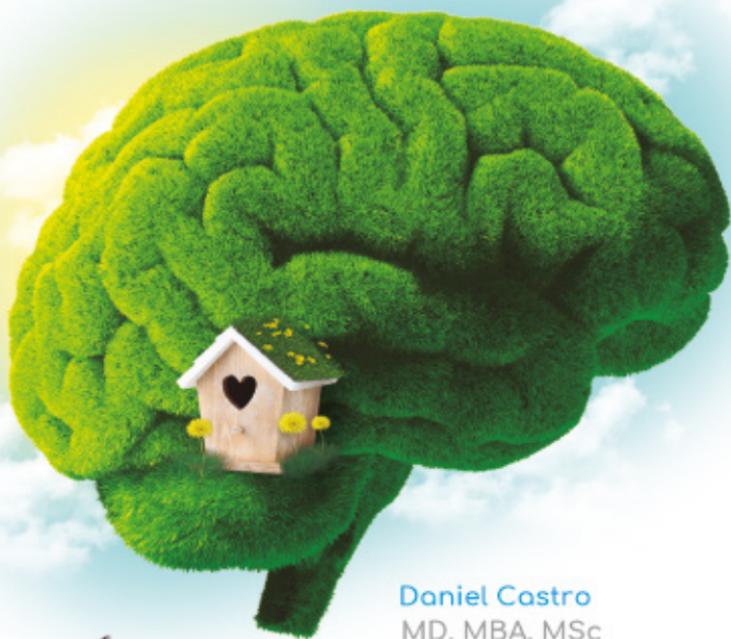


The **neurobusiness**™ Method Series

Persuasion and sales closing techniques



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1.

The clarity that
storytelling
lacked

Paul J. Zak, the man who discovered the role of oxytocin (a hormone that had traditionally been associated with uterine contractions during labor and **cooperative** behaviors among people), was also able to prove that good stories, those that attract and immerse us, are capable of releasing this same neurotransmitter and of changing our attitudes, beliefs and behaviors^{1,2,3}.

In fact, a team of researchers led by Zak was able to show that when people are exposed to stories that contain a dramatic angle, that is, an initial situation, a climax (or moment of tension in between) and an ending, cortisol and oxytocin levels in blood rise. This experiment was conducted because of the interest of the United States Department of Defense in determining the key aspects of persuasion and stories⁴.

The previous findings add to the results of research teams that have recently identified that brain regions, such as the ventromedial prefrontal cortex and the precuneus, are **activated** when exposed to stories^{4,5,6}.

But there is an origin to the importance of stories. Since mankind developed language thousands of years ago, storytelling is one of the **skills** that the human has honed to an uncanny degree. Let's travel back to the stone age.

“Storytelling is one of the skills that the human has honed to an uncanny degree”

After a day of hunting, men of these ancient cultures sat around a campfire to tell others about their adventures or made paintings that represented animal hunts. These paintings are known as rock art⁷.

Over time, storytelling became more complex. Myths and legends arose. The Greeks invented comedy and tragedy⁸. As humanity progressed, new ways of telling stories surged. Literature diversified into many **styles**. And approximately 120 years ago, radio, film and television were born.

Storytelling is a key aspect of language, transmitted by these media and corresponding to the art of telling stories to convey a message that is **unforgettable**. This is essential in the world of marketing, and increases audience engagement with different ideas or products^{9,10,11}.



When people are exposed to stories that contain a dramatic angle, that is, an initial situation, a **climax** (or moment of tension in between) and an ending, cortisol and oxytocin levels in blood rise



This brief historical review shows that we have become expert storytellers, and this is largely because stories **delight** the brain. Observe how eager a child can be when telling a story, it's truly amazing! Or remember your childhood: didn't you love to have your parents tell you stories? Remember that feeling.

A new way of telling stories

What if you have a solution in your hands, but your client or interlocutor does not think they have a problem? You are probably thinking that the person does not consider the solution to be **useful** or even believes it is unnecessary. It is likely that, at times, you may have had the unpleasant sensation of being told the end of a movie you haven't seen, but that you would like to watch.

Something similar happens when you have the solution to a problem in your hands and try to persuade someone else by talking about that solution first. In both cases the order of the story and the **dramatic** angle, with a beginning, a climax and a resolution, are ignored.

To **increase** your persuasion power, it is important that you always consider talking about a problem first, but whose problem? The problem of the brain that is listening to you. And the reason for this is that our brain sees the world only from the first-person perspective.

Furthermore, recent research on a particular area of the brain called the right angular gyrus has shown that this location may be the seat of our first-person viewpoint¹². The human brain sees the world through their own "Me".

The client's decision-making process begins with acknowledging a need. Before we used to solve obvious issues and, based on this, a product or service was sold, but now, it is necessary to make what is not so obvious **visible** to a client; it is necessary to help them identify what they are losing, or problem may arise if they do not use your product or service.



“It is necessary to make what is not so obvious **visible** to a client”

Therefore, applying the technique "The Brain Loves Stories" will bring clarity to your speech, because it will guide you in an easy way when presenting your idea, product or service. You should begin by talking about the customer's problem and it is imperative that they **recognize** that the problem exists.

As we have learned from a very young age, a story must have a structure: beginning, middle and ending. Similarly, and as we have seen in Dr. Bernard's stories with his patients and in Jessica's with her clients, business and communication have a structure of their own.

Neuroscience allows us to **rethink** the way stories are traditionally structured, and understand that they can now be presented as the problem, the options to solve that problem and, finally, the solution. Beginning with the clients' problems has a wonderful effect on their brains; it makes them feel involved, because no one ever addressed their problem.

After making this first point (the problem) clear, you must show your clients a scenario of possible success that activates the reward mechanism in their brain. This prepares the last phase of the story, in which you present your idea, product or service, with all its qualities and characteristics. Applying this novel structure to your storytelling is the way forward.

So, in business you break your story with a problem, you replace the plot with the alternatives to solve it and the resolution would be the closure of the negotiation with your brand or product. In order for you to understand it better, the following is set as an example. A battery dealer has a new class of rechargeable batteries.

The company has trained him and he has all the information necessary for the client; however, he ignores that the brain loves stories and that they have their own **structure**. On the day of the sale, he tells his client, who in this case is a traveler:

—I have some imported German rechargeable batteries, and today

The decision circuit at the brain level is not rational, it has a specific emotional state and is related to feeling in the thorax the **projected** losses and gains. This circuit is activated in the nucleus accumbens



I am selling them to you at a 20 percent discount.

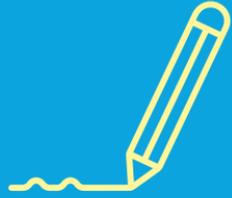
But another salesperson knows the little secret we described in this book. How will he sell the batteries? His story will begin with the presentation of the problem:

—Dear traveler, you are adventurous and like to travel to the most remote places in the world, where finding electricity is difficult. Is running out of batteries in your travel equipment a recurrent problem for you? Would you like to have a device or a product that frees you from such trouble?

This way a client's issues are exposed, without having to show the batteries, but instead, by using a story where you show them that you know them and their needs. After captivating the customer with the story about the problem, the salesperson outlines the **ideal** solution to that problem, without mentioning the batteries and much less the brand.

Expectation, an important ally

Why are certain movies or books commercially successful? Because their narration **hooks** their viewers' or readers' attention. And to captivate them there are very precise guidelines. In business, a message that generates expectation and curiosity is equally important. There are ways to attract attention through good stories that have to do with brain processes.



A **prescription** to take home:

1. Apply mental focus when listening to people, identify their problem. This way you can **build** more stories that are favorable in your sales pitch and, in general, in your communication with the people around you.
2. Keep in mind that your idea, product or service can be presented at the end of your story, without affecting the objective of your message. You will need to **internalize** this through practice. Applying the “The Brain Loves Stories” technique will allow you to have better communication with others.



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2.

The perfect closure

All negotiations and relationships with clients, colleagues, children, parents or partner are resolved in the brain. Deals occur when a commitment is obtained from an interlocutor or a client; But, as an old saying goes, “bread can burn coming out of the oven”.

In life, everything is a negotiation. You negotiate with your children, with your partner, with friends, a boss or a client. Regardless of the case, you should always reach a closure providing satisfactory results for both parties. For example, a father, after talking to his son, waits for him to tidy his room, without reprimanding him or threatening him with punishment. The success of this negotiation would be for the son to clean the room without further opposition. The same happens in other situations in life, especially in sales.

This is worth stating again: all decisions in a negotiation, including the closure, are the result of a brain process; therefore, the closure really occurs in the brain. Many consider that sales closures determine their profits. And they are right. This chapter is dedicated to all the people who want to obtain optimal results in their negotiations.

When the brain decides, emotions prevail over reason

The closure is the most critical phase of a negotiation. A bad closure can destroy the good work done previously. At this stage, sellers make many mistakes; the main one is to lower their guard, considering that everything there was to say has been said. Many people do not close their negotiation because they assume that the steps made during the sales process are enough to convince the customer of the benefits of the product and their need to buy it. Nothing more untrue than this idea!

Scientific **evidence** shows that the brain has certain patterns for making decisions, as revealed in the scientific article "The Science of Selling: Proven Strategies to Make Your Pitch, Influence Decisions, and Close the Deal", by David Hoffeld (13). Knowing these patterns can give you a great advantage when closing a sale or negotiation.

The brain has a **curious** way of making decisions. We believe that we make a decision when we verbalize it or when we are aware of it. But this is an illusion. When we realize we have made a decision,



All decisions in a negotiation,
including the closure, are the
result of a **brain process**



the brain has actually made it prior to that. This phenomenon is explained in an article titled "Unconscious determinants of free decisions in the human brain" and published in the journal Nature¹⁴.

“When we realize we have made a decision, the brain has actually made it prior to that”

In this article, researchers performed an MRI study on a group of people who were monitored before and during decision-making. Each person had to press a button making a **decision** on different situations. The scientists observed that ten seconds before the person pressed the button, a trace of brain activity appeared in the left prefrontal cortex. The research concluded that the brain had made the decision earlier, without the person being aware of it.

The results of this experiment show that the human brain makes decisions, first, through **emotion**, and then justifies them with reason. In this sense, it is relevant to know the process that enables decision-making in closure a negotiation.

Using neuroscience tools, you can influence the brain of your interlocutor to make the expected decision with a high degree of **certainty**. However, these tools do not force a person to make decisions. That, in addition to being unethical, could be a crime. The strategies proposed here only increase the probability of making the perfect closure for a negotiation.

The Double Option Closure: A Winning Technique

There are different techniques to achieve a perfect closure. We will concentrate on the technique called "closure by **double option** selection", but first, it is important to point out three classic mistakes made when finalizing a negotiation. In traditional sales coaching schools, where neuroscience is not considered, it is taught that the best way to close a deal is by doing it directly.



Scientific **evidence** shows that
the brain has certain patterns for
making decisions



The characteristic questions of this strategy are usually the following: When should I expect payment? When would you like to receive the merchandise? or are you going to buy the product? These are based on the security and **strength** of the seller. However, they are very aggressive towards the client and can intimidate him, which may cause the contrary effect to the one expected.

Another mistake is to seek a closure by reiterating profits. As we have shown, the brain makes decisions before we know it; therefore, summarizing the benefits of a product is wasted time.

Finally, there is the closure by alternatives, which offers the interlocutor or buyer a list of options. With this strategy, clients are believed to choose the option that best suits their needs, but this is not the case. An unlimited variety creates anguish.

If I ask you how you feel when you look at a restaurant menu with many options, your answer may be that you **experience** a sense of indecision that keeps you from choosing. This phenomenon also occurs on certain streaming platforms, such as Netflix. And the example is not exaggerated.

A user can spend hours and hours running through the options menu, unable to decide what to see. In neuroscience, this effect is called cognitive overload¹⁵, a state in which people go into paralysis from oversupply. So, what is the best option for the perfect closure of a negotiation? As we said, the closure by double option.

In a study published in the Journal of Consumer Research (2014) (16), the authors carried out an experiment in which they offered a single option to one group of people, while another group was offered two. The results were revealing: out of the people who were given one option, only 10% accepted; on the contrary, in the other group this probability increased significantly to 34%.





The human brain makes decisions, first, through **emotion**, and then justifies them with reason

What's behind this? Neuroscience research has shown that humans are averse to only one option. In a heuristic sense, it can be said that the brain's response to that one option is **instinctive**. Remember that emotion prevails over reason. Through the amygdala, which assesses risks and threats, the brain activates defense mechanisms that lead it to receive this only option with distrust and fear^{17,18}. This is what few people know when closure, and that is why they resort to strategies like direct closure.

But why double option? First, because the client is given an **option**, where he is able to decide. This creates a feeling that they are handling the situation and, therefore, they stop thinking that they are being pressured to make the decision. Some questions like "What do you prefer: paying the total amount today or paying a part now and the rest next week?" or "Do I give you the complete product or as the stock runs out?" are an example of this strategy.

Double option has an **evolutionary** explanation. When you choose between two options, the brain uses less energy. Think of animals. They always use double option: they hunt or they don't hunt, they eat or they don't eat, they hide or not. In nature, double option is almost instinctive, due to the low energy consumption it requires. We humans act that way too.

“Double options has an evolutionary explanation. When you choose between two options, the brain uses less energy”

If, for example, you practice these two modalities of choice with a child and ask him **to choose** a garment or, on the contrary, show him two options of garments, you may notice that the child will find it easier to choose between two options^{19,20}. This is a type of effective closure. In other books you can learn about other more specialized forms of this, such as closures by contrast or profit anticipation.



How is this reflected in life? Different circumstances will require your [ability](#) to obtain commitments from other people, for example, as a parent or with a partner. In many of these situations, having the right tools for closure a deal can make life easier.

Let's go back to the example of the child. When it comes to cleaning his room, it is easier for him to choose between two options: tidy up his space or help with another household activity. If you are the leader of a team and you need to redirect it, because there are two [aspects to improve](#), you must find commitments to generate those changes.

This is best achieved with the double option strategy, guiding the team to improve one aspect right away, and the other later, is a proposal that the members will accept more easily.



A prescription to **take** home:

- 1.** Focus on the fact that your idea is worthwhile and it's important to back it up with your positive attitude and body language.
- 2.** Identify the best strategy to make the closure by double option and propose to your interlocutor the two alternatives that best fit their need.
- 3.** Keep in mind that this skill is not acquired overnight. It takes practice. From now on, every time you skip doing a double option closure, you will be aware that you didn't do it, and this will lead you to improve in the future.



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