

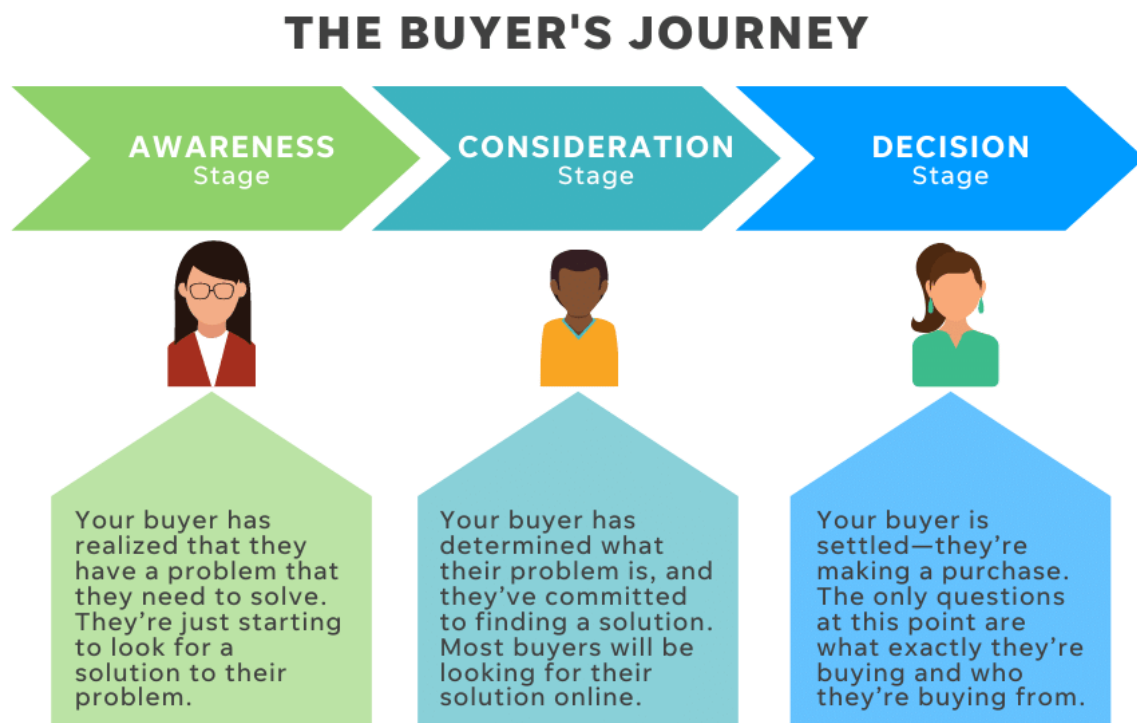
The Buyer's Journey

Today's buyers are more informed than ever before, thanks to the vast amount of information available at their fingertips. Because of this, the balance of power has shifted from the sales rep to the buyer in most sales conversations. This is why pushy sales tactics are no longer as effective as they used to be.

Instead, to be successful in sales in today, sales reps must adapt their mindset from selling to *helping* (see [trusted advisor](#)). The best way to start this process is by becoming intimately familiar with who the buyer is and the *journey* they take on their path to purchase: *The buyer's journey*.

What is the buyer's journey?

The buyer's journey describes a buyer's path to purchase. In other words, most buyers don't just wake up and decide they want to buy something. They move through a process where they become *aware* of a problem, *consider* solutions, and then *decide* to purchase a product or service. By understanding the buyer's journey, the pains and problems they experience along that journey, *and* the influencing factors that shape their thinking, sales reps can better empathize with a buyer and position their product or service along that path.



What are the three stages of the buyer's journey?

The buyer's journey can be broken down into three steps or "stages", that describe how they advance along their path to purchase: the *awareness stage*, the *consideration stage*, and the *decision stage*.

Here's how to conceptualize each stage:

1. **Awareness Stage:** The buyer becomes aware that they have a problem.
2. **Consideration Stage:** The buyer defines their problem and considers options to solve it.
3. **Decision Stage:** The buyer evaluates and selects the best provider to administer the solution.

Now that the overall journey has been defined, let's take a look at each stage in greater detail, from the buyer's perspective.

What is the buyer doing during the *Awareness stage*?

The buyer is experiencing a problem (often referred to as a pain-point), and their goal is to alleviate it. They may be looking for informational resources to more clearly understand, frame, and give a name to their problem.

Example: "*Why do my feet hurt all the time?*"

What is the buyer doing during the *Consideration stage*?

The buyer will have clearly defined and given a name to their problem, and they are committed to researching and understanding all of the available approaches and/or methods to solving the defined problem.

Example: "*How do you treat foot arch pain?*"

What is the buyer doing during the *Decision stage*?

The buyer has decided on their solution strategy, method, or approach. Their goal now is to compile a list of available vendors, make a short list, and ultimately make a final purchase decision.

Example: "*Where can I get custom shoes? How much will they cost?*"

If you don't have an intimate understanding of your potential customers, it may be difficult to map out the buyer's journey in a way that will be helpful from a sales perspective. It may help to conduct a few consultation role-plays, do some consultation shadowing, and speak to other franchisees about the sales process, to gain a robust understanding of the School is Easy buying journey.

Tailoring Your Sales Process to the Buyer's Journey

The buying journey is important, because people don't want to be prospected, or closed when they are not ready. When attempted at the wrong time, closing can hurt your sales process.

However, where a sales rep can shine (especially in a consultative sales environment) is when buyers are looking for additional information about your product that can't be found anywhere else. For example, what extra value does your product/service offer, that other firms don't.

Awareness Stage

Buyers are identifying the challenge or opportunity they want to pursue. They are also deciding whether or not the goal or challenge should be a priority.

| WHAT WE SHOULD BE ASKING | ACTIONS WE SHOULD BE TAKING |
|---|--|
| How do buyers describe their goals or challenges in the context of our business? | Creating informational, <i>not salesy</i> , sales collateral that educates them along their path to purchase. |
| How are our buyers educating themselves on these goals or challenges? | Providing them with resources to help them define the problem. |
| What are the consequences of inaction by the buyer? | Helping, helping, helping. |
| Are there common misconceptions buyers have about addressing the goal or challenge? | |
| How do buyers decide whether the goal or challenge should be prioritized? | |

Consideration Stage

Buyers have clearly defined the goal or challenge and have committed to addressing it. They are now evaluating different approaches or methods available to pursue the goal or solve their challenge.

| WHAT WE SHOULD BE ASKING | ACTIONS WE SHOULD BE TAKING |
|---|---|
| What categories of solutions do buyers investigate? | Understanding exactly how our product or service solves their problem compared to both our direct and indirect competitors. |
| How do buyers educate themselves on the various categories? | |
| How do buyers perceive the pros and cons of each category? | Considering how our direct and indirect competitors are showing up in the marketplace and how they influence perception. |
| How do buyers decide which category is right for them? | Providing the buyer with resources to help them determine the solution that's right for them. |

Decision Stage

Buyers have already decided on a solution category and are now evaluating providers. For example, they may have conducted some form of cost/benefit analysis by creating a pro/con list of specific offerings, to decide on the one that best meets their needs.

| WHAT WE SHOULD BE ASKING | ACTIONS WE SHOULD BE TAKING |
|--|--|
| What criteria do buyers use to evaluate the available offerings? | Understanding what objections they might have prior to the sales process so that you can adequately handle them. |
| When buyers investigate our company's offering, what do they like about it compared to alternatives? What concerns do they have with it? | Ensuring that you have a unique selling proposition that provides value to the buyer and sets you apart from competitors. |
| Who needs to be involved in the decision? For each person involved, how does their perspective on the decision differ? | |
| Do buyers have expectations around trying the offering before they purchase it? | |
| Outside of purchasing, do buyers need to make additional preparations, such as implementation plans or training strategies? | |

Some of these considerations may fall more under the marketing umbrella than sales. But ultimately the answers to these questions will provide a robust foundation for your buyer's journey.

The process of getting to know how your buyers buy, is invaluable as you create or refine your sales process. You'll be better able to empathize with prospects, handle objections, and provide the right information at the right time, helping you close more deals and win more business.