isn't that an

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emotional desire? The role logic plays is to determine which decision will best accomplish this emotional goal! So even if your product or service is heavily technical, don't discount the emotional component when selling.

Here's another example: Two people of equal means enter a car dealership and look at two different types of cars. One is a red convertible that can do 0 to 60 in three seconds, gets terrible gas mileage and costs $60,000. The second is a boxy, practical car that gets 50 miles to the gallon and costs $22,000. Person A buys the convertible and Person B decides on the practical car.

The question: Which purchase involved *emotion* and which involved *logic*? You may think Person A's purchase was driven by emotion and Person B's by logic. But, in reality, logic and emotion were involved in *both* purchases.

It's easy to see the emotion involved in Person A's decision—after all, it's a fun car! But it's also a good bet that Person A came up with several solid logical reasons to make the purchase in order to justify spending $60,000 (e.g., "it's made better," "it will last longer and have lower maintenance costs," "it will make me look more successful and attract more success," etc.).

It would also seem that Person B's decision was purely practical and, therefore, logical. This may be an erroneous assumption. Person B may have wanted to spend less money on a car because he wanted to spend the $38,000 on some exotic vacations or use the extra money to put the kids through college. **He used logic to evaluate which decision would give him the most pleasure** (based on his value system)!

To be influential, we need to take into account *both* logic and emotion. Of the two, emotion is a much more powerful motivating force. Unfortunately, too many people ignore the emotional component and focus solely on logic—neglecting what compels people to buy.

Focus more on what drives people emotionally for better influence.

In the next issue, we'll explore the fifth (and final) principle of influence.

If you want to learn more about strategies, skills and models actuaries can utilize to become more influential, you may want to read *The Influential Actuary* (*www.theinfluentialactuary.com*). ■

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ENDNOTES

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[2] Available online at *www.SOA.org/ld.*