

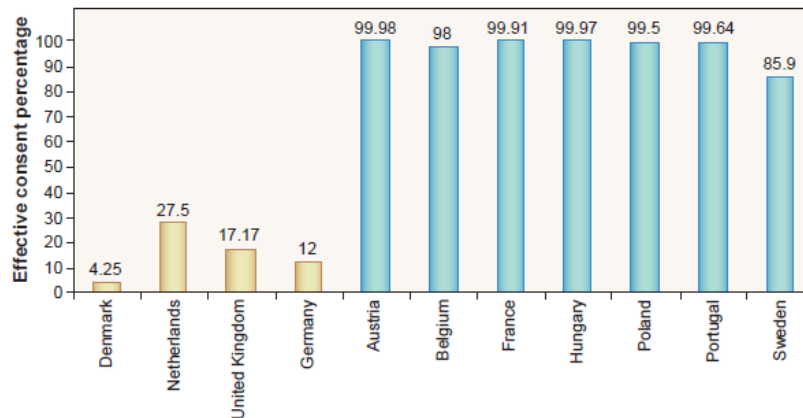
SELLING WITH CHOICE ARCHITECTURE

How can sales people sell in a way that will inspire prospects to choose to do business with them? Today, because of the advances in behavioral science, we know the answer to this important question.

Over the last few decades, behavioral scientists have conducted thousands of research studies which have revealed the causal factors that direct human behavior. The findings of this research have shown that the way a choice is presented, will often determine if it will be embraced. Behavioral scientists refer to this as *Choice Architecture*.

A prime example of the power of choice architecture is found in the fact that surveys indicate that 85% of Americans approve of organ donation. Yet, in spite of this, most Americans do not donate their organs. The sad statistic is that every year over 40,000 people die waiting for an organ donation. Many wonder why is there such disconnect between what people think about organ donation and the actual donation of organs?

This question has been researched by behavioral scientists and their findings reveal some fascinating insights about why people choose to donate their organs. In certain countries nearly every citizen is an organ donor. However, in other countries only a small percentage of citizens donate their organs. Researchers Eric Johnson and Daniel Goldstein created the graph below, which was published in the academic journal *Science*.¹ Their findings revealed that the countries of Denmark, Netherlands, United Kingdom and Germany have a very low percentage of their citizens donating their organs. In contrast, the vast majority of citizens in Austria, Belgium, France, Hungary, Poland, Portugal and Sweden are organ donors.



The reason that some countries have significantly higher rates of organ donation is not because of the country's religion, culture, or wealth. Instead, it is due to the way citizens are asked to become organ donors.

Those countries that have low rates of organ donation ask their citizens to opt-in by checking a box if they want to become an organ donor. In contrast, those countries that have extremely high

rates of organ donation ask citizens to opt-out by checking a box if they do not want to be an organ donor. In short, the deciding factor in whether or not people donate their organs is the way the choice is presented to them.

Another thought-provoking example of choice architecture is found in the way that restaurant menus heavily influence which menu items patrons choose. For instance, the price people will pay for menu items is dependent upon how those items are conveyed.² “Fresh squeezed Florida orange juice” demands a much higher price than mere “orange juice.” Something as simple as having a dollar sign in front of the price of an entrée makes the entrée seem more expensive and has been shown to reduce the restaurant’s ticket average.³ Also, menu items that are placed at the beginning or end of the list of their category options are much more likely to be chosen than those items in the center of the list.⁴ In fact, when the restaurants align their menus with the psychological principles that influence how people make choices, sales will often go up by as much as 10%.⁵

The research shows that the context a decision is made in will influence that decision. Often, sales people fall prey to simply asking prospects to make choices. However, asking is not enough. The way a choice is presented primes that prospect to accept or reject that choice. As a result, every part of a sales process should be designed to guide prospects in making strategic choices that guide them along a progression of consent and naturally advance the sale.

So resolve to leverage the scientific principles of choice architecture by intentionally aligning how you present a choice with how prospects are wired to be influenced. If you do this you will find that prospects will feel less pressure when making choices and will also be far more likely to choose in your favor.

About the Author

David Hoffeld is CEO of the Hoffeld Group, a research based sales training, coaching and consulting firm that is the leader in the integration of proven science and sales. The Hoffeld Group takes the repeatable and predictable principles, which science has proven to create and enable influence, out of the laboratory and academic journals and apply them to selling. For a deeper look at the Hoffeld Group’s groundbreaking research and innovative sales strategies visit HoffeldGroup.com.

Notes

1. Eric Johnson and Daniel Goldstein. “Do Defaults Save Lives?” *Science*, vol. 302, 2003. p. 1,338 – 1,339.
2. Dave Pavesic. “The Psychology of Menu Design: Reinvent Your ‘Silent Salesperson’ to Increase Check Averages and Guest Loyalty.” *Hospitality Faculty Publications*, 5, 2005. http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/hospitality_facpub/5
3. Sarah Kershaw. “Using Menu Psychology to Entice Diners.” *New York Times*, December 23, 2009.
4. Eran Dayan and Maya Bar-Hillel. “Nudge to nobesity II: Menu Positions Influence Food Orders.” *Judgment and Decision Making*, vol. 6, 2011. p. 333-342.
5. Beth Panitz. “Reading between the lines: The psychology of menu design.” *Restaurants USA*, 8, 2000. p. 81–87.