

# How Important Is Emotion to Persuasion?

Stories, analogies, and metaphors help salespeople bring emotion into communication with customers and prospects.

## Uncommon Value

Dec. 2020

How can Aristotle, a philosopher born in 384 BC, help a building materials salesperson communicate more effective messages to buyers in their market? The answer to that question lies in this month's column.

Aristotle contended there are three ways to make a persuasive appeal to another person. They are Pathos (Emotion), Logos (Logic) and Ethos (Credibility). For the sake of this discussion, I'll attach the features & benefits of your products to Logic and discussions you have with buyers about your company and yourself to Credibility. And that leaves Pathos (Emotion). According to Aristotle, persuasion can't happen without emotion. Buyers are moved to action by how a salesperson makes them feel.

At issue here is a salesperson's propensity to discuss their products, company and themselves with little regard to how their communication moves the buyer emotionally. There are three tools you have available to help bring emotion into your communications with customers and prospects. The three tools are stories, analogies and metaphors. How you use these tools will determine how successful you are at engaging the buyer emotionally.

**Stories:** Storytelling has long been known as a lever to engage emotion in the listener. A salesperson should always be on the lookout for a good personal story. Some examples could be a customer sharing how you helped them out of a jam, how they were able to sell a customer on a certain product, how you were able to help their marketing efforts. The possibilities are endless for those actively looking for a story and curious to how they can add it to their presentations. Here's an example from my experience in sales management. A salesperson on my team was having difficulty getting some insurance restoration companies to return his voice mails. This branch did a lot of work with insurance restoration companies, so I asked him why so many of these companies in that market buy from them? He answered that they help them find sourcing for hard to find products in houses with fire damage. I suggested his voice mail

message should revolve around that and perhaps he should try something like this. "Have you ever found yourself standing inside a recently burned out home...the smell of smoke thick in the air... surveying the scene and asking yourself – How am I going to find replacements for that? That's where I fit in, we help companies just like yours source those difficult to find products and keep your projects on schedule. If you're interested in learning more about that, give me a call at 123-4567."

**Analogies:** An analogy is a comparison between two things, typically for the purpose of explanation or clarification. Some popular analogies are "like finding a needle in a haystack" when describing something that is difficult or tedious – "useful as rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic" when it looks like something is helpful but in the end it won't make much difference, or "like fingernails on a chalkboard" when discussing something that is annoying. Using an analogy helps people understand and remember your point.

**Metaphors:** A metaphor is a figure of speech that describes an object or action in a way that isn't literally true but helps explain an idea or make a comparison. Some popular metaphors are "it's raining cats & dogs", "don't throw the baby out with the bath water", "that answer is just a Band-Aid, not a solution to the problem", and "that's the icing on the cake."

I would imagine that many of you already have several analogies and metaphors you presently use and that is often a force of habit – they come out of your mouth without much thought. Storytelling though is something I believe we can all get better at. Be attentive during conversations with customers looking for stories you can develop and inject into your sales presentations. Over 2,000 years ago, Aristotle wrote that persuasion can't happen without emotion. Storytelling helps buyers connect with the salesperson's solution and brings emotion into the equation. So I ask... what's your story?



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