

# THE THIRD WAVE SELLING NEWSLETTER

## INTRODUCTION TO PAIN GAPS™

Vol. 2 Issue 1

February 2005

One of the most painful experiences for salespeople is when they have presented their solution to someone who clearly needs it, sees how they can benefit from it, and yet, for some mysterious reason, doesn't take action. When I am training sales people, one of the most frequent questions I am asked begins with some variation of this scenario. It is the focus of the next two issues of The Third Wave Selling E-zine.

Why do people buy? In the seminars I have conducted over the years, I've received hundreds of different reasons. Some of the most popular include: they want it, they need it, something solves a problem, they like it, it makes them feel good, and (my personal favorite) keeping up with the Joneses. While all of these may *contribute* to purchases, none of these reasons explain *why* people buy. In every case, pain is the reason people buy. When your current or anticipated situation does not meet your current or anticipated needs, the discrepancy between the two creates pain. The greater the discrepancy, the greater the level of pain. Imagine Consulting refers to this discrepancy and its consequences as Pain Gaps™. If there is not a Pain Gap, there will be no sale.

In addition to varying levels of pain, there are different patterns to the discrepancies between expectations and needs. We call these Pain Gap modes. Both the level of pain and the mode of the gap must be understood in order to apply the concept of Pain Gaps effectively and increase your business. This issue of the Third Wave Selling E-Zine will focus on the different modes of Pain Gaps.

### CHANGE, PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Buying anything requires change. It may be as simple as buying a new refrigerator and having to change

refrigerators, or buying a new car and having to deal with the hassles of selling an existing one. While there is change, the new car or the new refrigerator is pretty much the same as the old one. This type of change is called *continuous innovation*. The seller does not require the buyer to change his or her behavior.

Years ago, though, when the first automobiles were introduced or the first electric refrigerator was sold, buyers had to change not only from the horse and carriage or the ice box, they had to change their behavior. This kind of change is called *discontinuous innovation*. Companies that have value-added propositions tend toward solutions that require buyers to change their behavior (or the organization's behavior), in some fashion. They are selling discontinuous innovation. While the concept of Pain Gaps applies to both types of change, understanding Pain Gaps is particularly important for any business development organization offering discontinuous innovation because of the higher level of pain they create.

Pain, as was noted, occurs when there is a discrepancy between expected results and needed results. Accordingly, there is negative pain and positive pain. A problem is a negative pain. If your sales department is not closing enough sales, you may have a problem, and that problem is going to cause a certain amount of pain. On the other side of the spectrum are opportunities. Opportunities are positive pains. Your sales department may be doing a great job closing sales, but you see an opportunity that would enable it to do even better. This opportunity—again, a discrepancy between the current or anticipated situation and the current or anticipated needs—causes a certain amount of pain. Positive

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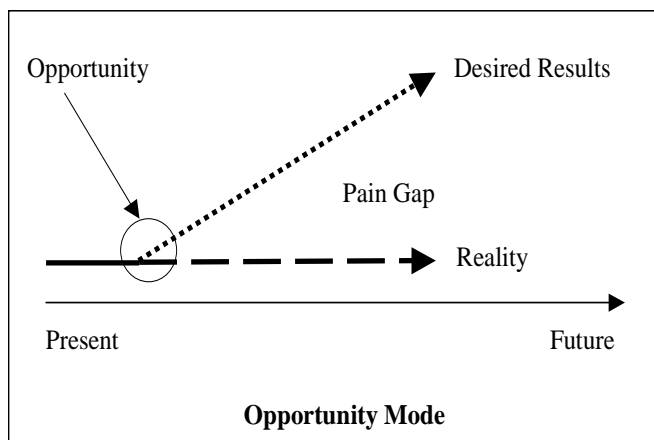
pains and negative pains will be clarified in the next section, Modes of Pain Gaps.

### PAIN GAP MODES

Pain Gaps fall into four modes, each corresponding to the buyer's response to the difference (if any) between reality and desired results. These modes are called: Opportunity, Problem, No Gap and Overconfidence. The first two of these modes provide a high probability of making a sale, and the latter two provide little to no probability of making a sale. It is important that you identify in which of the four modes your prospects fall as early in the sales cycle as possible. A word of caution here: modes are individualistic. If you are selling to an organization that has more than one decision maker, you must identify the mode of *each* decision maker.

### OPPORTUNITY MODE

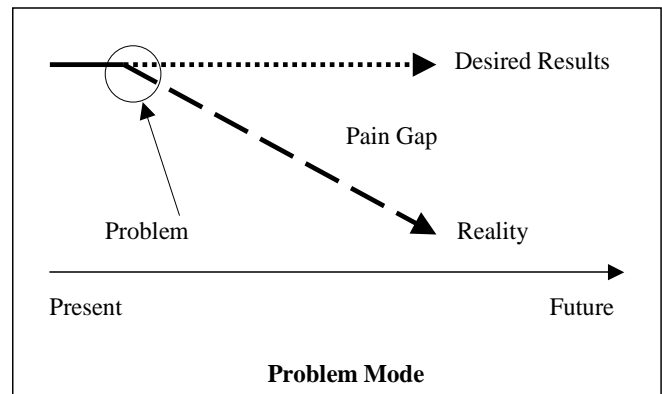
Opportunity Pain Gaps occur when, as the result of an *opportunity for growth*, there is a discrepancy between the today's reality and the desired results. The drawing below illustrates this concept.



The probability for a sale in Opportunity mode is high. By definition, the Pain Gap creates a desire to buy as long as your solutions are positioned as the change that will best improve an already good situation and thereby reduce or eliminate the Pain Gap. As the seller it is important that you identify what the barriers to attaining that opportunity are; and to position your products and services as the solution to overcome the barrier, and thus to fill in the pain gap.

### PROBLEM MODE

Problem Pain Gaps occur when the potential buyer encounters a *problem* that has caused the expected results to fall below the desired level. This discrepancy between what was desired and what will now occur creates a Pain Gap. The drawing below illustrates this concept.



Problem mode is similar to Opportunity mode in that the reality of today does not match the results needed tomorrow, and the probability for action is high. The buyer in Opportunity mode welcomes change as a way of improving an already good situation. The

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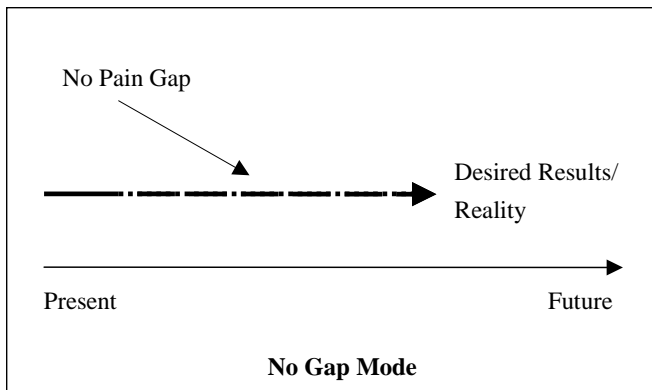
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buyer is Problem mode, however, is struggling to improve a poor situation. With both Opportunity and Problem modes you must demonstrate that your solution addresses the cause of the buyer's Pain Gap. In Opportunity mode the buyer is looking for the *best* solution, in Trouble mode the buyer is looking for the *quickest* solution. Traditional feature/benefit selling does not work effectively with buyers in Problem mode. They are not looking to improve their situation; they are looking to resolve a possible crisis. Your focus needs to be on the problem the buyer is experiencing and how you will fix it.

### NO GAP MODE

No Gap mode occurs when the expectations and the desired results are the same. There is no Pain Gap. In the eyes of the buyer, the results they are getting and the results they expect to get match their desired results. Accordingly, the probability of action with a buyer in No Gap mode is very low. The drawing below illustrates this concept.

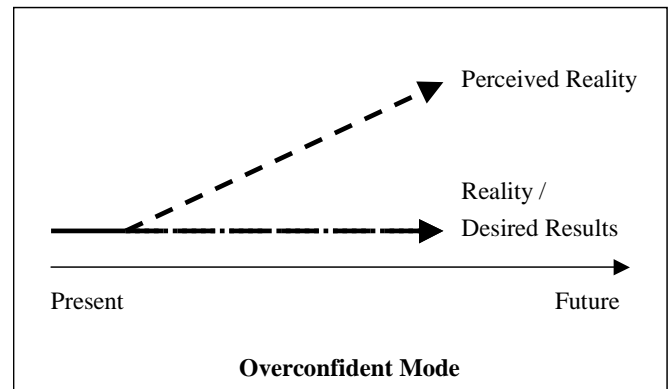


When talking to someone in No Gap mode, the change you are talking about, no matter how much good it may do, will often be perceived as a threat. In order to move someone in No Gap mode to action,

you must first move them to Opportunity or Problem mode. This can be very difficult, and, if not done properly, will be a complete waste of time. It is important to remember that not everyone needs your solution, and a certain percentage of people that you meet will legitimately be in No Gap mode. To learn how to move buyers from No Gap mode contact Imagine Consulting by phone or e-mail.

### OVERCONFIDENT

Overconfident mode occurs when the buyer's perception of reality is inaccurate. The buyer's (unrealistic) expectations for the future are greater than the desired results. The drawing below illustrates this concept.



The reason for the buyer's overconfident expectations is usually because the buyer misunderstands the situation or the buyer initially had very low expectations. Buyers in this mode are responsible for most wasted sales efforts, and dealing with a buyer in Overconfident mode can be one of the most frustrating experiences for a salesperson. The reason for this is that the salesperson clearly sees that the buyer needs something—any objective viewpoint of the situation would support that. Still, no matter what the

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salesperson does, the buyer just doesn't act. The probability of making a sale with someone in Overconfident mode is almost zero. If you are confident that your solution would ultimately make sense for this buyer, your best strategy is to maintain a relationship and be there when reality sets in. You may want to develop a marketing/education strategy that will help reality set in more quickly. For more information about how to develop a marketing program that will help educate your prospects and clients about their actual situation, contact Imagine Consulting.

### NO PAIN, NO SALE

The message of Pain Gaps is that the salesperson must be aware of the Pain Gap mode of the prospect. In order for a sale to occur, a prospect must understand that they have a problem. Lacking this understanding, the best strategy for a salesperson to take is to educate the prospect on how to diagnose problems more effectively. A consultant I know once said, "You may not be able to make a horse drink, but if you run them around hard enough, you can make them thirsty". It is important to realize that just because someone is in a Pain Gap mode that makes buying your solution a reasonable choice, it does not mean that your work is done. The level of pain on what we call The Pain Continuum™ is what ultimately determines when (or if) the prospect actually buys. The Pain Continuum will be the subject of next month's issue.

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