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### Aristotle on Selling Advertising

Aristotle was one of the greatest thinkers of all times. He lived in the third century B.C.E. and is still recognized as one of the giants of philosophy, who along with Socrates and Plato, laid the foundations of modern western thinking. He was also one of the truly great sales trainers. Of course he didn't call it sales training, he called it "rhetoric." Today the dictionary defines rhetoric as "the art of speaking or writing effectively." Aristotle defined it as "the ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion." Both of these definitions would also serve as a good definition of selling. People are not all that different today than they were in ancient Greece. We humans are still driven by the same basic needs and emotions as we were when business casual consisted of a clean bed sheet and a laurel wreath. The ideas expressed by Aristotle on the streets of Athens in 375 B.C.E. are still as useful today as they were in his time.

#### **Ethos, Pathos, Logos**

Aristotle believed that in order to convince others to agree with our view, we needed to offer them "artistic proof" that our point was valid. He identified three specific points we need to make our point. These are represented by the three Greek words Ethos, Pathos and Logos. These ancient terms have come down to us as the roots of modern words. We will look at each of these tools and how we can employ them to sell advertising to 21st century prospects.

#### **Ethos**

Ethos contains the root of the modern word "ethical." If we do not believe a person is "ethical" or honest, they will never win us over to their side of an argument. This is why it is imperative that we never lie to a customer, even if it would be in our best interest in the short term. Once we have lost a customer's trust, they will be reticent to ever buy anything from us again.

Establishing trust with a new prospect is very difficult. The simple act of identifying ourselves as a "sales person" calls our credibility into question. The customer knows we are there to earn a living by convincing them to buy our products. Even if we have the best of intentions, we are "tarred with the same brush" as every other sales person they've encountered in their lives. We need to prove that what we tell them, even if motivated by our own self interest, is true. We have a number of tools at our disposal to accomplish this. First, we must appear trustworthy. Dressing neatly and professionally helps create a "trustworthy image." We must also project confidence with our body language. Our walk, and the way we hold our bodies communicates a lot about

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us to the other person. Nothing is more important than maintaining eye contact and a good smile. Our greeting should be friendly and professional. One of the best ways to establish trust is to “borrow some credibility” by using a referral. When you ask a current customer for a referral to a prospect, you are leveraging the trust that your customer has built up with your prospect. This will get you in the door and allow you to build up your own reserve of trust. If you do not have a referral, using opening phrases like “I work with many of the businesses in this area” or even better use specific customers like, “I work with Business A and Business B” helps to establish your credibility. This is also why instead of saying, “I think you should,” it is more effective to use, “Many of my customers have found it is better to...” This language positions the advice as coming from a trustworthy peer rather than from a “self interested” sales person. You can also establish trust for your brand by participating in community events and being visible in the local community.

### **Pathos**

Pathos comes down from the ancient Greeks in the word “Empathy.” Pathos is involved with the customer’s emotions. Modern research is finally catching up with Aristotle, state of the art brain scans have shown us that the human decision making process is based more on emotions than on logic. Unless a prospect feels that what you’re recommending is good for them, they will not decide in your favor. You can engage a customer’s emotions in a number of ways. Fear is a good motivator; you can talk about how a new competitor or situation threatens their business. Aristotle believed that anger and fear were two of the most powerful emotions. You can stimulate their desire to beat out a competitor. You can engage their ego by talking to them about how they will feel as the leader in their market. I like to talk to people about why they got into the particular business they’ve chosen. This often reminds them of the strong emotions they had when they first started out. This also tells you a lot about what they originally wanted to achieve. Knowing this helps you to tap into these emotions and motivations. Phrase questions in emotional terms, do not ask a client “what they think,” but rather “how they feel” about something. This helps you to gain a better understanding of how engaged they are emotionally. Though he lived thousands of years before the term “psychology” was coined, Aristotle and modern behavioral psychologists agree, you must engage a prospect’s emotions in order to make them receptive to your message.

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### Logos

Advertising people will recognize “Logos” as the root of the word “Logo.” A logo is the symbol of a company. Over time and through marketing and experience, a logo becomes imbued with a great deal of meaning. When we see the “Golden Arches”, we can picture their restaurants and their menu. We will picture Ronald McDonald and all of his friends and this logo will activate our feelings, good and bad toward “Mickey D’s.” Aristotle recognized that the best way to convince someone to change their point of view was to help them come to that decision on their own. He believed that the most effective persuaders provided the person they wanted to convince with the relative facts and then guided them to the correct conclusion. He used deductive and inductive reasoning to accomplish this. Deductive reasoning uses a series of questions, “If such and such is true and this and that is true, would not this be true!” This technique was favored by Sherlock Holmes, but it is too cumbersome and time consuming for our purposes. Inductive reasoning is much easier to apply to the sales process. In inductive reasoning we look at a number of similar situations and then try to use this information to make a good decision in our own case. To help a customer make a decision, we can offer them testimonials from other business people who use our products. Our goal is to allay their fears and make them believe that our paper will help them achieve their goals, “If Joe’s Plumbing and Mike’s Roofing has been using their paper for years, it must work for them, so the risk to me is limited and I could make more money.” While they may not actually think this through in their conscious mind, this is the process that will occur in their subconscious. I’ve found that while facts and figures are effective in closing a customer, testimonials seem to have a bigger impact on the decision making process.

Here is an example of how to position information on a call:

“Mr. /Ms. Customer, I can understand why you want to be sure that this is the right move for you.” (This helps set the customer at ease)

“Of course, I’m confident that the program we discussed will attract more customers to your business.” (Communicates confidence)

“I’d like to show you something in my paper; this business has been advertising for more than 10 years with us and this one for over 15. I know both of these customers and they are hardworking, sharp business people just like you.” (This shows the customer that others have advertised and done well. The phrase “just like you” helps the customer identify with your advertisers. By praising them and the client, it makes him envy them, and builds the customer’s ego.)

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“Do you think they would continue advertising if our paper wasn’t helping them achieve their goals?” (Directs the customer’s thinking and helps them come to the logical conclusion to advertise.)

### **Selling the whole person**

Philosophy is the “love of knowledge.” Aristotle focused his life on gaining knowledge of his fellow citizens. He observed their actions and what motivated them. He was a teacher and was particularly interested in what he needed to do to get others to accept his ideas. He realized that simply rattling off a series of facts was very ineffective. He knew that just as a farmer needed to prepare the ground before planting their seeds, a sales person has to prepare the groundwork before making a presentation. A farmer first had to clear the land, removing the rocks and stumps in the way of his plow. A sales person has to make their prospect trust them to clear a path for the sales process. The farmer then had to plow the field so that it would be receptive to the seeds. The sales person has to prepare their prospect to hear the sales message by engaging their emotions. Finally, the farmer planted the right seed for the crop he wanted to raise. The sales person “seeds” their customer with the information they need to make a sound buying decision. Skipping any of these steps guarantees failure; seeds will not sprout on unplowed ground. A sales presentation will fall on deaf ears if the sales person hasn’t established trust with a prospect and engaged their emotions.

Though Aristotle gave his last lesson over 2,400 years ago his words still ring true today. By integrating his concepts of “Ethos,” “Pathos” and “Logos” into your sales presentations, you’ll close more sales and make more money.

*This article was written by Jim Busch of the Pittsburgh Pennysaver.*

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