

It's Your

EQ Not Your IQ,

That Counts

Seven Sales Strategies to Deflect an Economic Downturn

 Joe Mechlinski

Economic cycles are inevitable. What's not inevitable is whether you have the emotional intelligence to succeed regardless of circumstances. This article will explain how developing and utilizing emotional intelligence quotient (EQ), more than intelligence quotient (IQ), can position your team to make wins inevitable during an economic downturn.

Emotional intelligence was defined by Drs. Peter Salovey and Jack Mayer as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions." Here are seven strategies to help you achieve emotional intelligence in sales:

SELLING STRATEGY #1: Don't Miss the Gorilla

In our sales seminars, we use a training video that emphasizes the fact that, whatever you focus on, you find. We tell the participants that the challenge of the video is to count the number of times a basketball gets touched by certain players as they dribble and bounce-pass to one another in a revolving circle.

Amazingly, once the video starts, our participants are so zoned in on counting the number of times the basketball is touched, they completely miss an extraordinary event. A person in a gorilla suit walks calmly from the left into the circle, pauses to thump his chest, and walks out to the right. When we stop the video and ask the participants what they saw, most tell us about the number of touches.

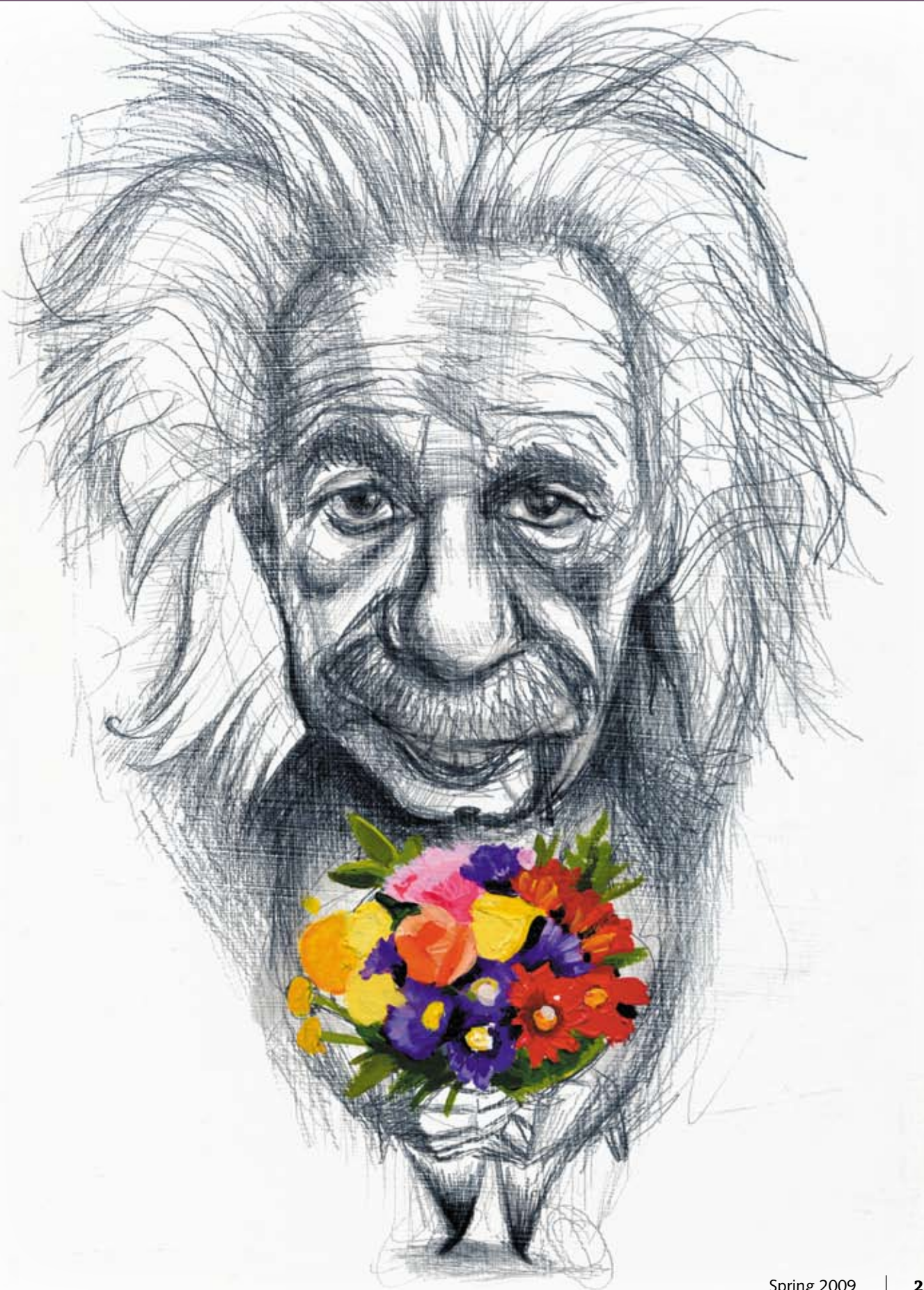


Illustration by Ryan Fitz for The Partner Channel

Only a small percentage will say they saw the gorilla. Somehow, they seem to possess the ability to monitor their feelings and emotions and then discriminate among them. They use the same kind of emotional intelligence that allows salespeople to navigate practically through business conversations.

An example of “missing the gorilla” can be found right here in the Microsoft Partner community. A Partner in the Mid-Atlantic had identified an opportunity to replace a new customer’s existing financial package with Microsoft Dynamics GP. They anticipated that the customer (a building contractor) would need a certain number of licenses and a certain number of implementation hours. What they failed to see (even though the information was available on the customer’s Web site) was that the owner of the company was also the head of a worldwide consortium for concrete buyers. In other words, he had access to hundreds of companies around the world that would have been good prospects for Microsoft Dynamics GP. Because the Partner was so focused on what they were expecting to see, they did not see the bigger opportunity – the gorilla. They closed the smaller opportunity but missed out on the larger one.

The lesson here is: Return to the basics and keep it simple. Focus on the blocking and tackling of sales. Pay attention to sales planning. Be aware of the number of calls your team makes each day. Role-play with them to develop their questioning skills. Help them get connected to whatever is most important to their prospects, and they will not miss the gorilla.

SELLING STRATEGY #2: Relationships Matter More Than Ever

While it has always been important to maintain a healthy mindset and focus on building relationships with prospects and clients, there was a time when this philosophy was not driving sales for technology companies.

In an article published in the *Harvard Business Review*, “Welcome to the Experience Economy,” Joseph Pine II and James Gilmore describe the evolution of the birthday cake as a metaphor for the history of economic progress.

In the agrarian economy, they write, mothers made birthday cakes for mere dimes using farm commodities such as flour, milk, and eggs. In the industrial economy, they paid a few dollars for pre-mixed ingredients from suppliers such as Betty Crocker. Later, in the service economy, mothers bought pre-baked

cakes from the bakery or grocery store. And now, in the experience economy, busy parents outsource the entire event to a Chuck E. Cheese, Discovery Zone, or Jeepers! ... and the cake is often included for free.

Likewise, selling has evolved – but it really hasn’t. Over the years, your approaches probably included door-to-door prospecting, personal references, phone calling, winning and dining, mailing, faxing, and e-mailing. Now we have opportunities to connect via rich e-mail, hot transfers, multi-media presentations, blogging, and social networking. While all of these vehicles can be effective, it is more important than ever to stay focused on one of the core yet timeless tenants of sales: *People do business with people they like*. In other words, the “cake” in sales is the relationship. What makes it sweet is your emotional intelligence.

Salespeople with high degrees of emotional intelligence are masters in building the relationship and winning long-term clients. They do it by understanding the difference between “enrolling” and “closing.” Enrolling is leaving the door open for future business with a customer. When you “close” a deal, you close the door. You are only as useful as the problem you just solved. In a poor economy, this approach is disastrous. By contrast, enroll in customers’ missions and goals, and enroll them in how your solutions help them get there, and you will establish yourself as a meaningful contributor in their success. Regardless of the economic outlook, they will see you as their Partner for life. You can have your cake and eat it, too.

SELLING STRATEGY #3: Mindset First, Process Second

Emotional intelligence in sales has everything to do with focus. To get results with Selling Strategy #3, you must focus first on mindset, then process. We call this sequence the Achievement Model. With the right mindset, just about any generic sales process will be effective. Without it, even the best sales system will fail.

Anecdotal evidence of emotional intelligence in sales is all around us. In nearly every Partner company, emotional intelligence shows up in the Pareto principle, also known as the 80-20 rule. This rule states that you will typically see that two salespeople in 10 are generating 80 percent of the company’s revenue. Within this company, there may be call scripts, brochures, Microsoft PowerPoint presentations, demos, and webinars. They exist for everyone in the department. But only two in 10 are putting up the big

numbers. And when they leave and move to another Partner organization, with different technology in a different city, with different processes, they typically will be on the positive side of their new company’s 80-20 rule. Why? Mindset plus process equals results. Emotional intelligence rules the sales world.

Mindset is taking responsibility for the results you want – rather than acting like a victim of circumstances – and declaring that you will cause those results to happen. With emotional intelligence, it’s not what you do that makes you successful, it’s how you do it.

SELLING STRATEGY #4: Communication Has Changed ... Adapt!

Once you have taken responsibility for the results you want and are holding your team accountable for doing the same, you must recognize that not everybody is like you. You may believe that the best, quickest way to communicate is texting or e-mailing... and you would be correct. However, “quickest” does not mean most effective, as evidenced by a famous 1967 study on the elements of communication by Stanford University researcher Dr. Moravian. He established that non-verbal communication makes up 93 percent of all communication. That means that the words we use (in our e-mails and marketing collateral) make up only seven percent of communication. In an economic downturn, this is nowhere near enough.

So, do you shift your team to making phone calls and completing in-person meetings? Yes, as much as possible. But you also must stay present to the fact that not everyone is like you. Some prospects do prefer e-mail. Some do want to see the spec sheet of features. The only way to find out how prospects and customers want to be communicated to is to be present to the signals they are giving you. Then adapt.

SELLING STRATEGY #5: Understand the EQ of Your Prospect

Let’s say you are a straight-forward, cut-to-the-chase type of communicator. You sit down to a sales appointment with a prospect who asks about your weekend. He wants to know if you have children, and if so, what their interests are. Then he wants to talk about his own children. When should you cut him off and get down to business? Only when he’s ready. Until then, let him talk. What you must understand is that some prospects are motivated by having fun and connecting personally. Others are motivated by what the facts and figures tell them. Others strive for significance or power. And others want the

greater good for the greatest number.

The focus of all these strategies is on the buyer. What is happening in the buyer's mind? What should you be doing to leverage the buyer's habits, preferences, and personality? Selling Strategy #5 emphasizes that you and your team develop the ability to comprehend the emotional language of the buyer.

SELLING STRATEGY #6: Be Remarkable

Approximately 100 years ago, George Washington Carver memorably said, "When you do the common things in life in an uncommon way, you will command the attention of the world."

How does this apply to Microsoft Partners in today's down economy? Only you know. Does it mean creating a simple but sound outbound prospecting campaign? Does it mean religiously marketing to and calling on them? Does it mean sending a hand-written thank-you note after each sales meeting? Does it mean sending a book out of the blue? A relevant article? Does it mean posting on your prospect's blog, or sending a new iPod case to your prospect's receptionist on her birthday? Being remarkable means being emotionally tuned in to others – and acting on those emotions.

SELLING STRATEGY #7: Selling Through Social Media

The final strategy we offer for using emotional intelligence to sell in an economic downturn is this: go where your audiences are. If you haven't checked into Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter, call a team meeting and see who on your staff has checked into them, and ask them to guide the rest. You may be surprised at how many of your prospects and clients are already taking full advantage of social media.

Because social media is fertile selling ground, here are some DO NOTs for salespeople who don't want to shoot themselves in the foot online:

- » **Don't use social media without a strategy.** As discussed above, you must first decide on why you think this will add value to your sales plan, and then think how to match your strengths to that of the mediums of social media. Assuming you decide it's a good idea, don't put all your eggs in one basket. You'll still need a physical presence at live networking events.
- » **Don't break the laws of human behavior.** Relationships normally are not started online, but they can be successfully fostered online.

- » **Don't be a jerk.** Don't flame anyone, bad-mouth the competition, or write multiple status updates about partying, gambling, religion, politics, and so on.
- » **Don't ask the community for something you are not willing to do first.** Use the online tools to expand the number of people with whom you communicate on a regular and frequent basis.
- » **Don't try to be someone you are not.** The idea is be authentic, share something of your life, and open yourself up to the emotional give-and-take of relationship-building.

Employing sales strategies based on emotional intelligence will help you differentiate your company and nurture your business relationships. Practice being present to your feelings and the feelings of those around you. Work with your team to bring emotional intelligence into every sale, and you will generate results in any economy. 🌟

Joe Mechlinski is the president of EntreQuest, an organization focused on growing Microsoft Partner companies' sales revenue through sales management, training, and hiring programs. To learn more, visit www.entrequest.com.

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