10 EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS THAT INFLUENCE B2B BUYING DECISIONS
The most successful consumer brands create an affinity and emotional connection with customers. Coke. Starbucks. Disney. Target. Apple. These companies understand the way to influence buying habits is through the heart. But what about B2B?

For a long time, the logical assumption was when marketing to a B2B buyer, you should primarily focus on the Value Proposition. In other words, what the product has to offer, its specifications and its business outcomes. While those attributes are an essential part of a sale, B2B marketers have historically overlooked the critical role emotions and personal value plays in buying decisions.

Interestingly, a recent study shows that personal value trumps functional differentiation in B2B purchases. In fact, if you can pull at the heartstrings of an actual human being, it delivers twice the impact on a sale versus simply demonstrating the value a product will deliver to the business.

71% of B2B buyers who see legitimate personal value say they will purchase a product.

Source: CEB and Google Study
If you don’t understand their emotions, you don’t understand your customers.

*Source: Forrester Data*
It’s clear that emotionality influences B2B buying decisions. But not all emotions have the same degree of impact. For example, sadness is typically a deactivating emotion. If you create a melancholy vibe, it shouldn’t surprise you when your audience withdraws or shuts down.

The purpose of this guide is to identify ten of the highest-performing emotions that make a connection with B2B audiences. Understanding these triggers and using them to your advantage in your branded content and campaigns can help you build an enthusiastic customer base.

Tip:
It’s important to note that not all emotions will resonate with every B2B persona. As a marketer, it’s your job (and the job of your partner agency) to explore and understand individual stakeholders’ personal needs, professional goals, daily frustrations, values and desired self image.
EMOTIONS THAT INFLUENCE B2B BUYING.
Can your brand create a feeling of wonder and excitement that resonates with your target audience? It’s a tactic employed by GE in the brand’s 2016 “Unimpossible Missions” campaign. A series of videos marry the work that GE does with the wonder of science. For example, the “A Snowball’s Chance in Hell” clip demonstrates how a snowball can survive in a bath of molten metal when housed in a GE super-alloy casing. What’s cool or amazing about the problems your company solves?

**AWE**

Related emotions: Thrill, Surprise, Amazement
It’s human nature to want to feel part of a group. In fact, many people would prefer to have brands treat them more like club members than customers. Build a loyal following by showing the real ways you make your audience feel part of something bigger. Champion their causes. Or simply be the brand that listens to them. One of the most impressive examples is the Shop Small campaign from American Express. The effort evolved into a Small Business Saturday movement that today spans all 50 U.S. states.

Related emotions:
- Esprit de corps
- Respect of others
- Popularity with team
One of the more effective ways we’ve seen to entice an audience to abandon the status quo is to stir up a sense of fear. Try dramatizing how inadequate, ill-advised or even dangerous the commonly accepted approach is. Then initiate a conversation about how your product provides a better way. It’s the tactic Adobe used successfully in their “Do You Know What Your Marketing is Doing?” campaign. Bonus points for humor.

Related emotions:
- Fear of missing out
- Uncertainty
- Failure
Sometimes laughter is the best medicine. Even brands in seemingly dull markets can have a little fun and bring an unexpected dose of happiness to B2B audiences. Can you make light of a common pain point? Or spoof the dizzying seriousness of corporate America? One great example of branded content that brings hilarity to the high-tech world of data centers and servers comes from Juniper Networks. The company’s unexpected video series pits tech geeks against one another in an Eminem-esque rap-off.

Related emotions: Happiness, Humor, Fun
Another powerful emotion that can help you strike a chord with B2B buyers is confidence. This emotion can take many forms. It’s your ability to help them do their job right. It’s establishing faith in your brand as a whole. Or it’s demonstrating your solution’s ability to keep an audience poised in the face of difficult challenges.

One example of confidence comes from Sage, a global software vendor. The brand’s CANstruction campaign played up their technology’s ability to help contractors confidently handle even the most daunting jobsite management issues.

Related emotions:
- Poise under pressure
- Trust
- Faith
Regardless of whether you’re marketing industrial solvents, machinery or cloud software, the people you are trying to reach are facing problems they consider to be painful, frustrating, even agonizing. One proven emotional approach is to sell the emotion behind the problem first. Then give the audience faith that you have the solution. For inspiration, take a look at CDW. The company rose out of the recession with a campaign amplifying frustrations every IT manager can relate to.

Related emotions:
- Annoyance
- Disgust
- Anger
Sometimes people are just tired of all the Negative Nancys. Perhaps showing your customers that the glass is indeed half full is the way to break through. Help them perceive the future as better than the past. Inspire them with a positive view of what’s to come (maybe even what’s already here). Numerous B2B and B2C companies put a positive spin on their industry or the world. Here’s one award-winning example from Lockheed Martin. And of course, there’s IBM, which continues its inspiring conversation about the promise of a Smarter Planet.
As humans, we feel an intense desire to be successful whether it’s in work or in life. Can your brand make people feel more fulfilled? Can you create a larger sense of pride in their work? Or show people how your brand can help them make a significant impact on the world or their own career? Take a look at Dell’s “Future Ready” campaign, which tells the story of how the company helps businesses and professionals achieve more by transforming the lives of the people they serve. Or check out Penske Truck Leasing which asks transportation companies to take pride in their fleet.

**Related emotions:**
- Achievement
- Self-actualization
- Purpose
For many business people, the ideal workplace is free of restrictions, obligations and other roadblocks. Their primary desire is the ability to act independently without technologies, processes and other people getting in their way. Can your brand tap into this emotion to tell the story of how you free your audience from interruptive forces? That’s exactly the strategy Dropbox employed in the company’s “Creative Freedom” campaign.

Related emotions:
- Freedom
- Autonomy
- Noncomformity
SAFETY

The stakes are high for B2B decision makers. Jobs, reputations, and livelihoods are on the line. That’s why sometimes the most powerful emotion at play is safety. When marketing to risk-adverse personas, dialing up the safety emotion can move the needle. Can you assure your audience that what they have today will be there tomorrow? The classic example is, of course, “Nobody ever got fired for buying IBM.” More recently, Hiscox Insurance played off the security emotion in their “Encourage Courage” campaign, which tells people it’s okay to take risks because Hiscox has your back.

Related emotions: Feeling secure, Comfort, Well-being
At Speak!, we believe our **Hearts+Minds** model of engaging B2B audiences. Here’s how it works: we first make a connection on an emotional and personal level (the heart). Then rationalize the value of your product or service (the mind). This method is uncommonly successful because it results in a compelling story that engages people but also moves them intuitively along the path to purchase.

**NEED HELP BRINGING SOME HUMANITY TO YOUR BRAND? THAT’S WHERE WE COME IN.**

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**PERSONAL VALUE**
- Myself
  - Pride in my work
  - Belonging
  - Career advancement
  - Happiness

**WORK VALUE**
- My Performance
  - Simpler work
  - Time savings
  - Productivity
  - Order and structure

**BUSINESS VALUE**
- My Company
  - ROI
  - Reliability
  - Required features
  - Performance

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**EMOTIONAL BENEFITS**

**RATIONAL BENEFITS**
MOST B2B BRANDS DON’T REALIZE HOW FASCINATING THEY ARE.

WE DO.

Contact us today and let’s do something great together.

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