



Advice

# Psychology

of Selling

## Why do people buy gifts?

Guilt and love are the two most common motivators behind gift purchases

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GUILT  
OR LOVE?



THE TWO MOST COMMON motivators for purchasing gifts are love and guilt (and I'm not talking about guilt which is caused by behaving badly).

When you think about it, most people buy gifts for someone they love – for a husband, wife, mother, father, child, grandparent or close friend. They buy for a birthday, anniversary or other special occasion. The gift becomes the physical

representation of that love and the person giving the gift wants it to be just right as they're figuratively giving a piece of their heart in the gift.

Helping someone select such a gift is often a fun and exciting challenge as you need to determine whom the gift is for as well as the occasion, and then find the perfect item that really reflects that love. When the perfect gift is selected, it's very

much appreciated by both the gift giver and the gift recipient.

Now, onto the other motivator – guilt. The type of guilt I'm talking about here is not the "I did something I shouldn't have" guilt, but rather the guilt that comes from not doing what I should have.

Think of it this way: guilt-giving is when you have to buy a gift for someone not because you want to, but rather because you have to. The gift is part of a reciprocal arrangement. In other words, you'll be getting a gift back. I often use the example of a secret Santa pool, where you draw names and have to buy a gift for someone that you don't really care for, much less love. You'd think it would be easier to suggest a gift in this case, but nothing could be further from the truth.

What the gift-giver is worried about in this instance is making sure their gift is of the same perceived value as the gift they'll receive. People will spend more money, effort and time avoiding or trying not to make a mistake than they will spend trying to save money (also known as loss aversion).

A great store's job is to make sure that their customer finds the right gift, whether it's a love gift or a guilt gift. Your customer should always be the guilt-er, the one who causes the guilt, and not the guilt-ee, the one who feels the guilt. ■

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