

AIDA

If you remember just one sales or selling model, remember AIDA

DAWOOD FAMILY TAKAFUL LIMITED HAROONABAD

AIDA is the original sales training acronym, from the late 1950s, when selling was first treated as a professional discipline, and sales training began. The model is said to have evolved from earlier work by American psychologists concerning assimilation and understanding of communications and information. Walter Dill Scott's 'Attention-Comprehension-Understanding' model, developed by 1913 at the Chicago Northwestern University, is cited as one example of possible contributory thinking, although this is by no means a specific single origin; in fact it is unlikely that a specific single origin for AIDA actually exists. AIDA is perhaps more relevant and useful today than when it was first devised, because modern theories and distractions can often cause people to lose appreciation for the most basic and obvious features and requirements of a successful sales engagement.

So, especially for those learning your trade in selling or advertising or communicating with prospective customers, if you remember just one sales or selling model, remember AIDA.

Often called the 'Hierarchy of Effects', AIDA describes the basic process by which people become motivated to act on external stimulus, including the way that successful selling happens and sales are made.

A - Attention

I - Interest

D - Desire

A - Action

The AIDA process also applies to any advertising or communication that aims to generate a response, and it provides a reliable template for the design of all sorts of marketing material.

Simply, when we buy something we buy according to the AIDA process. So when we sell something we must sell go through the AIDA stages. Something first gets our **attention**; if it's relevant to us we are **interested** to learn or hear more about it. If the product or service then appears to closely match our needs and/or aspirations, and resources, particularly if it is special, unique, or rare, we begin to **desire** it. If we are prompted or stimulated to overcome our natural caution we may then become motivated or susceptible to taking **action** to buy.

Some AIDA pointers:

Attention

- Getting the other person's attention sets the tone: first impressions count, so smile - even on the phone because people can hear it in your voice - be happy (but not annoyingly so) be natural, honest and professional.
- If you're not in the mood to smile do some paperwork instead. If you rarely smile then get out of selling.
- Getting attention is more difficult than it used to be, because people are less accessible, have less free time, and lots of competing distractions, so think about when it's best to call.
- Gimmicks, tricks and crafty techniques don't work, because your prospective customers - like the rest of us - are irritated by hundreds of them every day.
- If you are calling on the phone or meeting face-to-face you have about five seconds to attract attention, by which time the other person has formed their first impression of you.
- Despite the time pressure, relax and enjoy it - expect mostly to be told 'no thanks' - but remember that every 'no' takes you closer to the next 'okay'.

Interest

- You now have maybe 5-15 seconds in which to create some interest.
- Something begins to look interesting if it is relevant and potentially advantageous. This implies a lot:

- The person you are approaching should have a potential need for your product or service or proposition (which implies that you or somebody else has established a target customer profile).
- You must approach the other person at a suitable time (ie it's convenient, and that aspects of seasonality and other factors affecting timing have been taken into account)
- You must empathise with and understand the other person's situation and issues, and be able to express yourself in their terms (ie talk their language).

Desire

- The sales person needs to be able to identify and agree the prospect's situation, needs, priorities and constraints on personal and organizational levels, through empathic questioning and interpretation.
- You must build rapport and trust, and a preparedness in the prospect's mind to do business with you personally (thus dispelling the prospect's feelings of doubt or risk about your own integrity and ability).
- You must understand your competitors' capabilities and your prospect's other options.
- You must obviously understand your product (specification, options, features, advantages, and benefits), and particularly all relevance and implications for your prospect.
- You must be able to present, explain and convey solutions with credibility and enthusiasm.
- The key is being able to demonstrate how you, your own organization and your product will suitably, reliably and sustainably 'match' the prospect's needs identified and agreed, within all constraints.
- Creating desire is part skill and technique, and part behaviour and style. In modern selling and business, trust and relationship (the 'you' factor) are increasingly significant, as natural competitive development inexorably squeezes and reduces the opportunities for clear product advantage and uniqueness.

Action

- Simply the conversion of potential into actuality, to achieve or move closer to whatever is the aim.
- Natural inertia and caution often dictate that clear opportunities are not acted upon, particularly by purchasers of all sorts, so the sales person must suggest, or encourage agreement to move to complete the sale or move to the next stage.
- The better the preceding three stages have been conducted, then the less emphasis is required for the action stage; in fact on a few rare occasions in the history of the universe, a sale is so well conducted that the prospect decides to take action without any encouragement at all.

AIDCA

More recently (c.1980s-1990s) the AIDA acronym has been used in extended form as AIDCA, meaning the same as AIDA with the insertion of **Commitment** prior to the action stage. Arguably Commitment is implicit within the Action stage, but if it suits your sales training purposes then AIDCA is an acceptable interpretation. Commitment here means that a prospective customer is more likely to progress to the Action stage if their commitment to the proposition can first be established. As ever, adding detail make the thing less elegant and flexible, which in this case makes AIDCA non-applicable to selling methods that do not involve a two-way communication, for example, the structure of a sales letter or advert, for which AIDA remains more helpful. For two-way sales communications, discussions, presentations, etc., then AIDCA is fine.

- Attention
- Interest
- Desire
- Commitment
- Action