

Episode #44 - David Deutsch On Uncovering Emotional "Hot Buttons" that Make Prospects Buy

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John: It's John McIntyre here, the Autoresponder Guy. I'm here with David Deutsch, frequently referred to as one of the top direct response marketing consultants and copywriters in the country. David's copy has sold hundreds of millions of dollars worth of clients' products and this includes everything from books, seminars, newsletters, Maxwell House coffee and Uniroyal Tires.

His advertising career started at the renowned Ogilvy and Mather advertising agency on Madison Avenue. He's worked with all types of companies from Fortune 500 companies, such as Merrill Lynch, General Foods, American Express to small businesses and entrepreneurs. These days, he's mostly writing for and consulting with companies who sell information and advice in print. This is in print, online and through seminars.

Today, we're going to talk about how he's applying all the skills he's developed to email marketing. We're going to take a broader look at the marketing process as a whole. It's going to be very interesting.

David, how are you today?

David: I'm great, I'm great. It's finally warmed up here.

John: I was telling people the same thing here in Thailand. Warm up here is from 25 degrees Celsius to 30 degrees Celsius. It's gone from warm to hot basically.

David: I just wish I was there in Thailand now.

John: Alright so let's, before we get into the email marketing stuff and the marketing as a process, may be tell the listener a little more about you and may be a bit more about what you've been doing lately.

David: I started out in traditional advertising, as you said, at Ogilvy and Mather working at an ad agency and worked at various ad agencies and then discovered direct mail, basically through Jay Abraham, was kind of taken with him and his philosophy about marketing and the accountability of marketing and direct response.

I work a lot with publisher of books and newsletters and things like that, information publishers. As you said, I've also worked with bunches of big companies and little companies, online, in print and of course these days more

and more is online.

John: Okay, okay. I'm curious what specifically have you been doing online? Just emails, sales letters or the whole thing?

David: The whole thing. Yeah, as we discussed before I see it as an overall process of developing a sales letter, developing the emails that lead people to that sales letter, developing the emails may be that affiliates use, all those things go together. Banner ads.

John: Okay, okay. I like this idea and we were just talking about this before, before I hit the record button, but I'm sure there's some people who are going to be listening to this who will think about email marketing or even just email, building a list out of email as an isolation as though it is something you just use on its own.

What you're talking about is that it's really just part, it's one piece of the puzzle and if you look at all these different pieces, like banner ads and affiliates and JVs and email marketing and paid traffic like Facebook ads and Google ads and all these different things but there's something that ties the whole thing together. Maybe you call it the big picture.

How do you explain that high level overview of what's important when you're looking at the whole thing as a process?

David: I guess to me the thing that ties it together, to me as a writer, the thing that ties it together is the concept behind it, the idea behind it. In other words, for instance, what hot buttons are you hitting and if you know what works, what people respond to then that should ideally matter, manifest itself in your emails as well as in your landing page.

One interesting thing to me, I guess is how you can use emails, Internet marketing for testing things. Another words, it takes a long time to write a sales letter and you like to know, "Okay, what are the hot buttons that people are interested in?" Sometimes you can use emails to test out what hot buttons people are interested in.

You send an email and you push this hot button and they don't respond to that very much, so you try it again, maybe a different subject line and you see, "Oh, they really respond to this subject line, they really respond to this kind of content in the email. Let me write this, when I write the sales letter than I know I should I feature that in the headline and I know I should feature that in my presentation."

John: Okay. I think this is really important that, the idea that before you sit down to write a word of copy or write a landing page or write emails, think about the

autoresponder or the launch or whatever it happens to be, that whoever's doing it, the entrepreneur or the copywriter, they have to have ... They have to take the time to get an idea about what problems they're actually solving. What are the pain points?

David: Right, right. I think that's the main thing is what's the pain point? How is it that your product or service or whatever it is, how is it that you can help with that?

John: Okay, what I'm interested in is, I find this a fascinating topic because I've found as I've practiced copywriting and studied it, it's that once you get a good idea of how to actually write the copy, the big win after that is spending a large amount of your day, if not a majority of your time on just identifying the hot buttons.

After you've done all that then just the copy will write itself. It's just once you get that basic, once you get some decent chops down that the most important part is really taking the time to understand these hot buttons.

If someone's listening and they want to go and do this, they want to go and find out this hot buttons, they probably have some idea already because they're familiar with the market, they've done a little research. What do you suggest to people who would want to go and find out these hot buttons?

David: I think the main thing is ... One of the main things, I guess, is to talk to people, who you are writing to, talk to the typical prospect and see what kind of things come up. See what kind of things come up or when you start talking about my product does this, does that generate a response in them? Do they seem excited about that? Do they want to know more? What is it that gets their attention?

John: I'm curious when you were back on Ogilvy and Mather and doing a lot of the writing then did you ... What tricks or strategies did you use to figure out these hot buttons?

David: When I was at Ogilvy, of course, they had a very sophisticated market research department, they did focus groups, so they got typical prospects in a room talking about how they relate to the product and you could see from that because it's hot buttons is one part of it.

Another part of it, I think is talking about the problem and the solution in the vocabulary that people, who are prospects, use. In other words, if you're talking to people, let's say, that have arthritis then they talk about arthritis pain in a certain way. There are certain things that happen when you have arthritis. For instance, it's hard to open a door, just twisting on a door handle could be very painful.

If you don't have arthritis that might not be thinking, that might not be

something that you would think to talk about when you talk about the pain of arthritis. If you do talk about it then they go, "Oh this is a person that knows how it is, this is a person that knows what I'm going through."

John: Right, right. If someone doesn't have sophisticated research firms or focus groups or anything like that, what are some of the ways they can these kinds of insights? Are you suggesting say calling up a prospect and interviewing them for ...

David: Yeah.

John: Yeah. Okay.

David: Yeah, calling and interviewing, going to see them. If it's a general enough product, you can talk to your friends, if they're people that might use it. The other thing nowadays that's so nice is that you've got on the Internet, you've got forums, you've got people talking that you can listen in on on the Internet and see what conversations they having about this product or service or whatever it is that you're writing about.

John: People should be looking for the specific ways in which their prospects are talking? Look for phrases and slang, I know exactly what you mean, I'm trying to figure out how to describe it properly for the listener but the idea is you've got to go out there and you've got to get the prospect talking so you can hear how that conversation is going in that head including the words they're using to describe their problem, like about that door.

You say arthritis, people with arthritis, they're all having the same kind of experience but unless you have arthritis it's going to be very hard or you know someone who has it, it's going to be very hard to know exactly what those experiences are.

If you can find out what they are and then put them into the same words, describe them in the same way that the 80 year old down the road describes it her friends at Bingo. If you can describe it like that in the sales that are in the emails in all the marketing it just clicks, it resonates, doesn't it?

David: Yes, it absolutely does. If it doesn't then you seem like a fraud. The more specialized the market or industry or whatever, the easier it is to seem like you don't know what you're talking about or you're not one of us.

John: Right, you're just a marketer or an advertiser trying to sell something.

David: Yeah, you're just trying to sell me something, exactly.

John: You've spoken with people, you've spoken with prospects before, you've done this before, right?

David: Right.

John: Do you have a go to question, may be three go to questions that you would ask someone. You're on the phone, may be you've met them for coffee, I don't know the exact scenario but what ... How do you guide this conversation? How do you personally guide it and dive into ... How do you get info, how do you get the insights like this idea to opening the door with arthritis is very hard?

David: I think there's a couple of things. One is that you want to talk to them about their pain and with arthritis that's very literal but with someone else if they're selling a service to businessmen or something, you want to talk about the pain, what is it that they're looking for your product or service to solve.

What are they bothered by? What frustrates them? You want to know what keeps them up at night. What are they afraid of? What are they afraid of happening? What are they worry is going to happen? Then conversely, what do they dream about happening? What do they want to happen? What is success look like to them, for the arthritis person being pain free, for the business person? What is success in that business look like? Especially in terms of whatever it is that your product or service does.

What is a typical day look like for them? That's where they're turning the door handle thing comes in. What happens? What do they do? What do they spend their days doing? Then you can position your product or service more and more in terms of who they are and what they do.

I think that's a real good thing to ask about and then what have they tried? What products or services ... What have they tried to overcome this pain or solve this problem that you can solve for them? Because you want to also position your product in relation to other possible solutions.

John: Okay and understand where it fits. I think the really interesting thing about this is that copywriting and marketing, it's a very creative endeavor where you're producing something but the secret to doing it well is actually, you start by listening not by writing something down.

David: Yes, that's very true. That's very true, sometimes you listen good enough and long enough and they'll write the ad for you. Between talking to the prospect and talking to the client, if you're working for a client.

If you're working for yourself you have to talk to yourself in a certain way and interview yourself and that may sound funny in a way but you really can carry on a dialogue with yourself in terms of questions that you ask yourself. The best marketers, the best thinkers that I know are people that ask themselves questions.

John: I will admit that sometimes when I have a problem, I will go for a walk and I will talk to myself out somewhere where no one can hear me and I will go and talk to myself and so I walk and strangely I find it's a real effective way to solve problems because it's almost that by speaking the thought out loud it forces me to express it in a certain way and then that leads me naturally to the solution. Sometimes it's easy to be jumbled up in your head.

David: Yeah, that's definitely true. We can have a whole two hour conversation about thinking and all that but it's hard to get your brain engaged. It's hard to really make yourself think and when you talk, be it out loud or to yourself or whatever, it really forces you to think something through. I think that's great that you talk to yourself.

John: That's good to know. I hope the listener doesn't think I'm too crazy.

David: The rest of the world might think you're crazy but I don't.

John: You know what I've actually seen, maybe this is just a cop out but I swear there's a study out there that says smart people talk themselves.

David: Yeah and I think that's why. We can laugh but I think the truth of the matter is that talking to yourself engages your thinking and your thought process. I don't know about you but I start thinking about how I'm going to solve a problem and if I'm just thinking about it, pretty soon I'm thinking about what's for lunch and what's for dinner and what I'm going to do and may be I should watch something on ... May be I should check out this website. If you're sitting there talking to yourself, you're keeping yourself on track.

John: Absolutely, that's a great point because you could be thinking or you could be thinking, thinking could be just vague and you can just sit there and your thoughts float around like clouds or you can do that really focused thinking and it's the focused thinking which actually solves these kinds of problems.

David: Right, right. Let me turn that a little bit too toward copywriting, which is I think that copywriting to me is basically it's talking, you're talking to the prospect. I think that one thing that people can do as they're trying to write things is really to just talk it. Talk it out loud, talk it other people, try and sell the product or service to other people.

That's how you [inaudible 00:16:26] thinking, that's also how you generate good copy. Is just what happens when you try to sell it to someone, what happens when you try to pretend you're selling it to someone? What do you say? It's a little awkward at first to do that but it's a great technique for generating the words that you should be putting on the page or on the screen.

John: I like the idea of sitting and recording yourself because sometimes those

spontaneous thoughts that just pop out of the brain, pop into the brain that end up being some of the best parts of the copy.

David: Right. Right, exactly. Then getting back to, you were talking about, this is just really looping around but when you were talking about interviewing people and again I think this applies to interviewing the prospects or interviewing clients that you're working for, I think it's really important to be open ended just like you are with these interviews.

Just get people talking because if you just get people talking, they'll eventually say the most profound useful things that they wouldn't have thought to bring up on their own or you might not have gotten out through questions.

John: Right, that's a good point.

David: Preferably over a few drinks too is always helpful.

John: Absolutely. That's a really good point that when you start, if you go into an interview like this, when you're talking with a prospect with a preconceived notion or ideas in your head about how the prospect is or what they should care about or what they do care about, it will ... This is to the listener, without noticing it's going to, it will make you ask certain questions in certain ways which will almost lead the prospect into talking about things and may be even confirming what you're saying.

That's another thing, like you said, leave your expectations at the door and go into and just go into discover because unless you've spoken to these prospects before and unless you've taken some time to understand them, you're going to have a bunch of assumptions. What you really want to do is go in there and test those assumptions, instead of thinking, "It's not an assumption, it's definitely true." You go in and test because maybe it's not true.

David: Right. Right and may be there's an assumption that you haven't thought of.

John: Yeah.

David: May be there's something that's not one of your assumptions that you want to bring out and you need to give them the chance to ... You need to have the chance to uncover that.

John: Moving it back to copywriting and marketing, once you've done this, let's say you've spoken to a bunch of different prospects and you've done all the things we've just talked about, what's next? I've taught so many people to do this type of thing and I think it's pretty simple but I think a lot of people struggle with this. First, with just the fact of getting the idea that they have to go out there and talk to their prospects before they write copy but what's next? How do you convert these insights into powerful persuasive copy and marketing?

David: There's a couple of things, one is as we talked about, what would you say to someone to convince them to buy your product or service based on what you've learned about what they want, what their pain is, what they're looking for?

Sitting across from someone that you just met in a bar, what would you say? What would you say to get ... Like, "Joe, there's a way that you can cure your arthritis pain by using an herb that you find in your backyard." That's a little more open ended and that's good for generating some good raw material.

Then the other is there's not but a dozen or so different ways of presenting an idea in an ad or in a letter. There's a straightforward kind of a sale, "This can do this, here's how it works." You could ask a question, you can promote a challenge, you can challenge the reader, "Isn't time you got rid of your arthritis pain or whatever?" You can highlight how to do something without something, "How to cure arthritis without drugs, how to make more money in your business without working harder."

If you look through ads, if you really study ads, if you study copywriting. You see that there's certain templates, certain formulas that you can use so just try running stuff through those templates just like I just did with arthritis or making money.

John: Right, right, yeah.

David: Don't be slavish about it, don't steal another ad word for word but just see what happens when you use that template, that general format. That general way of presenting an idea, that general way of selling someone on something.

John: I think this is a bit like, everybody's been three or four years old or eight years old and we can't all remember it but we've all been up in that position where we want something from our mom or our dad and they don't want to give it to us but we've got a plan and we know how we can manipulate them or essentially just sell them on giving us what we want.

May be we want a day off from school so we do something to get them to give us a day off because we know what their hot buttons are, we understand our parents so well even at that age that we know intuitively how to get them to do what we want them to do. All kids know this.

It's a bit like that, that when you ... If you didn't understand your parents and you really didn't know them very well it might be very, very hard to do this. You wouldn't be able to push their buttons but when you've taken the time and this is just like with the marketing, if you don't understand the people with arthritis, it's going to be the same. You can't push the buttons, if you can't see them.

If you take the time to start and go out there and find out what all those

buttons are, when you finally sit down at a sales letter and with a general idea of what you want to say, it's all just going to ... You're going to be like that kid who knows exactly what buttons to press and exactly what will probably work.

David: Yeah, exactly.

John: Then it's a matter of testing.

David: I mean one parent might be really into their kid culturally learning more about culture so that kid might have to say, "You know Dad, wouldn't it be great if I stayed home and went to a museum today instead of going to school." Another dad may want their kid to be responsible and earn money so the kid might say, "Dad, I want to stay home from school today so I can cut the neighbor's yard and earn some money or figure out how to do a business online."

That's where knowing your parent, knowing your customer, knowing your prospect comes in because one approach, that approach isn't going to work with the other parent. The staying home and making money isn't going to work for the parent that's into their kid being cultured and the stay home and going to a museum isn't going to work for the parent that wants their kid to be responsible and make money.

It's the same thing to prospects. If you're not talking to them in terms of what they want, their hot buttons, you're wasting so much.

John: I would say some people too, they get stuck inside their head, thinking that ... I'm not sure, I've been there and I've done this and I think everyone's probably been there at some point but it's easy to fall into the trap of thinking you know what's best for your prospects, just like a parent thinks what's best for their kids.

Just because the parent thinks it's best for their kids, doesn't mean the kid wants to do it or anything like that. When someone sits down to write a sales letter, an email or create some marketing, if they go into it thinking, even unconsciously thinking, that someone should want their product because it's going to help them or for whatever reason like that.

They should want it because it's going to be healthy for them or because it's going to help them achieve their goal or all of these different things, which don't tie into the hot buttons which is this person's slightly depressed and opening doors, to go to that arthritis again, opening doors is really hard.

If you can't touch those things but you're just saying, "They should want it, they should want it" without understanding them. I think a lot of people have that problem.

David: Yeah, I think that's definitely true. I think there's a lot of mistakes that people make, I think. They're either assuming the wrong hot buttons that people have

or not really even thinking through what are the hot buttons. Not really knowing what are the hot buttons, but just writing and that's where again, the whole thing of talking like you're talking to a prospect comes in.

I think sometimes people just write, they just get words on paper and they forget that they're really selling to a prospect. They forget that they're really having to convince this skeptical prospect to keep reading what you're writing, to keep reading what you're sending them and to reach into their wallet and buy from you.

That's hard to do with just words, you've got to do that ... You've got to have the right hot buttons, emotions. You've got to be pushing the right buttons.

John: There's an issue here that where that ties in really well is that people do ... Some people think that people hate sales and they don't want to be sold to and all this stuff like that and I think that's a load of crap because everyone has problems and everyone wants solutions to those problems.

The job of the marketer or salesman or copywriter is to simply remove all of the barriers, the limiting beliefs or whatever standing in the way of that person going out there and buying the solutions to their problem. If you have the solutions to their problem, all you have to do is just knock out those barriers that are stopping them from taking action because maybe they don't trust you or maybe they're not confident enough today or maybe they feel like they can't afford it.

There's all sorts of reasons they may not do it and if you can just knock those barriers out of the way, someone will just slide down that slippery slope, it's that they'll always buy what they want if you can just ... They have that momentum, they're going to buy it but your job is just to ... I'm not sure how to explain this exactly but it's just basically a big slippery slope and that people are always looking for solutions to their problems.

If you say the right things and figure out exactly what those problems are and how your product really solves those problems then it's a no brainer. It's basically if you can give someone what they want in exchange for them giving you something they consider of less of value than the solution that you are giving them, they'll buy it. It's simple as that.

David: Yeah, I think it's a good way to put it. It's practically a disservice not to have them buy it. Not to do everything you can to convince them. It's interesting, it's almost two ways of looking at it. One way of looking at it is that here's a person who's bored and has really no interest to start with in what you're doing and you've got to do everything you can to get their attention and get them interested.

Assuming that can be very, very powerful in terms of the state of mind that you're in to write copy because we tend to think that someone is going to read what we've written just because we're putting it in front of them and they're not, they're busy, it's in their inbox with 100 other things. It's basically unlikely they're going to read what you've written.

You bring up something interesting too, which is you can almost start from the assumption that if what you have truly is a solution to them then they're going to want what you have.

From the other point of view too, you have to not do the things that are going to prevent them from buying what you have because in a way they want to not buy what you have. They don't want to spend the money, they've been disappointed before so they're going to be looking for you to say something that's not believable, they're going to be looking for you to say something that indicates that you don't know who they are.

If you can avoid doing all those things, as you said, that slippery slope, they'll keep sliding down that slippery slope.

John: That's a cool way of framing it up. I like that how it's almost like you said, I'm trying to do everything right, just try not to do anything wrong because they already want what you're having and if you just don't mess it up, it's kind of like when you go on a date and you take a girl out to dinner and she's already into you.

If you just don't mess it up at that point then may be you'll get married or may be you get laid that night, whatever. The point is that you don't have to do everything right, you just have to not do anything wrong.

David: Yeah, yeah. That's a real good point and it's really easy to do things wrong in copy. You said people don't like sales kind of things and that's true in a way, it depends on how you define sales. They don't like salesy, hypey, obvious kind of plays that manipulate them.

They do enjoy a good story, they do enjoy being sold by a good salesman. They just don't like the feel like they're being unfairly manipulated.

John: Right, it's kind of like ... Yeah.

David: Yeah, if you can avoid that, if you can build trust and bond with them and not say things that are going to make them put down the ad or not buy or delete your email then you're halfway there.

John: Absolutely.

David: These are all in a way, ways of looking through your copy after you've written it and saying, "Okay, at what point do I lose the reader, at what point does he start not believing it? At what point, is he going to say this is bullshit? At what point, do I say something that tips my hand that I'm just being too much of a salesman here?"

John: Yup, I've known people that have done that with, you probably did too, where you basically take a sales letter and you watch someone read it and you see what their eyes, you can do this with software on websites with eye testing or heat tracking, I think it's called.

David: Right.

John: You can check where people fall off. How far down the page they get. When they get confused.

David: Yeah, no, definitely. You can do it by giving it to them to read or you can read it aloud to them and just see where they start wandering off and getting bored. Eventually too, you've got to have an internal sensor for that kind of thing. You've got to be able to read copy, read your own copy and see where, almost like you're playing the reader. Almost by method acting, you become the prospect. Where do you lose him?

John: Right, okay, okay. This has been very interesting. A bit of a meander through how to research and how to ... I think this extremely important stuff and if people get this right, everything else just flows. Everyone wants the tactics, everyone wants to hear about great subject lines and great emails and how to make a ton of money and all those kinds of things. Those shiny objects but the really, really, really important stuff that's going to lay a foundation for just all the other stuff is what we've talked about today.

It can be a little bit dry or may be a bit boring, I hope it hasn't been boring but this is where everything else comes from. This is that piece that ties all the other pieces together.

David: Yeah, that's true. It's interesting when you talk about tactics and all that stuff, which has its place but I remember realizing once in talking to a lot of the writers that I've admired over the years and I wanted to know what tactics and strategies they used and what their secrets were. It struck me that in talking to them a lot of the time that they didn't talk about strategies and tactics and things like that, they talked about the market.

They talked about where the market was going and what people were thinking and what they were reacting to and what their hot buttons were and how things were changing. How they were becoming more sophisticated or how they were

looking for this instead of that.

Eventually I realized that was really their secret, was not that they knew more strategies and tactics and ways of doing things but they just had this passion for understanding their market and almost like an apathetic kind of approach to it.

John: I love this idea that you can't ... Like it's about the market, as entrepreneurs that we have to serve what the market wants. You can't go into the marketplace and convince people to buy what they don't want, it's just not how the free market works. People take their money and they spend it elsewhere.

It's that all trade, this is getting real deep now, but all trade or barter, where you exchange some form of value for another form of value, that's only ever going to happen in a free market if someone wants it. That's why it's so much more important rather than looking at crazy cool ad strategies and copywriting tactics and all that stuff that just look at the market.

What does the market want? Then just give them what they want. It's like Gary Holmes, how the single advantage, I think he mentioned it, the only advantage he'd want is a starving crowd, if you have that the rest is easy.

David: Yeah, yeah, exactly. Gene Schwartz too said, "That all we're doing is channeling desire, we're not creating it."

John: Yes.

David: You've got to channel what's already there.

John: I like that. I like that. I think let's end on that. Before we go tell people, I don't know if you do coaching or anything like that but where can people learn more about you if they want to learn more.

David: Okay, yeah, no. I do a lot of coaching these days. More and more I enjoy helping other people in their writing or helping companies work with their copywriters or work on their marketing as a creative director or copy supervisor. In addition to doing writing but if I spend the whole day writing, I go a little crazy so I like to divide that up 50/50 between writing and telling other people what to write.

If anyone wants to get in touch with me or whatever, my website is daviddeutsch.com. I better spell that out for you. It's David, L as in Larry and then Deutsch, D-E-U-T-S-C-H dot com.

John: Great, fantastic. I'll have the link to that in the [inaudible 00:36:47] notes at the method.com.

David: Good.

John: Yes, people can go to the website, click the link and go over. If they're interested in coaching or consulting, they should ... It looks like you do speaking as well, they can just go to your website to the contact page and send you an email, right?

David: Yeah and there's is a free thing about the "Copywriting from A to Z", I think is the special report that's free there.

John: Okay, so they can join your list and see.

John: They can see all of these insights to email marketing.

David: Yup, I get them on my list just like you train people to do. To develop a list.

John: Just quickly, I'm curious what do you send out to them, what's your ... Give me a quick rundown, what's email strategy after someone signs up?

David: Oh God, don't ask me that. It's like the shoemaker's kids having no shoes. I've got a course on creativity that I sell on the site and a series of interviews that I've done with copywriters and copywriting entrepreneurs that I did a while ago. That's on there but I don't really have an autoresponder series and I know that I should.

John: Okay, okay.

David: You don't have to worry about being inundated by emails if you sign up for my email list.

John: It's funny because I send people daily emails so if you want to receive less emails go and sign up to your list.

David: I know I should, I really should do that.

John: If you want to learn more about email marketing, David, there's a podcast that I know about, let me know if ...

David: That's a good idea. I'll have to listen.

John: I'll send you a link, man. Thank you. Thanks David for coming on.

David: My pleasure, John. Good to talk to you.