

Digital Emotional Engagement Guide



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Keep Prospects on Your Website

Before the cloud, your direct sales team could walk a prospect through the buying cycle. Your website was an electronic brochure supporting your sales efforts. The cloud changes everything. To compete in the cloud market, you must aggressively attract prospects to your website and convert more leads.

Prospects self-educate and form biases about your company before initial contact with you. It's your marketing that nurtures the prospect through the buying cycle, not sales. Your website becomes a critical lead generator, differentiator and tool to close prospects. Emotionally engaging prospects online is more complex than creating a relationship over lunch. This guide collects the latest research in the areas of behavioral economics, neuroscience, human behavior and social science to provide specific strategies to help you engage and convert prospects online.

Microsoft partners have an Average Bounce Rate of 57%. That means even if you're successful at driving traffic to your website, you're likely losing more than half your prospects after they view a single page!*

How to Engage your Prospects

- Prospects need to see themselves reflected in your imagery.
- Speak to prospects directly, not in 3rd person.
- Demonstrate empathy and speak to the pain your prospects are feeling.
- Prove you understand their business and are a member of their tribe.

Microsoft Partner
Average Sessions / month
12,000*

One Page
Bounce Rate
57%*

Increase Engagement by Resonating With Your Customer's Tribe

Everyone needs to belong, to be understood and to feel safe. When our business problems compel us to search for a solution, we look for someone who understands us. Someone who knows our business, is aware of our unique needs and is familiar with our challenges.

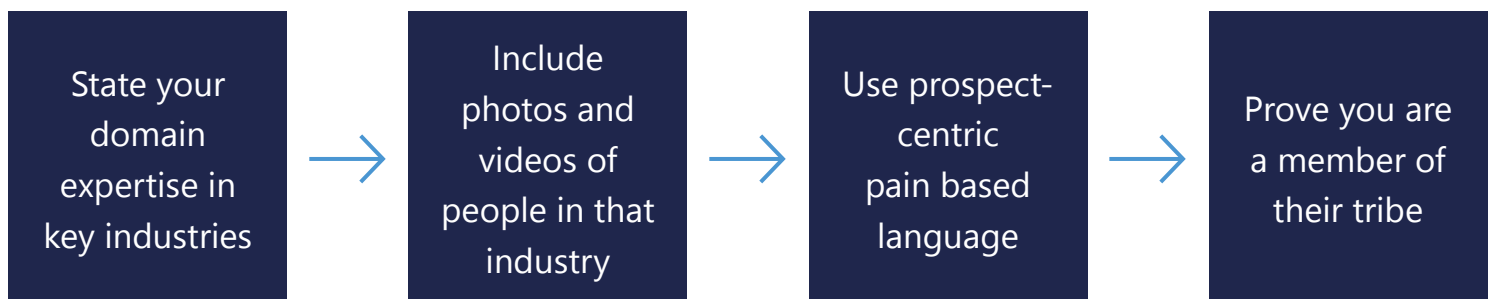
Don't talk about what you do on your homepage. Don't list the products and services you offer. Don't boast about what a great company you are! That can come later. Your task on the homepage is simply to demonstrate you already understand your customers' world. Let them know you've helped other customers, just like them, to solve their problems.

Aim for an empathetic perspective in your messaging, and use customer-focused language and visual imagery. What you say will instantly resonate with the prospect. You'll gain trust and the prospect will feel a positive bias towards your company. You want prospects to connect with you on a deep, emotional level. You want them to think, "wow this company really understands me, my industry and my company's problems." You can do this in a number of ways. Feature customer videos and case studies. Use "you" language rather than "we." Let prospects self-select by industry. Present images of real customers in their work environment at the beginning of your online interaction.

Digital online buying increases risk and uncertainty for prospects. A cold, emotionless website with stock photos, technical jargon, and feature lists will not increase trust in your company.

Your prospects don't want to spend time and money educating you about their businesses. It's risky working with someone who doesn't understand their unique needs. But if a prospect sees you as a member of their tribe, they'll unconsciously disclose more information and they'll overlook solution/service weaknesses, and help guide you through their selection process.

Demonstrate You Are a Member of Their Tribe



Stop Speaking to Everyone; Engage the Why, How and What Personas

Partners often have generic, horizontal messaging that tries to appeal to everyone. Bland messages will not differentiate your company or engage your prospect's buying brain. On average viewers spend less than 2.5 minutes on Dynamics partners' websites. This means you likely have between 1 and 4 minutes* to communicate your value proposition online. Don't drive prospects away with too much information and unimportant details. Speaking to everyone appeals to no one.

How to Engage the 3 Personas:

- Use messaging that emotionally triggers the Why, What and How personas.
- Provide self-selection paths by persona to filter out irrelevant information.
- Create marketing materials which speak to the specific pains of your target personas.
- Ensure your marketing materials are in an effective format.
- Include photos and videos of real people.
- Provide proofs of claims which appeal to each persona.

Average length of
Microsoft Partner Web session
less than 2.5 min

For more on creating persona-based emotional messages download the Emotional Messaging Framework White Paper from <http://aka.ms/cloud-surestep>.

Design your marketing materials to speak to the specific pains of your target personas.
Ensure your materials are in an effective format:

Persona Engagement Preferences			
Persona	WHAT	HOW	WHY
Primary Interest	Business Systems	Business Processes	Business Challenges
Selection Process Focus	Key Features	New Functionality	Business Outcomes
Primary Roles	IT End User: IT Director/ Manager, Consultant, Account Receivables Clerk	Management: Project Manager, Department Head, Project Director, Controller	Leadership: CEO/MD, CFO/Finance Director, Partner, VP Consulting
Preferred Communication Medium	Text, Demos	Video/Text/Charts	Dialogue/Video/Graphs
Maximum Text Length	10 pages	5 pages	1 page
Maximum Content Time	30 minutes	10 minutes	2 minutes
Preferred Form	Webcasts Product Comparisons Blogs Trials Technical white papers	Video Case Studies On-Demand Business Process Specific Demonstrations Industry Whitepapers Blogs	Video Infographics 3rd Party/Analyst Reports Thought Leadership Articles

Replace Emotionless Text with Compelling Visuals

Unless your online presence speaks to your prospects' emotional drivers, you will quickly lose them. The phrases "award winning," "great products," "great people," and "lots of experience" are predictable. They won't capture the attention of a well-informed, reluctant prospect.

Differentiation is the key to greater margins and higher win rates. Most partner websites have the same products, services and value messaging. Like it or not, technology solutions and business applications are commodities. You must be different! Use tribal pictures. Contrast between how customers do business now vs. how they could do it in the future. Use proven claims to differentiate your company and offering.

Many partners commonly showcase information processed by the logical brain as a means to differentiate: product/solution features and capabilities, experienced resources and geographic proximity. At first glance these advantages seem compelling and defensible. But they're IRRELEVANT.

The differentiation battle is waged on an *emotional* battlefield, not a logical or theoretical one.

Use QUESTIONS rather than STATEMENTS

Not engaging: "Our solution allows companies to manage financial and analytical data."

Engaging: "Missed your sales target again?"
"Click here to see how you can finally have reliable forecasting."

Emotions Compel Human Beings to Take Action, to Move, to Change

Business cases, functional comparisons, pros/cons lists and RFPs reside in the neo-cortex, the logical brain. It's good at rationalizing decisions, but not making them. The logical brain has 1/10,000 of the processing power of the emotional brain. So it's critical to use videos, charts, graphs and other visual and auditory mediums to communicate. Cut the text. Simplify options. Add movement.

Improving Emotional Messaging

	Common Approach	Messaging Example
Poor	Non emotion-generating feature	We offer inventory management.
Better	Somewhat emotionally appealing benefit	Improve your sales with more effective inventory management.
Best	Emotionally compelling and action stimulating pain	Stop losing orders because of stock outs.

How to Increase Interest by Triggering an Emotional Response

- Speak to the prospect's pain, avoid focusing on features.
- Appeal to all learning styles: visual (photos, charts, graphs, infographics), auditory (podcast, audio clips, webcasts) and kinesthetic (product demos, videos, on-line assessments).
- Stimulate fear and loss to motivate action.
- Describe a compelling and desirable future they'll want now.
- Create contrast. Show how life is now vs. how it could be.

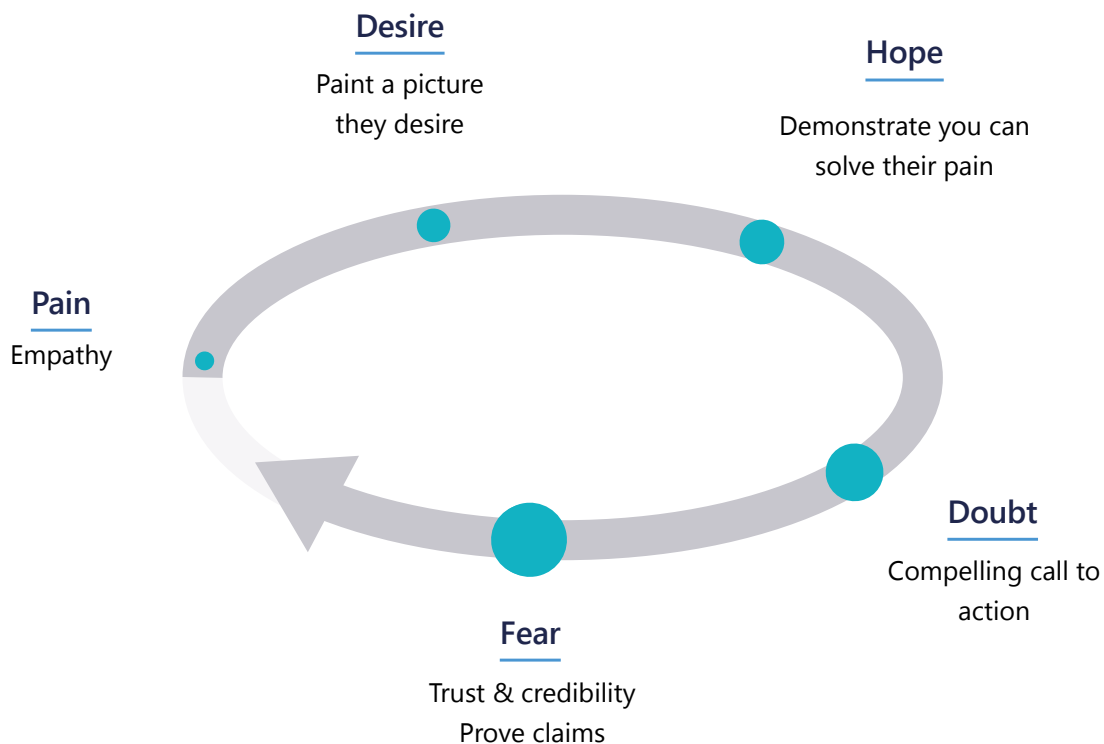


Align Your Messaging With Your Prospect's Emotional Buying Cycle

Most partner homepages have too much technology-based information. When a prospect first visits your website, they're in pain. They're searching for someone who already understands their problems and can quickly and inexpensively solve them.

Your homepage must show empathy. If your homepage immediately asks a prospect to call for a demo or speak to your sales team, you'll scare them off. They're not ready. Also, your homepage shouldn't brag about how great you are; it's unappealing to your prospect's emotional state of mind. They don't trust you yet. Once you've convinced your prospect you know their business, you can entice them with the details of your product and services. When they're ready to buy they'll dig into your website to discover more about your company. But this happens in the final stage of the emotional buying cycle, when they question their decision and fear making the wrong choice.

Map your marketing message to the emotional state of your prospect.



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Organize your menus, content and website structure to take prospects through the emotional buying cycle.

Emotional Buying Cycle

Empathy Stage

- Use YOU not WE language.
- Include pictures of customers who look like the prospect.
- Use industry specific (tribal) jargon when speaking to prospects online.

Desire Stage

- Ask provocative questions.
- Teach prospects something they don't already know about themselves.
- Tell prospects what others are experiencing that they're not.
- Show contrasting pictures of their current state vs. what it could be.

Hope Stage

- Share customer success stories in videos, case studies, testimonials, quotes.
- Show what is possible with pictures, demos or stories.
- Messaging should speak to the benefits others have gained.

Doubt Stage

- Provide quantifiable proof in the form of customer case studies, business benefit improvements, and costs savings.

Fear Stage

- Reduce fear by proving you're a reliable and safe choice.
- Create credibility by including company data: years in business, number of employees, number of customers, and office locations.
- List awards.
- Include customer logos.

Keep it Simple and Peak Their Curiosity

Your prospects are bombarded with more information than they can process. No wonder it's difficult for you to break through to capture their attention. It's even more difficult to trigger enough interest to stimulate a desire to purchase your products.

Visual input reaches your "old brain" the fastest. Long before your cognitive brain recognizes or analyzes the information and comes to a conclusion. The brain is also easily overwhelmed when faced with too many options. It only holds information for 15-30 seconds* before retaining the information for future use or dumping it. It desires short cuts and simple choices made at a glance, saving time and energy. Analysis slows things down. An abundance of text seems complex and is largely ignored. So review your website and cut everything that isn't compelling and important. Use more white space. Convert text to infographics, charts and graphs. Add more pictures.

How to Engage and Not Overwhelm the Mind

- Include lots of white space, cut text.
- Use simple, descriptive menus (e.g. maximum of five).
- Use real human faces, not emotionless stock imagery.
- Incorporate videos, demos, and on-line assessments
- Ask provocative questions in headlines: "Is your inability to trace your food products keeping you up at night?" or "Want to know how one of your competitors cut delivery time by 30%?"
- Ask questions prospects don't know the answer to: "Do you know how companies in your industry are reducing their cost of selling by 10%?"
- Remove content that isn't critical. Less is more.

Want to know the Top 4
Ways to Increase Margins?
[Click here to find out.](#)

How to Move a Prospect Through to Action: AIDA MODEL*



1 Grab Attention

Ask provocative questions.

"Want to trace your apples to your customer's doorstep?"

Provide unexpected content.

Free, high-value business research reports and self-assessments.

Use surprise/humor.

Show pictures of the elephant in the room.

Feature attractive graphics.

*Include charts using industry-specific images.
(e.g., for sales growth in the medical equipment industry your bar chart could be a vertical thermometer increasing in size)*

2 Generate Interest

Use relevant tribal imagery and messaging.

*Pictures of customers; use industry jargon.
(e.g., prison management CRM: reduce prison fights by tracking inmate gang history)*

Make a promise of resolution or satisfaction.

*Use before and after pictures.
(e.g., empty delivery truck vs. full delivery truck)*

Raise curiosity.

*Use thought provoking questions.
"Do you know the five biggest barriers to growth in your industry?"*

3 Create Desire

Use special offers; create urgency.

*(e.g., First 20 customers get 10% off.
Move to the cloud before Nov. 1 and get x...)*

Stimulate strong emotional feeling.

*"Had a big write-off recently?
Taking over 90 days to collect payments?"*

Make prospects crave unique benefits.

"Want to make money while you sleep?"

4 Motivate to Action

Create a fear of loss.

"Don't let your competitors gain an advantage because you delayed your project until next year."

Give in order to get.

Offer high-value content BEFORE asking your prospect to call you or watch a demo.

Provide high-value educational content.

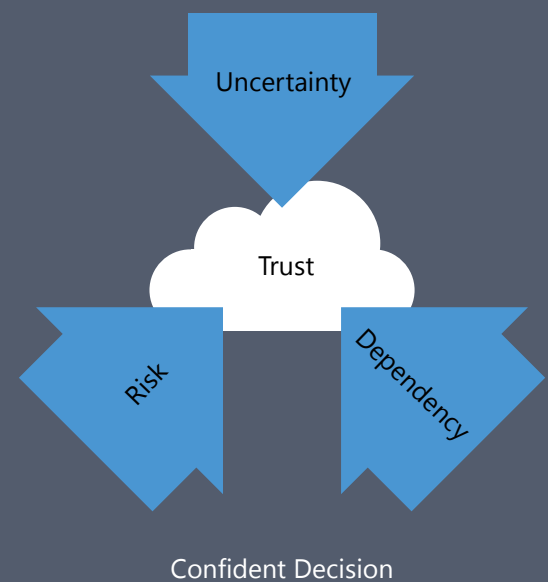
*Stop selling, start teaching. Include whitepapers, explanatory blogs, educational videos.
(e.g., top 10 mistakes manufacturing companies make when moving to a new system)*

Create Trust by Providing Proof

Cloud solutions drive a higher volume of sales transactions. But you'll have less control of the sales cycle and less personal interaction with prospects. Subscribing to an online cloud solution increases risk, uncertainty, and dependency for a prospect. That's why you need to earn their trust. You must be transparent in your pricing and information policies. Your claims must be validated by independent third parties. Everything must be supported by concrete, demonstrable proof. For prospects to form a positive bias towards your company, it is critical they feel a sense of safety during their online experience with your company.

How can you establish trust with the old brain in an uncertain digital world?

- Demonstrate social proof. Move customer testimonials, case studies and videos to the forefront of your website.
- Highlight specific, measurable evidence. Use charts, graphs and data to support your benefit claims.
- Display awards and customer logos to build credibility.
- Differentiate your offering from competitors with specific demonstrations.
- Be authentic and transparent.
- Provide third-party validation.



The Law of Social Reinforcement:

If we learn other people have already accepted an idea or a solution, our natural response is to accept this idea or solution for ourselves. A customer testimonial is more powerful than hoping your prospect takes your word for it.

Stop Selling and Start Educating

Prospects engage with a website when the message is relevant, intriguing and speaks directly to them. They won't act unless there's something in it for them. To learn more about your prospects, you must offer them something of value first. Stop trying to market to them. Instead, educate them. When you give prospects valuable content, you'll earn their trust. Then they'll give you their information or go deeper into your website. Give prospects an opportunity to learn something new. They'll engage further and come back for more.

How to Change Prospects into Customers

- State clearly what a prospect will get in exchange for disclosing their information. Don't say "subscribe."
- Buttons should explain WHY a prospect should click on them.
- Offer high-value, educational content for free, such as online assessments, research reports, articles, checklists and more.
- Make calls to action relevant and specific to individual personas.
- Develop proprietary content that competitors can't offer.
- Create urgency, fear of loss and scarcity. Limit availability and time.
- Use red and orange to attract the eye and increase click-throughs.
- Use persuasive action phrases like, "try now," and "get it now."

Learn the
Top 6 challenges
Facing Your
Industry
in 2016

When creating digital content and call to action statements, think about the material from your prospect's perspective and pro-actively address these areas:

Why should I click?

Will it be relevant to me?

What will you do with my
email address?

What will I learn?

How often will you contact me?

Be Transparent to Increase Trust

The growth of the Internet and digital media have disrupted selling, marketing and buying processes. This guide summarizes what we know about neuroscience and buyer behavior. It provides highly-actionable recommendations to help you increase your digital emotional engagement and attract more prospects, convert more leads and increase your win rates.

To attain a high level of emotional engagement, your website must:

- Feature Tribal Engagement and Resonance
- Be Simple, Not Complex
- Engage WHY, WHAT and HOW Personas
- Include Extensive Proofs of Claims
- Build Trust and Demonstrate Credibility
- Trigger Emotions
- Be Visually Stimulating
- Have a High Level of Value Exchange and Action Engagement
- Peak Curiosity and be Persuasive

References:

**Microsoft Partner web performance statistics are based on data gathered from digital emotional engagement audits in the U.S. and Europe, performed by Neural Impact Inc. in 2016.*

Atkinson and Shiffrin (1971) – working memory

Bandura, A. (1977). Social learning theory. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall

The AIDA model was originally identified by E. St. Elmo Lewis

For more information on building your cloud practice visit <http://aka.ms/cloud-surestep> and watch the Emotional Marketing Engagement to Grow Revenue video.