

JEFF SHORE

WITH AMY O'CONNOR & RYAN TAFT

BUYING THE EXPERIENCE

REAL LIFE LESSONS ABOUT THE WAY
REAL PEOPLE BUY HOMES

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *THE 4:2 FORMULA*

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CHAPTER 1:

How We Got Here

HUSBAND to WIFE, as they approach a sales office: “Think there’s a way we can ditch the salespeople?”

WIFE: “No, there isn’t, so just be nice.”

HUSBAND: “I’m not going to be too nice or they’ll never leave us alone!”

WIFE: “On second thought, maybe you shouldn’t talk at all.”

HUSBAND: “The thing is, I actually do have some questions that I couldn’t get answered on their web site, but I’m afraid if I ask anything, they’ll never shut up!”

WIFE: “I know, I know... Why is it always like that? Maybe we’ll get the guy who doesn’t even go into the model with us.”

HUSBAND: “Yeah, but that’s almost just as annoying... Then they’re useless. At that point why are they even there?”

WIFE: “Totally. It’s like, what am I supposed to do—open an upstairs window and yell down my questions to them on the porch?”

HUSBAND: “Uh-oh... we’ve been spotted... one of them is coming out now...”

WIFE: “OK, just don’t make too much eye contact and remember, we are ‘just looking’!”

REALTORS®: THE “MAKE IT UP” APPROACH

I launched my real estate career with Coldwell Banker in 1985. Their in-house orientation training was (at least at the time) state-of-the-art.

The problem then, and still a problem today, is that most Realtor® training is about business management. I learned how to farm leads, how to work the “up desk” like a champ, how to seek out referrals, and certainly how to take advantage of the swag provided me by the endless parade of lenders, title companies, termite inspectors, etc. Would you like to see my collection of vintage mortgage company key chains?

But I never learned one of the most critical sales techniques ever: how to properly walk someone through a home. I was simply left to figure it out as I went along.

The end result: My demonstration technique was as horrible as it was awkward. Was I thinking “strategy”? Not so much. It was more like *survival*—for both my customers and myself.

NEW HOMES: THE “MAP-KEY” TRAINING APPROACH

When I switched over to the new home sales world several years later, I went through a detailed program called “Map-Key” training. You might not know it by that name, but let me describe the gist of it for you and see if it sounds familiar: *“Congratulations, you’re hired. Here’s a map and here’s a key. Try to not get us sued.”*

“Let our advance worrying
become advance
thinking and planning.”

Winston Churchill

Still no one showed me how to walk someone through a home. So, I continued making it up as I went along. In other words, the horribleness I had been inflicting on buyers continued.

Sales professionals everywhere suffer through this exact same story. Sadly, not much has changed over the years and, not surprisingly, sales demonstration technique remains one of the most neglected aspects of sales skill development.

Indisputable proof of this becomes readily apparent to anyone who spends an afternoon visiting open houses and model home communities or watches a video “mystery shop” presentation. Heck, just watch a few episodes of *House Hunters* if you want to see how *not* to do it. Painful!

FOUR PAINFULLY COMMON PITFALLS

Over the past thirty years, I have visited more new home communities and open homes than I could possibly count. (Yes, I deserve some kind of award!) The technique infractions I have personally witnessed are too numerous to count, but the most common issues are as follows:

1. **Feature Dumping:** The ridiculous and annoying practice of pointing out glaringly obvious aspects of the home, whether the customer wants you to or not. I call it the “show up and throw up” approach. It is also known as “showing and spewing,” “selling is telling,” and “showing is knowing.” These monikers are accurate and the approach really *is* that non-glamorous and unhelpful to the customer.



AMY'S WARNING

Feature dumping sometimes appears very appealing to certain high and mighty people in home selling organizations such as the owners of the company, the regional or division presidents, or the VPs of purchasing who want to make dang sure that you highlight every (and I mean E.V.E.R.Y.) single solitary item that money was allocated to include. Your best sales job in this instance may be selling your leaders on understanding that you will absolutely highlight important features *when* they are relevant to specific buyers.



RYAN'S TWO CENTS

The sales world has endured a false teaching that I believe is the root cause of feature dumping. This teaching makes the claim: *If you are not talking, then you are not building value.* That could not be any less true. This “talk to build value” philosophy leads to a game-show style presentation where salespeople throw out a ton of features in the hopes that one or more of them will inspire the customer to purchase. I agree with the late, great business philosopher Jim Rohn, who said: *“Hope is not a strategy.”*

2. **Awkward Silence:** The flipside to feature dumping is the horribly uncomfortable practice of walking through a home with a customer but saying nothing at all. You look around, you smile uncomfortably from time to time, you check your cell phone for text messages, all in silence. It begs an important question: Why is the salesperson even there if he does not add value to the process?
3. **Blatant Neglect:** To avoid the possibility of awkward silence, many salespeople take the approach of entirely removing themselves from the home-showing process: *“You go ahead and I’ll just wait out here.”* Over the years, I have talked with many salespeople who suggest that this is, in fact, the most respectful of all sales methodologies. From my perspective, the same question from earlier remains: Why is the salesperson even there, and if she removes herself from the sales process, what is she doing that possibly merits a sales commission?
4. **Salesperson-Centric:** The opposite of neglect is the salesperson who inserts himself way too much into the presentation by talking about what *he* likes at every turn. *“I love this entryway. I think this countertop is just gorgeous! Oh, and look at this fireplace. I would love to curl up in front of that on a cold night!”* At best, a customer is thinking *“Who cares?”* when salespeople talk like this. At worst, another two-word phrase is in their minds. (Hint: It starts with “shut” and ends with “up.”)



AMY'S PRO TIP

At the beginning of your next walkthrough, take out your smart phone, find the voice recorder (I promise it has one) and record yourself for the entire time. Then, when you are by yourself, play it back. (I just heard that sigh and saw you roll your eyes all the way to the back of your head! Hey, I warned you this was a “pro” tip.) While listening (and wincing at the sound of your own voice—we all do it), tally how many times you say “me” or “I.” Also keep track of how many times you refer to the buyer or his family. Compare the two tally counts. Which count is greater and by how much? 'Nuff said.



RYAN'S PRO TIP

One way to ensure that you switch from being salesperson-centric to having a customer-centric focus is to develop a skill we call "Insane Curiosity." If you discover, via Amy's pro tip above, that you are salesperson-centric, there is a good chance you need to exercise your curiosity muscles. It is human nature to be self-focused; it takes work to retrain your brain to focus on other people.

Give your curiosity muscles a regular workout by picking a different person to get insanely curious about each day. (Not necessarily your customers. You can practice on friends and family.) The better you get at asking people about themselves and their lives, the more natural it will become to do so with your customers. It doesn't take that long for it to become second nature for you to ask about others vs. telling about yourself.

MOVING FROM "DEMONSTRATION" TO "EXPERIENCE"

So that's how we got here. Now what? Where do we grow from here?

In a nutshell, I believe that the traditional "demonstration" is dead. It's time for us to focus on the "experience" instead.

At some point in the history of real estate sales, the traditional "demonstration" made sense. Think back to the post-World War II housing boom. The G.I. Bill made home ownership a viable option for thousands upon thousands of servicemen. The economy was booming and suburbs began to flourish.

Many of these first-time home buyers were moving from cramped urban apartments or old family farms. They actually needed a well-educated salesperson to demonstrate all the new features in these brand new homes: dedicated hot water heaters, washers and dryers, dishwashers, garbage disposals, central heating and cooling.

But let's face it, even the most basic apartments today offer all of these amenities—and probably more!

Do you really think your customer needs you to demonstrate how the garbage disposal works? Give me a break!

My friend, it's time to radically re-think our approach to how we walk someone through a home.

Let's look briefly at the fundamental difference between a "demonstration" and an "experience":

| Demonstration | Experience |
|---|---|
| <i>An act of showing someone how something is used or done.</i> | <i>The process of doing and seeing things and of having things happen to you.</i> |

Are you in the least bit guilty of showing a home by focusing on how things work? By focusing on what features are included in the home? By pointing out the minutiae and missing the big picture?

If so, it's time to elevate your thinking.

UNDERSTANDING THE TWO TYPES OF EXPERIENCES

This book will take you on a journey that equips you with the tools to create two specific types of experiences for your customer:

Emotional Experience: Transcends the rational/physical attributes of the home (quality, price, size) to create feelings about the home itself.

Sensory Experience: Connects one or more of the key physiological senses to the physical attributes of the home.

| Emotional Experience | Sensory Experience |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involves both the body and the mind • Unique to the individual • Deeply personal • Affects facial movements and vocal acoustics • Gives meaning to a situation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sight • Sound • Touch • Movement • Sense of Space |

But to create this experience, you must first go a different journey—the journey of getting to know your customer on a deep emotional level.

BRIDGING THE RELATIONAL CHASM

The viewing of a home is one of the most exciting and important experiences in the buying process. It should be dramatic, electric, romantic even.

Home buyers (as we will see later in this book) desperately long to be emotionally engaged with the home of their dreams. They *want* to fall in love at first sight! It's a travesty that so many well-intentioned salespeople inadvertently punch love right in the face with a hackneyed and ill-conceived "demonstration".

Too many salespeople treat the "demonstration" of a home as merely another item to check off from their customer to-do list—this is why we must think in terms of an "experience" instead of a "demonstration".

So what holds us back from creating an "experience" of a home? Why do we fall into "demonstration" mode?

Frequently a relational chasm prohibits salespeople from engaging at a deep and meaningful level with their customers. When salespeople operate in this kind of emotionless mode, the entire home buying transaction is purely business. Maybe there is a part of you that thinks this all-business approach is completely acceptable.

Let me challenge that thinking with a different perspective. Suppose you were selling a home not to a client, but to your sister. What would be different? *Everything!*

Yes, everything would change. First of all, trust would already be a part of your relationship. Once you understood what she needed, you would be downright giddy to show her the home of her dreams. The process would be an enjoyable experience for *both* parties.

WHAT ARE THE KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SHOWING A HOME TO YOUR SISTER AND SHOWING TO A CLIENT?

- 1) **Relational Foundation:** There is a comfortable trust in place with your sister.
 - 2) **Understanding of Need:** You know what your sister requires and desires.
 - 3) **Ease of Rapport:** The conversation flows with knowledge and helpfulness, following an emotional pacing that is both fluid and natural.
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Establishing these three points as much as possible, early on in your conversations with customers will enable you to create a moving, memorable and motivating experience for your home buyer.



A FEW NOTES ON EMPATHY

Working with customers day after day can cause us, as salespeople, to become desensitized to the customer experience. In order to keep a fresh perspective and gain empathy for customers, I regularly visit new home communities and open homes.

I suggest you do the same. By going through multiple "demonstrations" with salespeople, you will have a greater understanding of how your customer feels. Remember that knowing what *not* to do is just as powerful as knowing what *to* do.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Take a moment to mull over these four questions. They will get you thinking about changes you need to make in the way that you show homes to your customers.

1. Is my approach based on tradition and routine or on a well-considered strategy? Can I defend each step in my presentation with a proven strategy?
2. Could I make this a lot more fun...for my customer and myself?
3. Can I commit to creating a difference in the way my customer experiences a home?
4. Can I diligently practice just one new technique today to get things started?

