



Perception Selling to Maximize Your Classroom Experience

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Perception can be defined as the sensory interpretation of given external stimuli. For example, a new student enrolled in an empowering martial arts program will mentally perceive his environment as one of excitement, enthusiasm and trust. On the other hand, a new student enrolled in an unconstructive, pessimistic program will quickly develop a negative perception of the martial arts as a whole. Perception is the pair of binoculars through which we view elements in the world. Different binoculars provide infinite combinations of shades, lighting, sizes, shapes, interpretations and analysis for the individuals that they serve. Any given social situation can be interpreted in countless ways depending on who is watching and the type of binoculars that they use.

Our mission as martial arts educators is to build our students on a foundation of success. We are leaders who employ effective communication techniques in order to convey a positive message. With such, we construct our classes for the purpose of motivating, inspiring and making a substantial difference in the lives of the clients that we serve. The ability of a martial arts educator to transfer his message in a clear and concise manner is paramount. This transference is received by those involved in the class and ultimately translated by their perception.

During any given martial arts class, there are three basic perceptions. First, is the perception of the instructor conducting class. Second, is the perception of the students participating in the class. Third, is the audience observing class from the lobby area. This audience includes the following: parents, grandparents, friends, family and prospects. In this setting it is vital to effectively sell ourselves and the program in a way that satisfies all three perceptions.

The following are five keys that will enhance your perception selling ability and maximize the results of your classroom experience.

1. Use empowering language to captivate the crowd.

Language is a powerful tool that can either captivate your crowd or fill them with boredom. Make a difference in your class by using language that inspires, motivates and sends a call to action for your students and audience. Imagine you are an artist with a colorful palette of choices at your side. Do not limit yourself to one color in creating your work. Utilize an assortment of colors, angles and positive images to make your work come alive.

There are roughly 490,000 words in the English language. The average English speaking person uses a vocabulary that consists of 5,000 – 6,000 of those words. Imagine the enhanced effectiveness of your classroom language if you were to increase this average number by 1%. The combinations of phrases and potential to reach your students and audience would reach new heights. Challenge yourself to create an expanded vocabulary filled with ideas that will make a difference. Dare to grow and refuse to settle for anything less than extraordinary.



2. Conduct your class in a way that addresses your student's needs.

Needs analysis selling is the process of determining client needs before recommending and implementing your product or service. When you take your car to the body shop, the mechanic will ask, "What can I do for you?" or "What seems to be the problem?" It is essential that the mechanic understands your basis for bringing the car in before a service can be performed. Dr. Tony Alessandra is quoted as saying the following, "In the medical field, prescription before diagnosis is malpractice!"

During your martial arts class this concept serves as a powerful tool in maximizing your experience. For example, let us assume that you are about to teach a 5 year old class. Before you step onto the floor, you notice that many of the students are laughing, playing and not sitting still. The junior instructors are sitting patiently with the children but nonetheless, they continue to fool around. As you turn and look to the left, the audience is observing class and making gestures toward their children prompting them to sit up straight and pay attention.

In this situation, the needs analysis is simple. The students need to be reinforced on the concept of self-control. You might say something like the following, "Ok class stand up and place your hands at your sides. Today we are going to practice our self-control. Everyone say self-control...Self-control means that we use our mind and body to help us get better at karate, doesn't it? If we are silly or playing around in karate class can we improve and get better?" From this point on, parallel the focus concept to your lesson plan for the day.

In the above example, the major need of the students was self-control. By targeting this need and addressing this need in your teaching, drills, classroom organization and use of language you will have successfully engaged in perception selling.

There are countless needs that your martial arts program is ready to solve. Find out what they are and serve your students. Practice needs analysis every day, and you should record the results. Keep these records in a notebook or laptop. Review them every day and take your teaching to the next level of excellence.

3. Communicate on the visual, auditory and kinesthetic levels.

Learning and communication are at their best when 2 or more of the senses are involved. Consider the following image. An intermediate level class is lined up in an attention position facing a lesson plan posted in the front of the room. The head instructor steps onto the matt with excitement and announces, "Today class we are going to give everything we've got. We are going to practice today's lesson plan with such exhilaration that we take our martial arts skill to the next level! As your instructor I am going to give you everything I have and I want to see your best! Is everybody ready to get started?" The class replies with a motivated spirit, "Yes Sensei!" Throughout the class, the instructor demonstrates the way he wants his students to demonstrate. He refers to the weekly quote written in bold letters on the board. He asks the audience to applaud when his class performs a given drill the correct way. While the students are engaged in pad work, he makes sure that their stances are correct and hand position is



correct. By this action he creates a private lesson feel in a group class. Everyone in class is electrified by the presentation and feels a personal connection with the instructor.

The best martial arts instructors are masters at teaching on the visual, auditory and kinesthetic levels. They use images, props, motivational quotes, voice fluctuation and power analogies to create a lasting effect on all 3 class perceptions. Take initiative in your classes today. Challenge your own creativity in developing new drills that will reveal your message in new, exciting ways.

4. Reinforce your lesson plan with real life examples.

Education psychology teaches us that abstract concepts are learned and understood progressively through the accumulation of concrete examples. For instance, if you were to ask 7 year old child in the beginner class to define “confidence” she might respond, “Confidence means to keep your hands up and to be strong.” The concrete explanation, “keep your hands up and be strong” adds to the abstract understanding of “confidence.” At the other end of the spectrum, you might ask a beginner adult to define “martial arts” to which she might reply, “Martial arts is a system of fighting, self-defense and physical conditioning.” In both cases the principle remains the same.

In order to bring out the best in your students, educate them in a way that guides them from concrete explanation to abstract understanding. Give examples that show how the martial arts relate to your students and to your audience. Use this principle whole heartedly and consistently for greater results in your martial arts classroom.

5. Selling 101: Transfer your excitement about the martial arts in a positive, lasting way.

The excitement level of your class is determined by the level of excitement that they feel and obtain from you. If you are tired, unmotivated and careless with your action then expect the same result from your students. The power of persuasion is strong on both the positive and negative sides. Be a positive believer and let it reflect in your martial arts school. Have the courage to be innovative, inspiring and willing to take your teaching to soaring new heights.