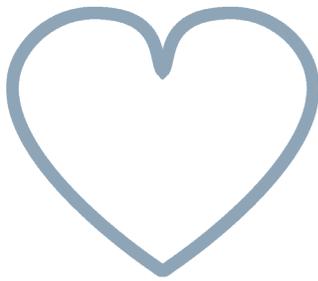


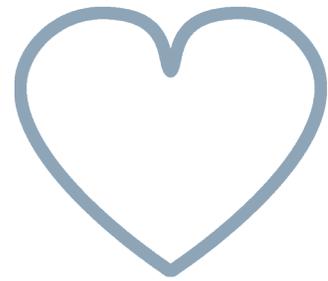
To CAPTIVATE and CLOSE, think E-R-E.



EMOTIONAL



RATIONAL



EMOTIONAL

You've probably read that emotions are the drivers of decision-making, even in the ultra-rational world of B2B. But that doesn't mean that the process is *only* emotional. Understanding the underlying emotional drivers for prospects' decisions is only part of the challenge. You must also provide the right rational, fact-based content to support the emotional appeal you make. But when and where should the message be emotional, and when should it be rational?

We think of the sales cycle in the E-R-E framework. It all starts with the emotional messages, then transitions into rational marketing in the consideration/assessment phase of the cycle, and finally returns to the emotional to close the deal.

In the lead gen stage of the sales cycle, the goal is to entice, intrigue and create engagement. It won't happen with facts. **The biggest mistake B2B marketers make in this stage is to confuse their potential lead with someone who gives a damn.** Your prospect-in-waiting has probably never heard of your brand. They may be using a different solution, or just be unaware that they have a problem that NEEDS a solution. And they are inundated with messages every day. And here comes your email with the subject line, "Gartner just put us in the Magic Quadrant!" or "Get more visibility." One in a million will open these types of emails. If your target is unaware of their problem, or doesn't think it rises to a level that needs to be addressed, they aren't receptive to your message, and you get ignored.

Using emotional messages that cut to the underlying issues has more impact at this point in the sales cycle. Done properly, your message will demonstrate empathy. When your message makes your audience say, "They get it. That's me," you have an opportunity to break through. Brain studies show that statements demonstrating empathy release the chemical Oxytocin in the brain of the recipient. That's the chemical that says, "I am open to listening." Emotional messages can open this door, and show that you understand prospects' pain, needs, and dreams.



Facts alone don't trigger the oxytocin response.



Achieving empathy is not as simple as telling a potential prospect you understand them — you have to do it in a way that *shows* you understand. Ask a question that they ask themselves. Get them to see the possibility of a future state only achievable with your solution. At the core, you must express how your product delivers on their values and needs. It's not easy. It takes time studying, speaking to and understanding potential prospects and existing customers. But once you discern their needs, you can speak to them in a way that creates an entrée to a deeper conversation.

Think about the elements of your marketing and sales interactions focused on this stage — your web site, outbound campaigns, email subject lines, blog headlines, and advertising. **Are you demonstrating empathy for your audience? Do they hint at how you are aligned with their values and needs? We see a lot of B2B marketers finding their content lacking when these benchmarks are used.**

Let's say you have succeeded in getting someone from lead to prospect status — they've recognized you may be able to deliver on a need. You've just graduated from the first E of the E-R-E model, and you're moving to the R phase — rational part of the cycle. Now a bona fide prospect is receptive to the information that supports the emotional premise you've established. HOW do you deliver on their needs? What proof do you have? Does it work for their vertical? Who else has used this solution? This is right in the wheelhouse of most tech marketing. Bring on the whitepapers, the analyst reports, the competitive reviews, product specs, etc.

This doesn't mean you abandon the emotion altogether. The rational should be served with reminders of the emotional need you've already established. You must maintain the thread that you've established in the first phase, and use the rational information to support the original premise. Your emotional pitch has created a context in which your target understands the rational information. Your study/whitepaper/analyst

report should come with an intro that reasserts the relevance of the piece and how it supports your contention that you understand their needs and will deliver on them.

This is where marketers fall down. A good transition from emotional to rational is crucial for success. You should remind prospects of the emotional promise you have made in the initial E phase. It doesn't have to be the focus of every interaction, but it's crucial that it's maintained.

Once the prospect has seen all of the information in this phase, it's time for final decision-making. If you have successfully gotten clients to consider your solution with an emotional benefit, provided convincing support to your contention with the rational marketing materials and sales interactions, then you must use emotion again to close the deal.

Why is emotion so important when you get to this point? **Because this is the moment of truth, the point at which your prospect has to stick his or her neck out and advocate for change.**

They must put their political capital and reputation at risk to choose your solution.

Think about the moment of truth in any important decision you've made. Consider the choice of college for yourself or your child. One school might be a little bigger, another a little closer to home, but in truth you could make a RATIONAL argument for either one. When you make the final choice, the facts take a back seat. One school FEELS right. In the final stage, marketing and sales need to make prospects feel they are making the right decision, not rationally convince them with facts and figures.

Too much rational information freezes a person in analysis mode — pondering, weighing options indefinitely. Features, pricing, service or technical requirements are all part of a successful close. But the tail can't wag the dog. To get to, "Yes," you must hammer home the bigger emotional story you have been weaving throughout the sales cycle. What will your solution deliver that they want and need? How will their





world change by implementing it? The moment of decision-making is the MOST emotional part of any sale. Does your message satisfy their emotional need, or does it leave them wanting? Your emotional appeal at this phase must give them the gut sense that they will be rewarded for making the right choice. It has to pull them out of deliberation and give them a reason to take action.

When you look at your overall sales cycle, and the marketing and sales interactions and materials you'll provide to prospects, think E-R-E. If you create an emotional narrative thread in the initial E phase, nurture and develop it through the R phase with relevant analysis and facts, and then reinforce it in the final phase, you will be much more effective at closing the deal.