CHAPTER 3

Measurably Superior Instructional Methods: Do We Need Sales and Marketing?

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This chapter expands on previous discussions of the importance of taking a sales and marketing approach to the dissemination and promotion of effective instructional technology (Binder & Watkins, 1989; Binder, 1990, 1991a, 1991b). Behavioral educators who have developed measurably effective instructional methods and materials must do a better job of targeting markets and customers, identifying their needs, developing and packaging specific solutions for those needs, describing these offerings with language that will influence customers' buying decisions, and inducing customers to adopt or literally purchase the solution. Stated with a more commercial intent, we need to learn how to package and promote what we do to sell it in sufficient quantity and generate sufficient revenues to guarantee continued, independent funding of our research and development. This is the most pressing challenge for instructional technologists today if we seek to make significant, lasting contributions.

How We Have Failed

Many academics and human services practitioners seem to view sales and marketing as beneath them. Yet many express surprise or indignation when measurably superior instructional methods are not more widely adopted. As scientists motivated by empirical data, or as practitioners encouraged by observable results, we often lack sympathy for those who are not likewise motivated. For example, in moving from educational research and teacher preparation into private-sector corporate consulting and training development, I assumed that measured results would "sell" effective instructional methodologies. This naive assumption turned out to be incorrect. Although data work to support adoption or buying decisions made by those in need of objective justification, such decisions seem largely influenced by other factors, including the emotional connotations of the words used to describe products, services, and their benefits (Miller & Heiman, 1987). Objective data seem to be relevant only when they relate directly to a problem or need of which the customer is clearly aware. Customers must be able to identify results that they perceive to be desirable, and there seems to be a substantial emotional component in this anticipation. The behavior of our prospective customers—educators and administrators, for the most part—suggests that we have often failed to successfully identify reinforcers for their behaviors,

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effectively enable them to anticipate those reinforcers, or bring them under the stable control of the positive consequences of adopting our methods.

Malott (1992) made the point that "behavior analysis can save the world by focusing on the added, effective, performance management contingency. We can best contribute by designing and implementing contingencies with outcomes that are sizable and probable" (p. 19). Our difficulty has not been with the effectiveness of our solutions. Indeed, we have been able to produce remarkably powerful solutions to pressing educational problems (e.g., Watkins, 1988; Binder & Watkins, 1990; Johnson & Layng, 1992). Rather, in large part we have failed to attractively package, market, and sell our products. This has been true both for those working within schools and human services agencies and for consultants or academics attempting to influence education on a large scale from the outside. We might benefit, therefore, from adopting methods used in private enterprise to market and sell products and services.

What Is Sales and Marketing?

The marketing and sales approach is largely a matter of verbal behavior that is designed to prompt and reinforce successive approximations to a "buying decision." Marketing and sales has at least four discernible functions: (1) market researchers identify and survey potential markets for products or services, (2) product development and product marketing professionals create products and services that meet the target customers' perceived needs or wants. (3) marketing communications people craft vision statements, product literature, and advertising copy to increase the likelihood of positive buying decisions, and (4) sales professionals use questioning strategies to prompt customers to discuss their perceived problems, their needs, and the value of solutions to those problems. Once customers have expressed their needs and the potential payoff for addressing those needs, salespeople can introduce solutions and explain how they address those needs, as a step toward "closing the sale."

Every step in the process is designed to introduce or strengthen the establishing operations or to shape customers' verbal behavior toward buying decisions. Although this chapter is not intended to provide an exhaustive or technically precise behavioral description of this process, others could contribute significantly to our understanding by carrying out such an analysis. Instead, I will simply introduce and discuss some of the basic principles and procedures of sales and marketing and suggest how they might apply to our efforts to promote effective instructional methods.

Market Research: The Problem of Identifying Markets

The first step in an effective sales and marketing process involves research, with varying degrees of formality, aimed at identifying prospective markets or customer groups and their needs. Market research consists of procedures for checking in advance the correctness of marketing, sales, and product decisions (Breen & Blankenship, 1982). These decisions can be related to all aspects of the product development, marketing, and sales process. As a starting place, however, we need to discover who might be willing and able to buy what we have to offer.

As academics and practitioners, we are not ignorant of market research, although we probably have not conceived of our activities as such. Indeed, the processes of grantsmanship and academic publication frequently involve searching for granting agencies interested in funding research or applied programs, or investigating journals to determine which are likely to publish what we write and how we should position what we write so that it will be accepted. In these processes we conduct a narrow version of market research by scanning potential markets to target customers and identify their needs.

On the other hand, our grant-seeking and publication efforts differ from private-sector market research in several critical aspects. In seeking grants, for example, we are often communicating with our peers—academics, practitioners, or bureaucrats—whose jargon and perspectives we share. Consequently, we may not need to conduct extensive research to determine the best language for describing their problems or needs. We may not have to reduce our communication efforts to plain English, expressed in terms that an otherwise unfamiliar audience might understand. To the contrary, in many cases the more academic jargon or "bureaucratese" we use the better, since using such language with these audiences might convey credibility. In market research, as it is described here, one goal is to identify and adopt the vocabulary of the customer—language that might be quite different from our own.

Although there is certainly an element of selling involved in grantsmanship and publication, the motivation of our customers in these situations may be significantly different than in the commercial environment. In many cases, we need only seek the agencies or journals whose published standards correspond with what we are already doing, rather than adapt our work in any significant way to the needs of the market. In some cases, granting agencies and journal editors have the equivalent of quotas to fulfill and accept the best of whatever proposals or manuscripts they receive. Participation in this process may therefore be far different than inducing an otherwise uninterested prospective customer to buy something.

To more widely promote and sell our educational technologies, we must identify those customers who control decisions to adopt or buy our products or services; capture the language they use to describe their problems, needs, and wants; and use that language to communicate the benefits of our products and services. We must identify those customers who have serious problems or needs that we can address with unique or compelling cost-effectiveness or emotional impact and in sufficient numbers to generate a significant return on our investment, both financial and in overall impact or visibility.

An important difference between the process of identifying potential customers and of securing grants is that the grant-getting process does not always promote development of products and services that will outlast the grant. Grants can significantly contribute to our survival only if they are viewed as "seed capital" to develop products and services that will be successful in the marketplace. Otherwise, as has occurred so often in research and program development, grants are analogous to "feeding the deer"—once the artificial source of sustenance ends, the deer starve to death because the free food has discouraged adaptation to the natural contingencies. From a selectionist perspective (Johnson & Layng, 1992), grants often select programs that cannot stand on their own. The benefit of conducting market research as a precursor to exposing ourselves to the contingencies of the marketplace is that it increases the likelihood of survival by identifying the needs we must satisfy in order to be sustained by natural, economic contingencies. That is, market research helps us define the parameters of products and services we must develop, package, and offer to increase the likelihood of adoption and support in the free market environment.

Methods for conducting market research vary. They may include relatively informal analyses as well as formal controlled studies and significant statistical and demographic research (Breen & Blankenship, 1982). Simply listing the types of prospective users and buyers of our technologies and creating preliminary descriptions of their potential problems and needs is a way to begin considering which products and services to develop for whom. Scanning the media for information about potential markets and needs and recording the language used to describe them may also be a good preliminary step. Once having defined the characteristics of potential buyers, using readily available sources of demographic and statistical data to estimate market size is another common exploratory method. Working with marketing professionals to apply more sophisticated methods, whether as paid consultants or as academic colleagues, may offer behavioral educators an entry into more sophisticated phases of the market research process. It may also lead to new types of research for behavioral educators, such as studies aimed at empirically determining optimal conditions and target markets for dissemination of behavioral technology.

Some market research methods are similar to those used by instructional designers in the process of needs assessment (Zemke & Kramlinger, 1982). For example, using surveys and questionnaires with samples of a prospective customer base to determine the types and magnitudes of their problems and needs, and the language they use to describe them, is a relatively easy way of beginning to formulate products and services likely to be successful in particular markets. Using focus groups—structured group discussions—with various customer types is another important tool for identifying markets, customer needs, and effective marketing language. Telephone interviews can produce a large amount of data about specific questions and topics at relatively low cost, given phone lists of appropriate interviewees. An important emphasis for all of these methods is to identify significant markets with pressing needs that can be addressed in powerful ways. In the process, a narrowly defined "niche" market may often provide a more secure or predictable customer base than a larger market, which is less predictable because of its broader parameters.

Examples of potential markets for our services might include the growing number of parents willing to invest in after-school programs for their children; adults needing to pass certification or licensing exams in specific fields; adult literacy; home study markets for children whose parents purchase materials at check-out counters in common retail outlets; computer training; many areas of corporate and industrial training; public schools willing to contract with outside providers in specific curriculum areas; people willing to pay for health maintenance programs; foreign language training in specific market segments; and various types of recreational instruction such as chess, bridge, and golf, where the skills might be taught more efficiently.

For each potential market, we need to define a customer profile; obtain estimates of size and indications of ability and willingness to spend; identify perceived problems, needs, or wants; and gather information about actual or potential competition. (By the way, markets with existing successful providers are often ripe for additional competitors and may sometimes offer greater potential than new, untested markets.)

Product Development: The Problem of Defining a Product

Effective sales and marketing relies on having a product. Once we have conducted market research to identify a significant market with specific problems or needs, the purpose of the product development phase is to create and package a product or service that is designed precisely to address those needs and be attractive to target customers. Just as it is often a mistake to assume that a broadly defined market will be more lucrative than a narrowly and more precisely defined market segment, developing a generic product or service may be perceived as "for no one" because it is for everyone. Prospective customers must be able to easily identify the product or service as a solution to their particular problems, in both its description and packaging. In the process of product development, we would be wise to conduct research about whether our prospective customers can readily identify our offering as specifically intended for them.

The more tangible our solution is to specific needs, the easier it will be to describe, demonstrate, and sell. A major difficulty for instructional technologists, and for behavioral educators in particular, is that we often attempt to sell methods or an approach rather than a well-defined product or service. Because we are frequently involved in academic pursuits, and have ourselves been sold on the concepts and principles of behavior analysis, we often promote our general methodology on the merits of its logic and overall measures of success. Combined with our frequent use of jargon and abstract terminology, this approach places us at a significant disadvantage.

An interesting trend toward "packages" of behavioral interventions began in the 1970s with such products as Foxx and Azrin's (1974) popular toilet-training book for parents. This was an example of applying general principles and procedures to a specific problem for a particular audience and using language that was easy for that audience to accept and understand. Some criticism arose in the field of applied behavior analysis when academic publications reported the results of "packaged" combinations of interventions without analyzing the effects of each component (Birnbrauer, 1979). This controversy, however, might have been clarified by distinguishing between marketing packages created to disseminate technology and the science of behavior analysis, which should strive to determine the effects of each variable and its interactions.

In recent years there have been many examples of educational packages being marketed by nonbehaviorists directly to the public. Ads in airline magazines, for example, portray language learning self-study programs that are clearly and attractively aimed at busy professionals. *Hooked on Phonics* (1987), a popular audiotape and workbook reading-instruction package marketed on television, and the videotape study skills program *Where There's a Will There's an . . . A* (Olney, 1989) are examples of mass-marketed educational packages aimed at specific segments of parents and students. Those who need these programs can easily identify them as potential solutions to their problems.

Some behaviorists have also been successful in creating and marketing specific products. Behavioral educator Michael Maloney of Ontario, Canada, for example, has successfully marketed educational software called *Math Tutor* (1985) for teachers, parents, and children. (In fact, this series of programs has received awards for excellence from both *Curriculum Digest* and *Parents Choice* magazines.) Trying to sell behavioral education, or even such specific methodologies as Precision Teaching or Direct Instruction, may be far more difficult than selling "The Morningside Program" for children and adults with learning problems (Johnson & Layng, 1992) or *Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons* (Engelmann, Haddox, & Bruner, 1983). These types of packaged, targeted products are far more likely to be commercially successful, thus serving as effective vehicles for disseminating our technologies, than the generic methods on which they are based.

There may even be evidence that the more specifically we define and package our products, moving away from general methodologies toward particular solutions, the more effective they will be. An example, from the now-famous Project Follow Through study (Watkins, 1988), is that the Direct Instruction model, which included both a methodology and very specific curriculum materials and procedures, was more effective at teaching basic skills to young children than the Behavior Analysis model, which relied on a generally "behavioral" methodology of contingency management but did not include curriculum materials that were developed and refined for effectiveness specifically with the target population. The Morningside model, which integrates principles from Precision Teaching, Direct Instruction, and other behavioral methodologies, appears to be more effective in teaching literacy, numeracy, and study skills than any of its component methodologies in isolation (Johnson & Layng, 1992).

Marketing Communication: The Problem of Description

Having identified customers and needs and developed and packaged a solution, the next step is to communicate with prospective customers about the product and how it addresses their needs or desires. Marketing communication involves identifying and using audience-specific language, describing products and services as need-solutions that appeal to target customers, and crafting language that carries appropriate emotional connotations for its target audience and conveys the relevant facts.

As scientists, we have learned to communicate in ways that are ineffective when used with those outside our profession. In particular, academic encouragement of passive sentences and technical jargon has created barriers between us and the general literate public. Using behavioral terminology to communicate with prospective customers is similar to using engineering jargon to sell cars (Binder, 1991b)—it simply doesn't work very well. Yet, we are so attached to our language because of its technical power and precision that we tend to resist plain English. We often seek to convert others to our philosophy and therefore to our way of speaking. Although this goal might be a worthy one in the context of academic or philosophical discourse, it may not support wide dissemination of our methods.

As the originator of the phrase *measurably superior instructional methods* (Binder, 1990, 1991a)—the tag line for the 1992 Ohio State University Conference on Behavior Analysis in Education—I can speak from experience about the need to obtain feedback from the market about our use of language. In an effort to substitute plain descriptive language for such terms as Precision Teaching, Direct Instruction, and Behavioral Education, I created the phrase *measurably superior instructional methods* because it emphasizes our measured results. However, recent feedback from nonbehaviorists and relatively naive readers has convinced me that the air of haughty superiority connoted by this phrase probably outweighs any descriptive improvement it represents. Our persistence in using the term *behavioral* is an example of our failure to take the audience into account. For whatever reason, this term raises mechanistic, even inhumane, images for many people. We may wish it were otherwise, but we will probably not be very successful in promoting our products and services if we insist on tagging them with language that does not appeal in the marketplace.

A good illustration of using plain English to describe our methods to a general audience is *Don't Shoot the Dog!* (Pryor, 1985), a paperback written by an accomplished animal trainer applying behavioral principles to common human situations. Even seeking to translate the language of our methods for prospective buyers, at least until after they are thoroughly satisfied customers, may be a mistake. We need to exercise extreme care in this area, especially because of the more attractive language used by our "competitors" in psychology and education who begin with a natural marketing communications advantage.

As Malott (1992) observed, "Cognitivism is a lay view in intellectual's clothing. With its expectancies, values, beliefs, and self-efficacies, cognitivism lends legitimacy to the misconceptions of the person on the street" (p. 19). Unfortunately, the language of cognitive developmentalists expresses what behavior analysts believe to be inaccurate descriptions of learning and behavior in terms that are attractive to the general public (Stone, 1991). In recent years, for example, the term *cognitive science* has acquired a high and seldom questioned degree of legitimacy in popular publications and discourse. Its models of commonly accepted processes and mental events based on the language of computer systems seem to add scientific credibility to an already popular vocabulary of mentalistic explanations. In many popular discussions of related topics, cognitive science is assumed to have superseded the old behavioristic notions of the 1950s and 1960s.

Thus, we start out with a handicap—the language we ordinarily use to describe our methods. It does not communicate, except to a small number of specialists. Moreover, it carries mechanistic or "robotic" connotations that seem to offend the average person. Because we are technologists, like technologists in other fields we tend to emphasize technical language in discussing the features of our products and services rather than present the benefits and unique strengths of what we offer in plain English that describes how they address our customers' perceived needs. The fact that we often promote our general methodologies rather than specific products and services adds to the problem, because in addition to being full of jargon, our descriptions are abstract, even when they describe outcomes or benefits.

An approach that is more aligned with effective marketing communication suggests that we must adopt language that (1) is specific and concrete rather than abstract, (2) is familiar, emotionally attractive to our customers, and easily identifiable as "for" them, and (3) describes solutions to their problems or needs and the feelings associated with those solutions, rather than focusing on the features of our methods and materials.

A look through current popular news publications, in their almost daily reporting of efforts to improve American education, should help us identify words and phrases for describing commonly perceived problems and needs for education and training. A useful step in attempting to describe our products and services might involve focus groups for recording language used by typical customers to describe their problems and needs, the types of solutions they would like to see, and what those solutions would offer them (both objectively and emotionally). We might follow up with individual interviews or questionnaires to confirm and refine their language choices for describing needs and problems, products and services, and solutions and payoffs. In such questionnaires, for example, we might ask prospective customers, "What would you more likely buy, X or Y?" where the alternatives are different descriptions of the same thing.

An interesting precedent in behavioral research on the effects of language was a Burns's (1984) dissertation with Roland Tharp at the University of Hawaii. In this study, behavior modification procedures were described in two ways: standard behavioral terminology and humanistic language. Burns reported that the subjects viewed the behavioral description more negatively than the more humanistic description. This study lends credence to the argument that while it is important to preserve the technical precision of our own terminology as part of behavioral science and engineering, we should not make the error of using such language to market our wares.

Sales: The Problem of Inducing a Purchase

Sales is a process of prompting and shaping prospective customers toward a purchase; that is, the verbal and nonverbal behavior involved in choosing to exchange value (or personal support) for products or services. Although there are many models of the sales process, perhaps the most data-based approach is called SPIN® selling, derived by a researcher who observed and counted the behaviors of effective salespeople (Rackham, 1988). Rackham observed that the most effective salespeople asked certain types of questions with relatively high frequencies when speaking with prospective customers. These questions (summarized by the SPIN acronym) were ***s***ituation questions, probing for descriptions of current conditions; ***p***roblem questions, prompting discussion of current or anticipated difficulties; ***i***mplication questions, aimed at inducing the customer to expand on the range and magnitude of difficulties associated with each problem; and ***n***eed-payoff questions, prompting explicit statements of needs and descriptions of the expected value to the customer of addressing those needs. This sequence supports a highly effective methodology for prompting and reinforcing the verbal behavior likely to lead to a purchase (assuming that the customer is in a position to buy the particular product or service).

In contrast to such a needs-oriented sales process, many salespeople simply "pitch" the features of their products, attempting to convince prospective customers of their benefits. Technologists, in particular, often engage in such "feature dumping" rather than asking questions that will lead to customers' identifying their perceived problems and needs and the value of solutions. Behavioral technologists frequently fail in this regard, attempting to promote the elegance and power of our methods rather than probing customers to discover their needs before presenting our solutions. Viewed in this context, our common practice of citing objective data to support the effectiveness of our methods is likely to be successful only if it follows a sequence in which the prospective customer has explicitly stated problems or needs and the data represent evidence for our compelling solutions to those needs.

Other elements of successful sales are generally subsumed under "sales strategy," a topic Rackham (1989) also covered in detail. For example, when attempting to promote our products or services in competition with others, we may need to adopt strategies for shaping the customer's priorities and buying criteria, shifting the customer's focus from the perceived weaknesses of our products to their perceived strengths. Analyzing customer behavior during the process of purchasing a product or service (the "buying cycle") can help us select strategies at each point that effectively prompt and shape behavior toward the final purchase. After the purchase, understanding how buyers behave during the stages of adoption and implementation can lead to prompting, reinforcement, and problem solving that will ensure continued support and repeated purchase of our products and services.

Another important component of sales behavior involves elementary acts of interpersonal communication. One sales-training program, for example, teaches people to discriminate the affect of the prospective customer at each point in a sales discussion and then respond with a "matching" affect, while prompting and shaping them toward a "positive attitude" that is likely to support a buying decision (*Par Sales Training*, 1983). This program can serve as a useful antidote to the all-too-common approach among behavioral educators and researchers of responding with indignation and self-righteousness to anything other than enthusiastic acceptance by the prospective customers (as though they were stupid for not coming to the "correct" conclusion). In our own frustration, arising from histories of frequent extinction and punishment, we often forget that "the organism is always right." If Skinner's understanding that organisms behave lawfully applies any-where, it certainly must be true of the customers we would like to adopt our products and services. In the midst of the sales process, we must remember to adjust our own behavior accordingly, shaping and reinforcing our customers' responses toward the buying decision.

Qualifying the Customer

A recommended prerequisite step is known as "qualifying the customer." Before pursuing prospective customers, sales professionals set criteria that are intended to screen out those who are unlikely to purchase. Typical qualification criteria include whether prospects can afford a purchase and the absence or presence of various obstructions or positive influences on their ability to control the purchase or on the likelihood of their making purchasing decisions. Depending on the products or services being sold, and often on specifics related to customer types or market segments, qualification criteria may vary a great deal from one sales situation to another. We should also consider what factors might define our prospects' probability of purchase before expending time and energy trying to influence their behavior. Given limited sales resources, we need to "choose our battles"—allocate our efforts where they can be most effective.

The Public Versus the Private Sector

In marketing and selling educational products and services, a primary qualifying criterion might involve the distinction between the public school system and the private sector. For example: What are the conditions under which we are more likely to have an impact on the effectiveness of education? Can we ever hope to significantly impact the public education system from the inside?

The probability of changing public education is addressed by Benno Schmidt, recently president of Yale University and now president of the private-sector Edison Project, an enterprise intended to create hundreds of private for-profit schools that will compete with public schools during the next decade on effectiveness and price. Business Week ("Saving Our Schools," 1992), quoted Schmidt as saying, "I asked myself: What is the chance that public education would make the investment in innovation and have the freedom to experiment and set itself the kind of competitive conditions in which innovations can flourish? There is no chance" (p. 72). Watkins (1988) conducted a contingency analysis of the American public education system and came to much the same conclusion.

Although many of us continue to propose significant technical and structural changes for public education (e.g., Pennypacker & Binder, 1992), there is little reason to believe that the system will allow us to develop and apply optimally effective instructional methods and programs on a large scale any time soon. On the other hand, small-scale private-sector educational enterprises developed and implemented by behavioral educators have been able to achieve significant impacts on students' learning and performance, while selling their programs to markets eager for improved educational practices. One of our best current examples is Dr. Kent Johnson's Morningside Program, which began in Seattle as a private school and demonstrated the capacity to dramatically accelerate the learning rates of adults and children with learning problems. Since 1991, the Morningside program has taken hold at Malcolm X Community College in inner-city Chicago, and community support has swelled because of the dramatic effects on students in summer and regular programs (Johnson & Layng, 1992).

How, then, should we approach the educational market? One strategy is to understand what is possible in each market segment, public and private, and to decide in groups or as individuals on specific goals for each. In public schools, for example, we might focus on specific curriculum areas, geographical sectors, or other target markets where we (1) are most likely to be allowed to teach as effectively as possible, (2) can produce results that have especially powerful economic or political impact and visibility, and (3) are likely to receive public credit that will lead to additional opportunities. Although it is not clear what these markets might be, given the history of nonfunding and punishment for effective educational programs (not merely "behavioral" ones) in this country (Mathews, 1988; Binder, 1991b), many of our colleagues may still choose to focus their energies in this direction for personal or political reasons.

As a compromise, we might develop programs or materials outside the public system that can then be sold into it. "Private practice" educators in some states have developed specific programs (e.g., foreign language) which they deliver on contract to public schools (Lochhead, 1991). They are held accountable contractually for results but have comparative freedom within their programs to develop and deliver the methods and materials that they see fit. Some corporations provide management and instructional services for entire public schools under contract (Holmes, 1990). These emerging markets may offer significant opportunities for enterprising behavioral educators, allowing them comparatively greater freedom to implement effective programs in public school environments.

Finally, self-contained private schools, after-school programs, and publishing enterprises can serve as laboratories for developing and marketing optimal instructional systems and packages, staff performance management systems, organizational structures, and efficient development and publishing operations. So far, our private-sector colleagues have focused mainly on packaging and promoting instructional methods and programs as *services* (e.g., Morningside Academy in Seattle; The Learning Centres in Ontario, Canada; Ben Bronz Academy in West Hartford, CT; Haughton Learning Center in Napa, CA), although a few examples of publishing efforts with *products* also exist (e.g., Engelmann-Becker Corporation's DISTAR programs). The results of some programs have been staggering and have attracted significant public attention (Binder & Watkins, 1989, 1990; Binder, 1991b, 1992; Johnson & Layng, 1992). In the future, behaviorists might combine instructional and performance-management technologies to produce superschools and then conduct systematic sales and marketing efforts to sell these programs to the general public. Major private enterprise programs such as Sylvan Learning Centers (one of several national franchise after-school programs), Kumon (a Japanese import after-school program that uses timed practice sheets), and the Edison Project (an effort of Whittle Communications Corp. to open 2,000 schools around the nation) serve as precedents for a free-market approach that behavior analysts might profitably choose to emulate while incorporating our superior instructional technology.

Deciding How to Proceed

The individual decision to "go private" or remain in the public sector combines personal, professional, and business considerations. At a personal level, starting any business is a risk, especially if it takes us away from the security of a regular public school job. On the other hand, many startup businesses have begun as part-time enterprises until they become large enough for full-time involvement. Private enterprise requires a range of skills, high energy, and persistence, and many educators may feel that they lack one or more of these prerequisites. Nonetheless, there are few better environments for shaping skills and effort than the economic contingencies of the free market. And many educators are already working far beyond the call of duty in their public education jobs.

Professionally and as a field, we must examine the trade-offs between public- and private-sector efforts. Starting a learning center, school, or program materials company can challenge professional skills and knowledge in extraordinary ways, while accelerating professional development and helping shape how offerings are presented to potential customers. A successful undertaking will allow us to apply all the best techniques and approaches we know with few limitations, unlike most public-sector environments. (If truly successful, in the sense of establishing a stable customer base, it will also insulate us from the instability of public budgets and the threat of layoffs.) Nonetheless, some argue that for political, moral, and cultural reasons we should not abandon the public system altogether, since most students will continue to receive their education in that environment. Our decision becomes a choice between a challenging private-sector environment that may support accelerated development of the effectiveness and marketability of our methods and a challenging public education environment in which we may be more frequently frustrated and risk burn-out but still maintain the hope of slow change from within. We can probably predict that most of our colleagues will remain in the public environment, but that some of our most powerful changes and innovations will come from private-sector efforts.

Many of those who have already chosen to "go private," including this author, have come to the conclusion that our only real hope is to be able to demonstrate extraordinary effectiveness in the private sector, while learning to market and sell what we do. We hope that combining dramatic effectiveness of our private-sector programs and published products with efforts to communicate and sell directly to parents, business people, and the general public will eventually lead to a significant impact on the educational system, because of pressure from our satisfied customers demanding comparable effectiveness in public schools. Whether this strategy is ultimately successful, exposure to the contingencies of the marketplace will shape and refine the technology itself.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter provides an overview of some key principles and procedures taken from private-sector sales and marketing. It emphasizes the importance of assuming a needs-driven orientation to product development, packaging, and communication with customers. Some specific suggestions that behavioral educators can begin to apply, in the public system and the private sector, are also included:

- Work to understand your potential customers, perceived problems and needs, using formal and informal surveys, interviews, and group discussions.
- Design concrete solutions for very specific target groups, being sure to package and describe these solutions in ways that appeal to your intended audience so they can clearly see the objective and emotional payoffs.
- Capture the language of the intended adopters or customers in interviews, group discussions, surveys, and popular literature reviews—especially the language they use to describe their problems and needs and the characteristics they seek in solutions. Use that language when discussing your products and services and how they will address needs and problems.
- Use questions for prompting prospective adopters or customers to discuss their problems, the implications of these problems, and the value of solving their problems or addressing their needs. Shape their verbal behavior toward telling you what they need in terms that you can use to describe what you offer as solutions.
- Pick your battles, focusing on those you can win with significant impact, and be clear about the trade-offs between job security, cultural impact, opportunity to advance the technology, and long-term personal and professional goals.

This chapter, and my previous publications, have encouraged behavioral educators to learn more about sales and marketing principles. No matter how effective our methods and programs might be, they will have little impact on our culture if they are not adopted. After decades of successful research and development, the current challenge for behavioral educators may be effective sales, marketing, and implementation on a wide scale. From a selectionist perspective, our effectiveness in this area may well determine whether our methods will be adopted by the culture at large in the future or whether behavioral educators will become instead extinct. Whether we can "sell" what we offer may make a difference with respect to the survival and success of our species as a whole.

References for this chapter include a number of books and training programs that provide further information and guidelines for selling and marketing—guidelines that might be applied to promoting effective instruction. I sincerely hope my colleagues will study some of these documents and programs, perhaps adding the precision of behavior analysis to their content, and consider their implications for effective dissemination and implementation of behavioral technology.

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