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Marketing to Decision Makers

By Michael Lovas

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Marketing to a person with any authority in a business situation means you're going to have to communicate with a very distinct type of person. In Buying Types language, that person is probably a Gold. In the professional world, he or she is one of the following:

- **Manager**
- **Supervisor**
- **Surgeon**
- **School Principal**
- **Accountant**
- **Auditor**
- **Lawyer**
- **Policeman**
- **Organizer**
- **Firefighter**
- **Machinist**

WHY ARE THEY SUCCESSFUL? As you can

probably tell from the titles, those people are successful in whatever field they enter. Gold professionals are driven to succeed. And, that's why you'll be talking with a lot of them. They're very action oriented. They want to do and accomplish. They're highly opinionated and like to set standards for other people. As such, they're perceived as being very critical. If you know someone who would rather be right than happy, that's probably a Gold.

You might think of their success like this. They are interested in activities that are valued by businesses: They like to organize, manage, plan, formulate policies, set standards, measure performance and make sure everything runs like it's supposed to.

In other words, the people you want to do business with are in their positions of power because of their affinity for certain behaviors. If you know a few other things about Gold people, you'll be able to communicate with them more successfully. For instance, if you know their values, you know what to say to them, how to appeal to them, and what not to say to them. You know how to dress, and how to act in their presence. If you know their decision-making style, you also know how to format information such as letters and brochures so the Gold people pay attention to them instead of tossing them in the trash. This article will answer some of those questions.

WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE? The first thing you'll want to know about a Gold is how to find them, besides looking at their title. If you're just looking at the person, first, look at his forehead. Most Golds have very few wrinkles there. Any lines will normally be unparallel or asymmetrical, as if they had been registering disapproval with their faces. But the main tip-off is the eyes. Gold's are decision makers, but they're typically not warm and emotional or expressive and excitable. So, if you look into eyes that seem cold and calculating, you're probably looking at a Gold.

HOW DO THEY DRESS? Next, look at his clothes. A Gold professional is very proud of his station in life and his image. That includes his appearance. He dresses like a successful professional and expects you to look the same. He enjoys classic styling, so don't show up with a wild tie or blue jeans. The Gold professional is not interested in being hip. He feels above such colloquial activities. So, dress conservatively.

WHAT DO THEY SAY? Golds will tell you about themselves in the phrases they use. Here are a few of the things you'll likely hear them say:

- the bottom line is...
- benefits and privileges include...
- good value for money
- minimize our risk
- protect what we've built
- go by the book
- knowing is always better than guessing
- It's my way or the highway

HOW DO YOU RECOGNIZE THEIR ENVIRONMENT? Third, look at his office. Most Golds prefer the Spartan school of office decor. They will have few photos, if any. They will not have a photo of their dog. They might have an award or a painting, but you'll find very little that gives you a glimpse into their private lives. Many Golds work every day in an office that looks vacant when they're not sitting at the desk. If there are items on the desk or in the bookshelf, they are neatly arranged and well organized. One thing nearly all Golds will have is a list. They make lists, and sometimes they make lists of their lists.

HOW DO THEY MAKE DECISIONS? Golds love to make decisions. They believe that they are better at making decisions than any one else. To them making a decision is like playing a position on a sports team. Some people block and kick; some go out for passes. But only one makes the decisions. That's the Gold.

They normally make decisions quickly and efficiently. They sometimes come to their conclusion before all the important information is given. So, give them the really important benefits up front. If they want more information, they'll ask for it. Remember, they're in charge. If you plan to present him with a fool-proof package filled with testimonials and spreadsheets proving that your product is the best on the market, well, you can save yourself a lot of effort. A Gold in a position of power would never in a million years read a stack of documents or wade through a complicated spreadsheet. He wants to see all your material reduced to no more than a short list of bullet points. You can back it up with a series of ancillary documents for reference and evidence, but don't mistake those pages for the presentation. They are for back-up only. He'll probably have someone else go through them. But he wants your conclusions in a few quick-hits. He is very time conscious, placing a premium on his time. If you give him a truckload of papers to wade through, he'll perceive that you have wasted his time. Then, he'll do two things. First, he'll take offense. Then, he'll call the meeting to a close.

RESPECT THEIR TIME. Remember, the Gold values his time. Thus, one of the mortal sins is to be late for your meeting. Just imagine you're going to make a presentation to General Patton. You'd dress appropriately, arrive early, deliver your information in a no-frills manner and wait for instructions. You would not be late, and you would not waste his time. You treat a Gold professional the same way.

WHAT'S THE DOWN SIDE? For all their special gifts, Golds have a down-side. They tend to be autocratic and overbearing. They tend to impose their thoughts and plans on others. And, they are likely to question your conclusions, believing them to be wrong. At their worst, Golds are close-minded and judgmental. But they're still in charge of most American businesses. So, develop a few skill for appealing to them. It can pay off for you

because Golds are also fiercely loyal. Once you're on their team, you you'll be the first person called for a quote.

They are more focused on the immediate and tangible than theory or feelings. So, if you get your feelings hurt, the Gold probably won't notice. They are also very conscious of the chain of command and hold great respect for hierarchy. So, if you "sneak" past the receptionist, you might not like the reception the Gold gives you. They are brilliant tacticians and can see immediately if your product fits into the current scheme. However, they don't see the big picture, so if you're selling a product for the future, be careful.

RISK AND INNOVATION. Golds place their personal money in safe investments and they treat their employer's money in the same way. If you're selling a product with any risk, be careful. If you're selling a product that is new or innovative, be careful. They look for the tried-and-proven standards of the industry.

WHAT DO YOU SAY TO A GOLD? First and foremost, remember that the Gold is in charge. Being in charge is the Gold's gift to the world. When it's time for you to make a comment, consider what the Gold has said. Then, remark that those opinions are very well thought out and highly organized. Don't forget that Golds are motivated by power and control, so phrase your presentation to place them in control.

Golds tend to make decisions based on past experience, so show how your product is like another solution. Tell your Gold who else has bought into your proven solution.

WHAT NOT TO SAY TO A GOLD. In the insurance and financial industries, we have all been taught to open any conversation with small talk, find a common ground and use that to forge an alliance. Not! That won't work with a Gold. They are not people-oriented and could not care less about forging an alliance with a stranger until the stranger proves himself. So, don't waste your time

with small talk. Make the most of your opening twenty seconds and prove that your product will solve the Gold's problem.

A Gold professional is the most powerful person you'll face in your career. He is the person in charge. He is the one who gets things done. He is the decision maker, the manager, the organizer. If you sell to businesses, you probably talk with the Gold Buying Type every day.

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