

For  
B2B Sales  
Professionals



# Selling the SHIFT™

*Tap into buyer's mental models  
and sell more, better, and faster*

*By Charlie Anderson, President of the Selling Skills INSTITUTE*

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# Selling the SHIFT



## Do you really understand *how* and *why* your customers buy?

In this white paper, Charlie Anderson, founder and President of Selling Skills INSTITUTE shares critical insights into *how* and *why* B2B customers buy, how to increase win rates, beat annual sales goals, and reach top-performer status.

### **Here's what you'll learn:**

- The new role of today's sales professionals
- Key skills, strategies, and methods to tap into the internal factors that drive B2B buying decisions
- How to apply principles from neuroscience, behavioral economics, and psychology to win today's complex B2B sales
- How to update buyer's mental models and turn reluctant prospects into profitable clients faster

The discipline of shifting buyer's thinking, in small but important ways, and updating their mental models—their internal pictures of *how* and *why* they think about something—promises to be a major breakthrough for B2B sales professionals.

- Studies show that **FIVE OUT OF TEN PROSPECTIVE CUSTOMERS** end-up making a “no buying decision.” They stick with the status quo, and it's costing companies hundreds of millions of dollars, every year in potential revenue
- In B2B sales situations, sales reps are not just competing against sales reps from other companies. Their fiercest competitor is the customer's reluctance to move away from the status quo—**THE CUSTOMER'S LET'S DO NOTHING DIFFERENT ATTITUDE**
- The first step towards influencing prospects to buy from you is to get them to recognize that they need to **DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT IN THE FIRST PLACE**
- Today's major sales challenge isn't about the sales reps' struggle to sell their products and services, **IT'S ABOUT THE CUSTOMER'S RELUCTANCE TO BUY THEM**

### ➤ ***Selling the SHIFT* will help you skyrocket your sales.**

*Selling the SHIFT* is a strategic sales approach to identify and illuminate buyer's outdated mental models that impose limitations upon themselves and their businesses. Secondly, it's a proven roadmap to update buyer's outdated mental models with more powerful ways of thinking. And finally, it's a framework to move buyers away from the gravitational pull of the status quo, so they can explore what could be, rather than clinging to what is.

To sell to today's B2B buyers, sellers have to shift not only *what* they think, but *how* they think. Without the right mental models, buyers won't see the problem, understand the benefits, or make the change to purchase your solution.

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## Your number one competitor isn't who you think it is.

Business executives and sales leaders invest lots of time contemplating how to compete against their toughest rivals.

But they invest a miniscule amount of time thinking about today's reluctant, fence-setting, delaying, postponing, hesitating, wavering, foot-shuffling buyers who pose the most imminent threat to their survival.

In today's business environment, it's often easier for buyers to continue to do what they've always done—stick with the status quo—than it is to change their buying habits.

## *Underestimate buyer's resistance to change and you'll risk failure.*

### ➤ The new role of today's sales professional.

*Selling the SHIFT* is the new role of today's sales professionals. Simply uncovering the customer's needs, desires, and pain points, and providing ill-advised solutions will *not* enable sales reps to beat the competition and win sales.

Occasionally, buyer's business problems galvanize them to wrestle with troubling issues and motivates them to abandon the status quo. Statistics, however, indicate that five out of ten prospects decide to live with their problems in spite of negative personal and organizational consequences.

- Today's sales professionals understand buyer's organizational challenges, tap into their mental models, and act as shift catalysts—sales professionals that influence behavior change
- *Selling the SHIFT* isn't a selling approach that's designed to convince customers to buy products and services. It's a strategic process to help buyer's shift their thinking and modify their behavior so they can

vacate the status quo prison, expand their perspectives, and shift their understanding of where opportunities reside

- Clearly, if you want a buyer to act differently, you first have to help them think differently—thus the title: *Selling the SHIFT*
- If you're unable to influence buyers to think differently, don't expect them to behave differently



## *Selling the SHIFT is not about convincing buyers to change their minds.*

It's about helping them reflect on aspects of their thinking and behavior that are ineffective, self-limiting, and create the biggest obstacles to them achieving what they are capable of.

By devising the right conditions, and following a proven, systematic process, buyers self-discover how to think in new ways and see things they never saw before. This leads them to open their minds to what *could be*, instead of limiting it to *what is*.

Because *Selling the SHIFT* process allows buyers to reach conclusions themselves, their understanding of what matters expands, as does their ownership of the results.

**What makes *Selling the SHIFT* so powerful, is that by following the process, buyers see and feel the need to change their own minds and behaviors.**

# Selling the SHIFT

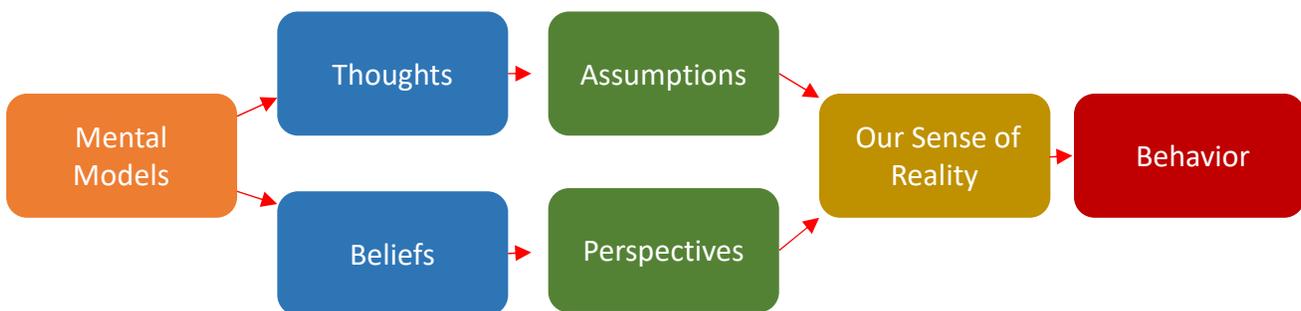
## ➤ Status quo is a stubborn competitor.

What most business executives and sales leaders fail to fully appreciate is that B2B customer's buying habits are driven by factors that are deeply embedded in their subconscious mind.

### Psychologist describe these deeply embedded factors as mental models.

Mental models influence our thoughts and actions. They regulate how we process information, understand problems, interpret events, reach conclusions, and make decisions.

- Mental models represent deeply ingrained thoughts, assumptions, beliefs, and perceptions that have been developed overtime that guide us in our everyday lives. Very often, we are not consciously aware of our mental models or the effects they have on our decision making and daily behaviors
- Mental models are deeply held images of how we believe the world works—it's our reality
- Mental models are generally advantageous. But when things change, mental models that were once useful, often become outdated and can sabotage future progress



## ➤ Buyers think and act through their mental models.

Have you ever run-up against a prospect that realized he/she had a business problem, internalized the emotional pain from the problem, and acknowledged the value of your solution, but decided not to buy from you, and remain with their incumbent provider?

If so, you probably didn't win the sale because the prospect's mental models and buying motives were out of sync. As an example, a prospect recognizes his insurance agent isn't meeting his service expectations, but his mental modeling messaging (remain loyal) serves as a barrier when he/she is contemplating whether to replace their insurance agent with someone new.

*Without the right mental models, customers won't see their problems, understand the benefits of your solution, or make the change necessary to buy your offering.*

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## ➤ Mental models impact sales efforts.

It might not be immediately obvious how to apply mental models to your sales efforts. But consider this example: when Salesforce came to market, potential customers did not have any concept of software operating in the cloud. At the time, they expected to buy boxed CDs (and later DVDs) for installation on their computer.

Salesforce understood they had to *shift people's thinking*. From *software-in-a-box* to *software-as-a-service*. In other words, they had to change the mental model in the buyer's mind. This is why they ran the "No Software" campaigns, to shift the concept people have of what software is.



**Ask yourself the following three questions to determine if your sales efforts should concentrate on updating prospective customer's mental models:**

1. Do they fail to see a problem that seems obvious to you?
2. Do prospective customers recognize the problem, but fail to see how your solution could solve their problem?
3. Do prospective customers recognize the problem and the value of your solution, but fail to make the change?

Is the answer to one or more of these questions yes? If so, *Selling the SHIFT* is right for you. Focus your sales efforts on shifting buyer's thinking and updating their mental models in a way that creates a win for buyers and yourself.

*You may have to shift how and what buyer's think before they'll be ready to buy your solution.*

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➤ **B2B buyers often make flawed business decisions.**

One of the biggest challenges today's sales professionals face is that business executives, owners, stakeholders, and key decision makers hold on to faulty mental models, that negatively impact their objectivity, when contemplating whether to stick with the status quo or move away from it.

In spite of the fact that their perception of reality becomes a straitjacket for their thinking and actions, restricting them from seeing or accepting different perspectives, business leaders continue to yield to faulty mental models, wishful thinking, and behaviors that sabotage their progress.

Here are examples of companies that enjoyed enviable success, that stubbornly relied on mental models and wishful thinking, that worked for them in the past, but eventually contributed to their demise.

- Blockbuster
- Polaroid
- The Sharper Image
- Circuit City

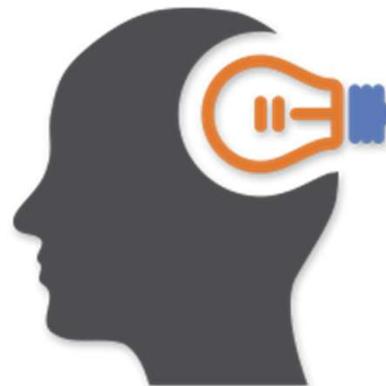
Faulty mental models are responsible for many breakthrough ideas being ignored or dismissed. Business executives and owners are often unable or unwilling to see the value of a new idea, that doesn't fit within their current mental models, of what they believe will work within their organization.

The reality is, nothing remains the same. Applying yesterday's mental models (thinking) to solve today's complex business problems doesn't work. The key is to regularly acquire more useful mental models and employ them when dealing with today's challenges.

***Albert Einstein once said, "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."***

➤ **Mental models can facilitate success or, if inaccurately shaped, lead to failure.**

Mental models may outlive their usefulness or, may persist, when they were never useful to begin with.



**There are four general problems associated with mental models and their use:**

1. First, they can be outdated because they are limited by the initial interpretation that made them useful in the first place
2. Second, they can be improperly used or applied
3. Third, they can lead to mistaken answers if supported by outdated or incorrect information
4. And fourth, their effectiveness is rarely examined and tested



***When we refuse to update our mental models, we close our minds to new possibilities and sometimes even the truth.***

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## ➤ Connection between mental models and winning sales.

To fully understand how B2B customers make buying decisions, and to significantly improve your win ratio, it's important to understand the role that mental models (a person's principles of operation) play in buyer's decision making process.



According to the authors of *The Challenger Sale* and *The Challenger Customer*, "mental models don't just matter...they matter a lot. Because that is what's driving the customer's behavior in the first place."

## ➤ Mental models are dynamic.

Mental models frame and influence the way buyer's perceive, understand, interpret, and act upon their sense of reality. Mental models guide buyer's perceptions and behaviors. They are used to understand life, make decisions, and solve problems.

Mental models enable thoughts and actions, but also constrain them. When explicit mental models dominate your thinking, you'll attempt to explain every situation you face through that viewpoint. As an example:

*"If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail."*

When customers use mental models that are well adapted to the task at hand they can improve their situation and outcome. But mental models that are out of sync, with the real world, can muddy the waters and tarnish information customers evaluate, causing them to fill in uncertain details of a situation or event with outdated or inaccurate information.

As an example, buyer's mental models may inaccurately cause them to believe that...

- Your price is too high without considering the value that you're offering
- There's no difference between your offer and what they currently have. Their mental model: "All insurance agents are the same"
- Their current provider is doing a great job and there's no reason to change anything. The real issue is that the gravitational pull of the status quo is blocking the buyer's change efforts

A buyer may have beliefs and imagine that he/she is responding objectively to a specific situation, but in reality, we all have our favorite mental models, the ones we naturally default to as an explanation for *how* or *why* something happened or should happen.

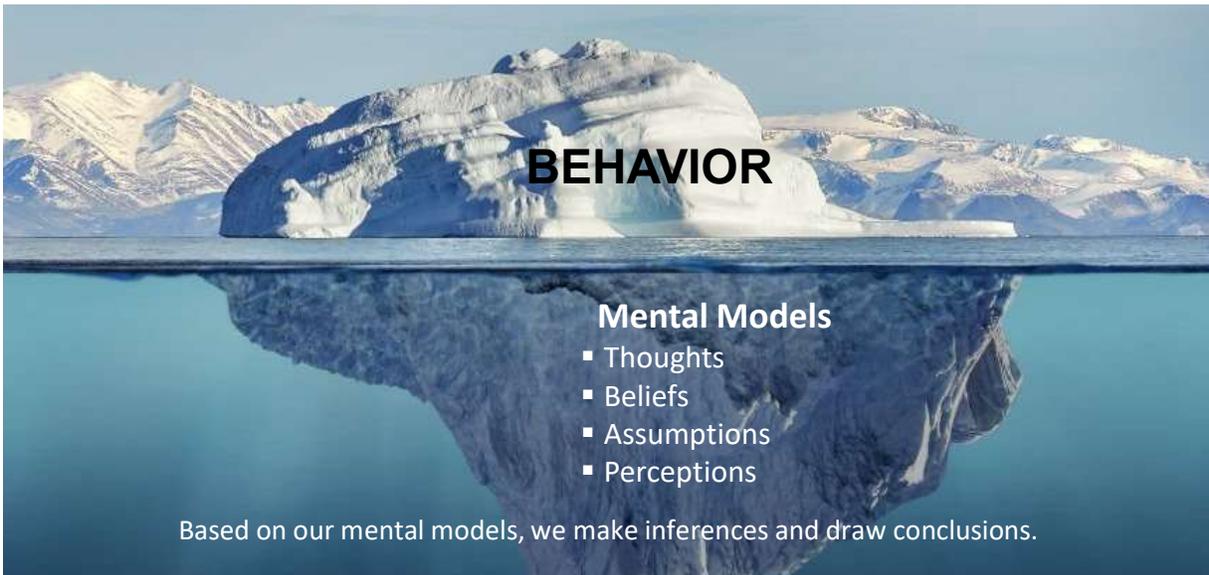
*All perspectives hold some truth. None of them contain the complete truth.*

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## ➤ **Mental models, the cause and effect.**

There's a cause and effect relationship between mental models and buyer's behavior.



## ➤ **Cause and effect.**

By recognizing the cause and effect relationships between mental models, that are often hidden below the surface in our subconscious, and the impact they have on our decisions, we're able to determine whether current mental models are aligned for effective outcomes or need adjusting.

### ***An example of mental models cause and effect.***

A mother and father teach their young daughter to be responsible, prudent, and frugal with her money. She grows up and starts a small business. As she contemplates different ways to grow her business, and anticipates the possible economic consequences of various options, to increase sales or reduce cost, her *memory* of what her mother and father taught her about money *causes* her to feel *anxious* (effect) when she thinks of investing money to grow her business.

Two key questions come into play in this scenario. First, is her ingrained mental models about money an asset or a hindrance in growing her business? Secondly, would updated mental models about money unlock new profitable growth opportunities for her business?

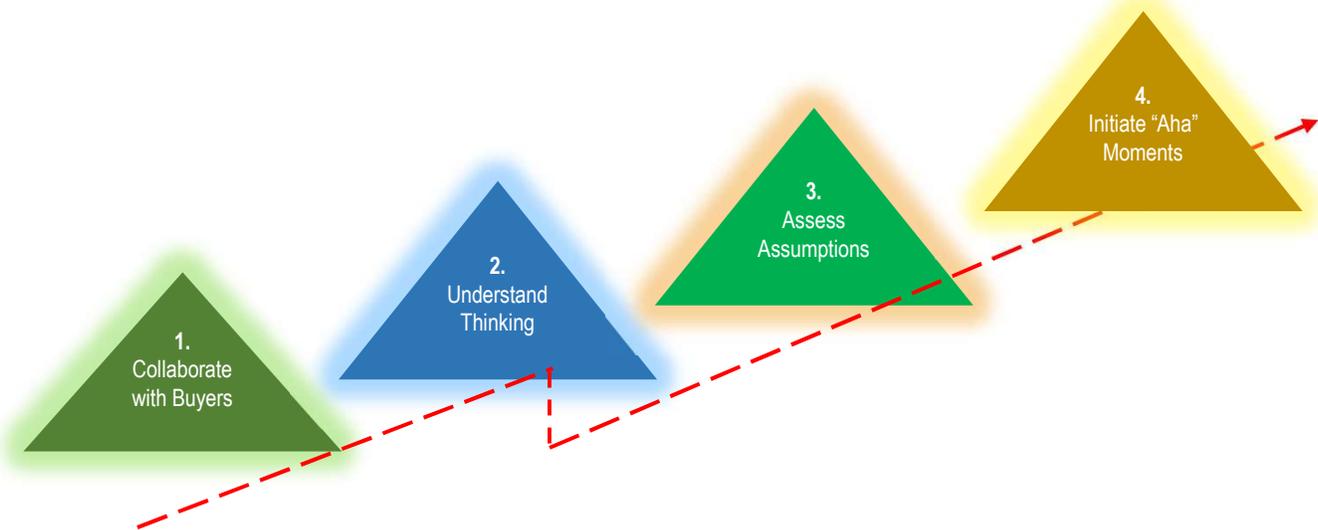
When mental models lock people into old ways of thinking, it's difficult for them to push beyond their self-imposed boundaries and seize new opportunities.

***By practicing mental model awareness (noticing that a mental model has been triggered) and thinking differently about the situation or event, we can update our mental models, modify our behavior, and change our results.***

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## ➤ Four key steps to update buyer's mental models.

These four components are complementary and work together to produce a reliable process to update buyer's mental models.



## ➤ 1. Collaborate with buyers to reveal their mental models.

You don't need to be a psychiatrist or psychologist to encourage buyers to discuss their mental models. By inspiring people's confidence, drawing on observations, doing a walkthrough of buyer's sense of reality (*how* and *why* they think a certain way), and listening to understand beliefs, assumptions, and generalizations underlying their decisions, you'll be able to ascertain valuable insight into buyer's mental models.

To reveal buyer's mental models break tradition and navigate conversations away from the analytical data, facts, spread-sheets, and PowerPoints, and focus on *how* and *why* buyers think and feel about a specific subject, situation, or event.

### **Ask exploratory questions to reveal buyer's mental models:**

- Can you share with me the underlining thinking and beliefs that led you to reach that conclusion?
- Can you help me understand your specific reasons for pursuing this course of action?
- Which of your prior experiences will be most influential in your decision making process?
- What deeply ingrained thinking, acquired through experience or practice, will be difficult to override when making a buying decision?
- Are there pre-existing perceptions and beliefs that are likely to suppress alternative, plausible considerations?
- What information did you take away from the meeting and how did it impact your thinking?

*Exploratory questions help reveal buyer's mental models—their thoughts, assumptions, beliefs, and perspectives.*



## ➤ 2. Understand buyer's thinking—their inner dialogue.

Why do buyers do what they do? Why do they choose one provider over another? And why are some projects scrapped while others are advanced?

To answer these questions, sellers need to understand thinking patterns that influence buyer's purchasing decisions. Once the thinking that's driving purchasing decisions is verbalized, buyers and sellers can assess, and if necessary, collaborate and upgrade ineffective thinking patterns, which unlock the potential for buyers to see beyond *what is* versus *what could be*.

*Here are examples of thinking patterns that can negatively impact buying decisions.*

- **Normalcy thinking.** The refusal to acknowledge or to take action to solve a problem which has never happened before. The tendency to be over-optimistic, overestimating favorable and pleasing outcomes. (This will never happen to me... thinking)
- **Plausible thinking.** Because something is plausible means that it must be true
- **Confirmation thinking.** The tendency to search for, interpret, focus on, and remember information in a way that confirms one's perceptions and assumptions
- **Selective perception thinking.** The tendency to disregard and reject new ideas and evidence that contradicts an imbedded mental model. In this way, people maintain beliefs that are contradicted by their everyday experiences
- **Subjective thinking.** Perception that something is true if a person's belief demands it to be true. Buyers reach a conclusion even though there are no definite facts that convincingly support their conclusion
- **Status quo thinking.** The tendency to want things to remain the same, in spite of potential negative consequences
- **Loss aversion thinking.** Basing decisions on limited information and on the risk and cost of being wrong
- **False consensus thinking.** The tendency for people to overestimate the degree to which others agree with them
- **Anecdotal thinking.** Using a personal experience or an isolated example, to make a decision, instead of compelling evidence

*Having the skills to divulge buyer's thinking patterns, that negatively impact their probability of success, and the know-how to slightly shift their thinking, are real differentiators for sustainable sales success.*



➤ **3. Assess buyer's beliefs, assumptions, and perceptions—subconscious factors that influence buying decisions.**

Buyer's beliefs, assumptions, and perceptions play a major role in *how* and *why* they make purchasing decisions. In some instances, these principles of operation result in good decisions, but on many occasions, they keep buyer's fixated on *what is*, instead of *what could be*.

*What we perceive to be true and what is actually true aren't always the same.*

To heighten buyer's awareness and to help them assess the effectiveness of their mental models—are they playing a supportive role or are they undermining their progress—approach them with the right intentions, the right tone, and engage them in *reflective conversations*. Conversations that focus on inquiry, comprehension, and assessment of the buyer's beliefs, assumptions, and perspectives.

**Ask buyers reflective questions:**

- What did you learn about yourself and your team as you worked on solving the problem?
- What lessons did you learn about your beliefs, assumptions, and perceptions as you worked on finding a solution for your business problem?
- Have you modified any of your beliefs or assumptions you used to have on this subject? How did those changes come about?
- If someone else were looking at the same problem, what beliefs and assumptions of theirs, might be different than yours?
- In hindsight, what alternative courses of action may have been possible?
- If you found yourself in a similar situation in the future, what would you do the same, and what would you do differently? Why?
- What are your feelings telling you about options you're looking at to achieve your goals?
- Rather than focusing on what you should start doing immediately, what are you willing to stop doing?
- What decisions / actions have you been avoiding out of fear or apprehension?

When  was trying to decide whether to shift its focus away from making memory chips, its co-founder, Andrew Grove asked his partner, "If we were kicked out of the company, what do you think the new CEO would do?" They reasoned that a new leader would feel no emotional attachment to the declining memory chip business and would probably leave it behind.

*Any business with behavior that's based on faulty beliefs, assumptions, and perceptions is doomed to extinction.*

# Selling the SHIFT

## ➤ 4. Initiate “aha” moments.

The final step in *Selling the SHIFT* is to trigger an epiphany or aha moment, in which buyers discover a sudden flash of insight, that prompts a different perspective. Aha moments enlighten us to see situations, events, other people, and ourselves in a new light.

***When a buyer says, “Why didn’t I think of that” or “I never thought of it that way,” they are experiencing an “aha” moment.***

We have all experienced it: the jolt of insight arriving like a thunderbolt, unexpectedly and without warning, popping into your head, that shifts long standing assumptions and beliefs.

Not all aha moments are created equally. Some demand a deep inward search to uncover them. Other times, they fly in and out of our life swiftly, silently, and almost unseen.

***But what if aha moments could be accessed more reliably?***

The aha moments I’m referring to in *Selling the SHIFT* don’t just occur by accident. It’s a well-designed strategy to give rise to aha moments that enable buyers to perceive the fallacies, behind their long-held assumptions and artificial boundaries, they unknowingly impose upon themselves and their businesses.



***Five steps to spark aha moments that can shift buyer’s thinking and help you win more profitable sales faster.***

1. Tell stories that inspire buyers to see things differently. Steve Job was masterful at telling stories that created aha moments—the cell phone versus a hand-held computer.
2. Share compelling insight—this could be new ideas, strategies, or research relating to their industry—that cause buyers to think differently and take action.
3. Ask reflective questions that encourage buyers to “look in the mirror” and discover thinking and beliefs that drive their actions. (Have you ever considered the thoughts and beliefs that drive your buying decisions?) They may be surprised by the epiphanies.
4. Shine the spotlight fully on your clients and allow them the space to tell their stories, so that they can unlock their own aha moments.
5. Help buyers look at situations through a “fresh pair of eyes.” By looking at different data, facts, competitors, inspiration, language, and context, buyers are able to see a problem or opportunity differently.

# Key Takeaways

- ❑ Studies show that five out of ten prospective clients end-up making a “no buying decision.” They stick with the status quo and it’s costing companies hundreds of millions of dollars every year in potential revenue.
- ❑ Most sales reps try to sell solutions within the buyer’s existing mental model—their way of thinking. *Selling the SHIFT* alters the buyer’s prevailing model, making them more open to new thinking, new ideas, and exploring different solutions.
- ❑ Today’s *sales professionals* understand buyer’s organizational challenges, tap into their mental models, and act as shift catalysts—*sales professionals* that influence behavior change.
- ❑ Clearly, if you want a buyer to act differently, you first have to help them to think differently—thus the title: *Selling the SHIFT*.
- ❑ Most business leaders and sales executives fail to fully appreciate that B2B customer’s buying habits are driven by factors that are deeply embedded in their subconscious mind. Psychologist describe these operating factors mental models.
- ❑ Without the right mental models, customers won’t see their problems, understand the benefits of your solution, or make the change necessary to buy your offering.
- ❑ According to the authors of *The Challenger Sale* and *The Challenger Customer*, “Mental models don’t just matter...they matter a lot. Because that is what’s driving the customer’s behavior in the first place.”
- ❑ Albert Einstein once said, “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.”
- ❑ To reveal buyer’s mental models, break tradition, and navigate conversations away from the analytical data, facts, spread-sheets, and PowerPoints and focus on *how* and *why* they think about a explicit subject, situation, or event.
- ❑ Once the thinking that’s driving purchasing decisions is verbalized, buyers and sellers can assess, and if necessary, collaborate and upgrade ineffective thinking patterns, which unlocks the potential to see beyond *what is* to *what could be*.
- ❑ Any business executive or stakeholder, with behavior that’s based on faulty beliefs, assumptions, and perceptions, is doomed to extinction.

# Charlie Anderson



**CHARLIE ANDERSON** is the founder and President of Selling Skills INSTITUTE. He is the original creator of the proprietary SHIFT Thinking™ breakthrough sales training method and Human Dynamic Selling™.

Human Dynamic Selling is a new, holistic B2B sales model that abandons outdated, self-focused, product pushing, selling traps of yesterday and outlines a human-centered selling approach. It's foundation is based on interacting and connecting with today's buyers as human beings with hearts and minds, not simply as customers that just so happen to buy products and services.

During the past 19 years, Charlie has met, trained, and coached thousands of sales professionals in the insurance and financial service industries, commercial printing, publishing, digital media, outsourcing, TV broadcast, banking, marketing, and advertising fields.

Charlie is the author of six books including his number-one bestseller, *The Secret to Winning Big*, which he co-authored with the legendary personal development trainer, author, and speaker, Brian Tracy.

Charlie was recently recognized by The National Academy of Bestselling Authors, an organization that honors authors from many leading independent bestsellers lists.

If you're looking for a competitive edge, one that empowers your sales team to out-think, out-compete, out-perform, and out-sell the competition, you should contact Charlie Anderson to explore how SHIFT Thinking and Human Dynamic Selling can transform your team into ultra-high performers that consistently exceed their revenue goals.

Contact Charlie via email: [charlie@shiftthinking.net](mailto:charlie@shiftthinking.net) or by phone: 339-927-2746.



Call 339-927-2746 or email Charlie at [charlie@shiftthinking.net](mailto:charlie@shiftthinking.net) for a **COMPLIMENTARY, NO OBLIGATION, SALES DIAGNOSIS**. He'll analyze your sales situation and provide you with his best advice on ways to maximize your sales effectiveness.

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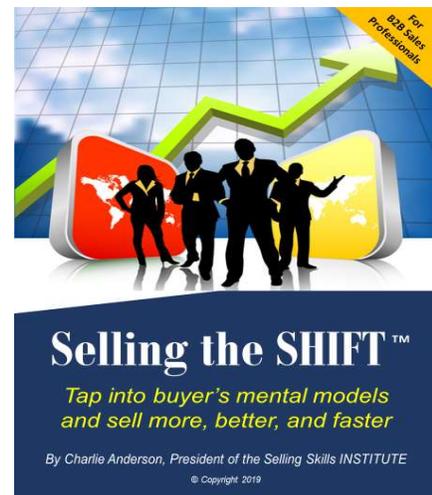


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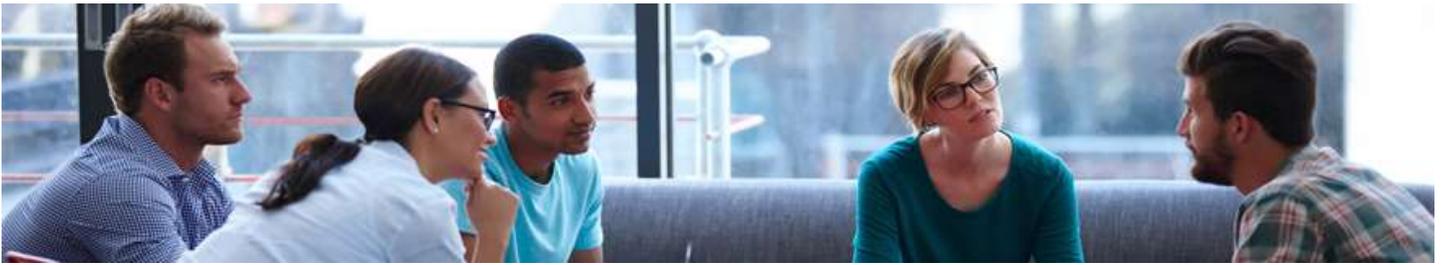
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Transforming sales potential into peak performance



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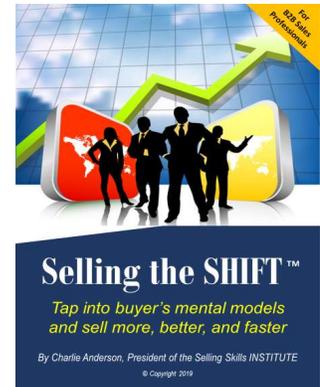
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