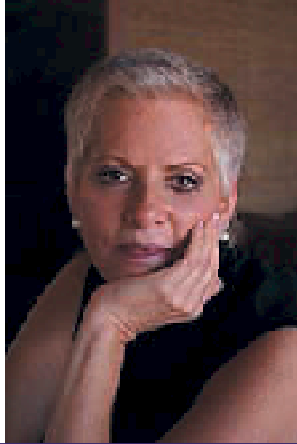


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# **BUYING FACILITATION<sup>®</sup>**

**THE NEW WAY TO SELL THAT  
INFLUENCES & EXPANDS DECISIONS**

by Sharon Drew Morgen

Author of New York Times  
Bestseller **Selling with  
Integrity and Sales  
on the Line**

**Sales Edition**

“Sharon Drew Morgen takes Rackham’s approach a step further. . . She holds that the salesperson’s job is to help prospects efficiently arrive at whether their needs can be satisfied by the seller’s company. . . The whole approach centers on meeting the customer’s interests, not the seller’s.”

—Philip Kotler  
author of **Marketing  
Management**

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This book is dedicated to all sellers  
who understand that their job  
is to serve their customers.

*Buying Facilitation: The New Way to Sell That Influences and Expands Decisions*

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ISBN 0-9643553-0-2

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## PREFACE

*Buying Facilitation: The New Way to Sell That Influences and Expands Decisions* is a learning tool. Each part offers explanations and models to help you learn The Buying Facilitation Method® and integrate it into your current sales techniques.

Part One, “How Buyers Buy,” explains the decision-making process and how it affects sales, buyers, and the buying process.

Part Two, “How to Help Your Buyer Buy,” describes in detail each step of buying facilitation and integrates the method into conventional sales.

Part Three, “Serving Your Buyer,” puts it all together—the skills, the models, the beliefs—and uses role plays and examples to make The Buying Facilitation Method come alive for you.

One piece of advice: Take the time to write your responses to the questions in the “For Reflection” sections placed at the end of each chapter. They are great learning aids.

My purpose is to create the means to support sellers in making the world of business a more meaningful and lucrative collaboration between people and systems, integrity and profit. My vision is that by integrating sales and buying facilitation, we’ll be able to serve our customers with skill, heart, and integrity; we’ll be able to make money serving our values; and we’ll be able to serve our companies by being brand ambassadors in every client exchange.

Thank you all for embarking on this journey with me.

Sharon Drew Morgen

*Austin, Texas*

*April 28, 2003*

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# THE BUYING FACILITATION METHOD®

ou are probably all too familiar with the following scenario: You make an effective sales presentation, ask great questions so that everyone understands that the product would solve a problem, create good relationships—and the buyer still doesn't buy. Do they decide not to buy because your presentation was poor or they don't like you? Do they not find the product worthy? No, on all counts.

When you employ a sales methodology, you are attempting to introduce a foreign element into a system that sees itself as complete. This is the case even when a prospect seems ready to buy. Remember that introducing a product or uncovering a need is moot if the buyer's system is not ready for change. They will not add something new to their environment even if it is needed. As I said before, it's not about the product. People are happy with their circumstances, or they would already have changed them.

Indeed, you need an additional skill set to help your clients and prospects understand those pieces of their system that need to be united before they can bring your solution in-house. It's not enough that you have answers. It's not enough that you have a good understanding of the problems. Your clients must have the comprehensive understanding of their systems and how they need to be aligned behind change. They will not add anything new to their environment—*even if they need it*—if the company systems would face chaos once the new practice or product appears.

Your use of buying facilitation will generate this understanding. This process helps buyers identify all of the issues that must be taken into account before a buying decision can be made. Your function as a neutral navigator is to help the buyer think it all through.

I'm not suggesting that you throw away the sales approach you are currently using. Rather, I'm suggesting that you add the front piece of buying facilitation to your current skill sets. Once your buyers have figured out how to align all of their internal and systemic issues, and they know exactly what needs to happen for them to make a buying decision—for example, find help in getting some folks to buy into the change, establish budget timing, incorporate interdepartmental initiatives, and tackle resistance to any change—then it will be time to sell.

Uncovering a need is moot if the buyer's system is not ready for change.

Buying facilitation has several benefits: The time it takes buyers to decide will be sharply reduced since they cover the issues in their Problem Space quickly. Your product will be clearly differentiated from the competition if in no other way than by your value-added attention. Your questions will place you in position to be a true consultant, one who brings new skills, fresh eyes, integrity, and values into the collaboration. By aligning your approach to selling with their buying patterns, your rapport will be enhanced. Last, but not least, when you present yourself as a navigator and servant leader, you will be in position to be the provider when they are ready to buy.

## PREMISES OF BUYING FACILITATION

Buying facilitation operates according to a totally different set of premises than sales does:

- The seller's job is to help people understand what their systems require in order to change.
- Only a person working or living within a culture or system can understand it.
- People will do something different only when they are assured that chaos will not occur—or that they know how to manage the chaos—when they make a change.
- A seller is in a unique position to serve a buyer by helping her discover the how, what, when, where, and why needed to solve a problem within the parameters of her culture.
- A buyer is the only one who can make her way through the decision system she lives or works within. The seller has no political capital and is limited to a macro view because he doesn't reside within the buyer's team, company, or family.
- A buyer must be able to recognize the differences in competitive product offerings before she makes a purchase. But she will be ready to comprehend product data only after she has recognized what a solution will entail.
- The seller's first job is to help the buyer discover a solution that incorporates all systems decisions. The second job is to help the buyer find a way to implement that solution.
- A seller is in a unique position to be a brand ambassador for his or her company.

## BUYING FACILITATION VERSUS SALES

Because buying facilitation is so very different from sales, let me first tell you what it is not:

Buying facilitation is

- ▶ not a form of Consultative Sales.
- ▶ not sales, although people will make buying decisions as a result.
- ▶ not about presenting information on your product, service, or idea in order to garner interest.
- ▶ not a process that serves the seller but one that supports buyers.
- ▶ not about helping sellers gather information so they can sell what they think is needed.

Buying facilitation is

- ▶ an up-front addition to the sales process.
- ▶ a decision-based system that leads buyers through all of the criteria that they need to consider in order to make a purchasing decision.
- ▶ used in any type of situation—multimillion dollar sales, multi-decision-maker sales, prospecting, up-selling, long-term customers, call centers and telemarketing, customer service, insurance and brokerage sales, consulting and partnering sales—where there is one person with an idea, service, or product that would serve another person, group, or business.
- ▶ based on the belief that buyers have a culture that works and so need to coordinate all issues and people before they bring in anything new.
- ▶ based on a facilitative questioning system that teaches buyers how to recognize and align all of the norms, rules, people, decisions, partners, initiatives, values, beliefs, and current projects that operate within their environment and create the status quo.
- ▶ based on the belief that buyers buy using their own buying patterns or set of criteria and will avoid sellers that use incompatible selling patterns, even if they need the product or service.
- ▶ a system that guides buyers toward finding their own solution.
- ▶ a way to bring values and integrity into your relationship with clients.

It does no good if you (the seller) know what is factored into a buyer's decision; indeed, we can never know what truly goes on in our prospect's political environment. Buyers themselves need to understand fully how all of the factors

operate together. Interestingly, because they are so close to the situation, there's a good chance that you can teach them how to think through their issues in a new way—but not by giving them information, opinions, or product knowledge.

## FOR REFLECTION

1. How do you see buying facilitation differing from your current sales practice?
2. What new beliefs would you need to accept in order to adopt the Buying Facilitation Method? What would you need to believe differently in order to adopt Buying Facilitation?
3. How would you know that being a buying facilitator would actually close more sales for you? Would help your buyers decide more quickly? Would make you a trusted consultant? What would you need to have happen with your buyers to recognize the difference in their attitudes and their relationship with you?
4. What would you need to know or understand in order to be willing to do whatever it takes to learn buying facilitation effectively? Since it takes some practice, how would you use your new skills, and where would you apply them as you are learning?



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# LISTENING

The best way to go about learning to create Facilitative Questions is to tune your listening skills. The Buying Facilitation Method elicits systems-based rather than needs-based data, and you must fine-tune your listening skills accordingly. Indeed, because Facilitative Questions don't gather or impart information or focus on product or sale (remember that you do that at the lower funnel, much like you are doing now), your listening criteria differ from what you are accustomed to.

Until now, you have based your sales techniques on eliciting client data pertinent to your product. You've listened for content so you would know how to pitch and be able to recognize key issues; you've listened for "what's missing" where your product sits so you could help your buyer figure out what she needs; and you've gathered data so you know how to fit your product into her environment responsibly. These are all important topics, and they get addressed in the Lower Funnel.

But remember that until or unless buyers figure out how to make sense of the issues within their Problem Space, they cannot know how best to use the product information you have to offer. Until buyers are able to decide how to operate effectively through any changes—in jobs, initiatives, management, personal status, and the like—they will delay a decision.

All the information about your product that you might offer will not be heard until the issues highlighted in the Upper Funnel are decided upon.

## LISTENING IN THE UPPER FUNNEL

Because we are listening for systems, rather than content, Buying facilitation employs a different set of listening skills: What is not being said rather than what is said. How the buyer answers my questions rather than what the answer is. What the buyer ignores rather than what the buyer knows.

When I listen, I

- use the filter of my experience as a product expert to understand the systems—the people, the initiatives, the management structure—that make up the environment in which my product sits;

- grasp the generic systems beliefs that lie behind what a buyer is saying;
- use the data I'm hearing to regularly summarize what I have heard in order to make sure it's accurate and to direct the buyer to unexamined systems issues;
- seek enough content data to formulate the next question;
- notice how the buyer brings new thinking and trial solutions into our conversations;
- observe how the realm of what's possible widens.

Here's an example: I met a beautifully dressed young man on a plane. He told me he was going to a long-time prospect's site in order to gather enough data to offer them a free week of consulting. This would be a way to introduce his team to them.

As I listened, using my systems filters, I understood that the buyer had not yet made a purchasing decision, and the seller was getting so impatient that he was willing to lose money by giving away what he should be charging for. I also understood that his hidden agenda included

- the hope that having staff on the prospect's site would keep other vendors from doing the same;
- a plan to gather enough intelligence while on-site to circumnavigate any problems with closing the deal;
- the assumption that the buyer would buy once they were comfortable with and trusted the seller's installed team;
- the belief that a successful trial would get the buyer to make a faster decision;
- the expectation that once the installed team began working, the buyer would want to pay to get the job finished;
- the assumption that because he had a high-quality product, the buyer would decide to buy it once they experienced it.

In the hopes of saving this man money and time, and actually helping him close his deal, I offered him the following list of Facilitative Questions to ask the prospect before he made his offer of pro bono consulting:

- I recognize that you and your decision team have much to decide. What criteria are you focusing on in order to make sure you have all of the information needed to make your most effective decision? How will you know when you've gathered all of the appropriate data for this decision?

- How will you know when you are ready for the change that this implementation will bring? What will you need to see or understand?
- What needs to happen prior to implementing this new project so that the teams involved will work collaboratively and the chances of chaos will be minimized?
- How are you choosing among vendors? How will you know, before you begin working with one of us, that we will deliver what you need?
- What would you need to see from us or know about us so you'd understand that we would give you the expertise you need as well as service?

The young man called me from the prospect's site to report that once he asked the questions, he had no need to offer the week's consulting. The prospect was so pleased with the questions—which they could not answer—that they hired the young man to help them discover the answers.

Once you think in terms of systems rather than content, you hear very different things. Keep in mind that this may be difficult at first because you were trained to listen for content. A belief shift concerning the real nature of your job is necessary: Do you want to sell? Or have someone buy?

## A FILTER OF QUESTIONS

As I use a filter of internal questions, I continually ask myself, What is going on there? What are they missing in their thinking? What thinking is keeping them where they are? What beliefs are at play? What would they need to believe in order to make a new decision?

I do not listen for what I need to pitch. That all gets handled in the Lower Funnel. (If I need to, I can always ask the prospect to repeat some of the specifics she mentioned in the Upper Funnel.) Instead, I actually listen for and hear all of the systems problems that are held within the Problem Space.

To help you get a handle on the type of listening I'm doing, let me give you a simple, non-sales example: Let's say you went to a party where everyone was dressed in really cool, funky clothes, and a man walked in looking nerdy, or a woman came in with an ill-fitting outfit that made her look like she'd outgrown her clothes and couldn't afford to buy new ones. Did you immediately think of selling either person a dressing coach? Or some new clothes? I doubt it. You probably asked yourself, "Whatever was he thinking?" or "However did she decide to wear that outfit?"

This is the same type of “noting” I suggest doing when you listen to a buyer: What is going on? How did it get that way? Why is it still that way? What systems do they live with that keep it that way?

If you do this, you would never entertain the notion that the partygoers are ready to buy new clothes. Instead, you would recognize that the thinking that led them to choose what they wore needs to be changed before they would know how to buy or wear anything different. It’s the same with your clients.

## **METAMESSAGES**

Language is an external presentation of our internal beliefs and values—our best effort to explain to someone else what is going on. Sometimes, our best efforts do not convey all of the issues we address internally. Sometimes, our words are confusing to our listeners. Sometimes, we use short-cuts in our language. In other

When you hear silence at the end of a sales process, you are hearing the sound of people trying to make a decision.

words, as facilitators we can’t listen for just the content of words but must also listen for the overriding messages.

Here are a few examples of what I call metamessages—the real essence of what the person is communicating, even though the actual words used are not saying what they mean:

- ▶ “How are you different from your competitors?” means that the buyer doesn’t understand how to make a buying decision. When you use The Buying Facilitation Method, buyers will know how you differ because you will have just provided servant leadership, true consultancy, and decision support.
- ▶ “You are expensive” means they haven’t figured out why you differ from your competitors. If they knew why and how you were different, the value that your product brings, how they could benefit from it, and how to evaluate the benefits—all outcomes of the use of buying facilitation—they wouldn’t have to ask price. Remember that buyers do not buy on price unless they have no other way to evaluate your product.
- ▶ “Let us think about it and call you back” means they haven’t figured out all of the pieces of their decision.

When you hear silence at the end of a sales process, you are hearing the sound of people trying to make a decision. When you use buying facilitation, the silence goes away: Your buyers know how to make a decision quickly because they understand how to line up all of the components of the solution. I have watched a three-year sales cycle for a \$50-million solution cut down to a four-month sales cycle and a six-month sales cycle cut down to a four-week sales cycle.

Your buyers will understand how and when to buy, how to include you in the solution, how to move forward with you, and how to address any issues that remain confused or unresolved. Once you have led people through the Buying

Decision Funnel, and they come out with a solution, you will have earned a place on their decision team. Remember: The time it takes buyers to come up with their own answers is the length of the sales cycle. Help your buyers decide. Then sell them the product they need, based on their own solution criteria.

**Remember: The time it takes buyers to come up with their own answers is the length of the sales cycle.**

The longer you believe that your job is to sell product rather than teach buyers how to make their best buying decision, the harder it will be for you to listen for systems rather than content.

## SUMMARY STATEMENTS

In addition to asking Facilitative Questions, I occasionally use a summary statement to help the buyer and me understand where we've gotten so far. This is not an active listening exercise but a summary statement of how I understand the buyer's metamessages. I'm checking to make sure that I'm accurate.

I usually start a summary statement with "So what I hear you saying is X." The buyer's response will tell me if I've interpreted her metamessages correctly or not.

Here's an example of a summary statement:

Let's say that I'm a realtor. I see a "For Sale By Owner" sign in front of a home that I'd like to sell, and give the owner a call. After getting into rapport, I ask if she'd consider using a realtor. She responds by saying that she plans to sell her home herself in order to avoid paying a realtor's commission. I offer a summary to get her to understand the heart of the matter: "I hear you saying that you've got the resources to be able to get buyers to view the house."

In this statement, I am pointing out to her the realities of the situation: Since she does not want to pay a commission fee, she needs to have a way to find prospective buyers. If she doesn't, she's reducing the possibility of a sale by limiting the number of people who know that the house is for sale.

Did I say that to her? Yes and no. "No" because I didn't use those exact words, and "yes" because the underlying message I delivered said just that. That's what a summary statement does: It brings the content the buyer is discussing directly into line with the professional realities that the seller recognizes.

Note that the summary must be used with caution: You cannot use a hammer to hit the buyer over the head. Using a hammer, I would have said, "So, it seems to me that you are saying that you think you could get as many buyers to view the house as a realtor." This would be rude and mean. A summary just brings

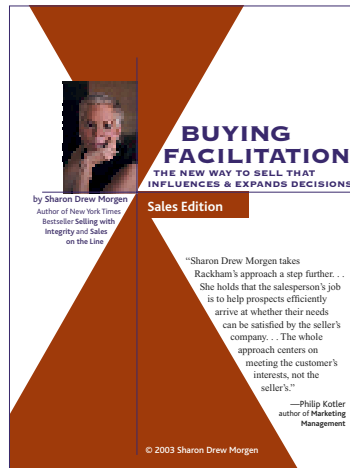
all of the facts, and some of the interpretation, forward in order to give buyers the ability to reassess the situation from their own perspective.

Making a summary statement also lets the buyer understand that I'm actually hearing what she's saying and what she isn't saying. This teaches the buyer how to recognize the issues before her—what she is really saying but not understanding.

## **FOR REFLECTION**

1. How do you currently listen? What do you listen for?
2. What new filters do you need to put in place so you can listen for systems rather than gaps in data?
3. What would you need to know in order to practice listening from a systems standpoint rather than an information standpoint?
4. What would happen differently in your interactions with customers if you listened for systems rather than information?

You have been reading excerpts from  
Sharon Drew Morgen's  
new ebook:



to purchase the complete book go to  
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