

## Driven to Buy

- By [Gareth English](#) -

In previous articles we have discussed the importance of meeting your customers' psychological needs. In this article we will expand upon this, providing a deeper understanding of this critical aspect of customer experience delivery and addressing the following questions:

- How do I keep my customers coming back time and again?
- What's really important to my customers?
- How do I establish a strong relationship with my customers?
- How do I design a Service Brand that appeals to my clients?

### What is driving us?

Why do we go shopping? What is driving us to buy things? It would be simple to think that we merely needed the objects or services that we go looking for, but beneath these apparent needs are our psychological needs. These needs or drives are what really motivate us to go out and shop. Therefore if you are looking to fully meet the needs of your customers then it's vital that you understand what is driving them in the first place.

Whilst we may feel very modern with our cars, laptops and phones much of what drives us at a fundamental level is what drove our ancient ancestors, it's just that we express it in a different way now. For example I no longer seek to protect myself with a spear or shield, but I may look to for a car with a lot of safety features, or choose organic food that will make me feel safe from pesticides.

### Why is this relevant to business?

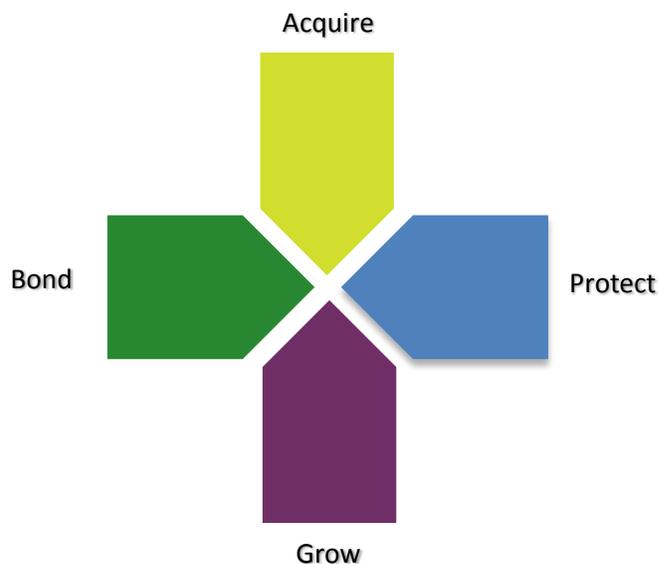
Simply put people need to fulfil these psychological drives and are willing to pay for experiences that achieve this. The more effectively that an experience delivers on meeting a need, the more likely we are to repeat that experience every time we want to satisfy that need. Therefore the products and services that we return to are those that are fulfilling our needs efficiently.

So the benefit to your business is that meeting their drives will **engage your customers to stay longer and to spend more.**



## What are the four fundamental drives?

Our research at Customer Psychology has led us to focus on four fundamental drives, drawing on the work of researchers such as Lawrence & Nohria, Reiss, Maslow and Herzberg. The four drives are to Protect, to Acquire, to Bond and to Grow. We all experience all four of these drives, although at different points in our lives we will be willing to expend varying amounts of energy in fulfilling them. There are also individual differences: for example in some people their drive to Acquire will always be greater than their drive to Bond. In the remainder of this article I will examine more about these drives and how different organisations are focused on appealing to them.



### Protect

This is perhaps the most fundamental human drive and it's one that can be seen in virtually all living things. In simple biological terms the purpose of the Protect drive is to defend ourselves so that we can survive to the next day. An extension of this drive is to Protect our resources (food, or shelter) so that we can survive into the future and to defend our children so that our genes can survive.

In modern humans, this drive is concerned with protecting ourselves and our accomplishments. We seek to defend whatever is ours because we intrinsically value what we have over what we do not have: and fear loss as a result. This drive tends to become more important as we get older or more affluent: we have more to lose.



## Acquire

In biological terms, once we have achieved the stability of survival this drive ensures that we move beyond subsistence and increase our survivability in the future. Acquiring more goods and resources allows us to do this, essentially stockpiling for future security.

In the developed world, most people are fortunate enough to have moved from worrying about survival resources such as food to other possessions such as cars, clothes or flat screen TV's. Once such worldly goods have been acquired, the Acquire drive is still active and so the focus tends to shift to the acquisition of symbolic resources such as money and power.

Any acquisitions, whether real or symbolic are comparative: we seek to have more than our neighbour, no matter how much that is.

## Bond

In biological terms, we are better able to protect ourselves and to acquire resources if we work together with others: a group can capture larger prey or protect from more fierce predators.

As a result, modern humans are social creatures: all people need people. Although this applies in various ways and to various extents, there are very few people indeed who are happy to live in isolation. Over time we tend to feel more positive in the company of those we like and we will miss them when we are away from them. A strong part of the Bond drive is the desire to be part of something larger than ourselves: a family, clan, team, organisation, political party or country.



## Grow

In evolutionary terms, the drive to Grow concerns being able to predict why things occur and what will happen in the future so that you can act accordingly.

In modern people this drive has shaped itself into a broader curiosity and desire to learn and develop. This is not just curiosity to find out about immediately relevant specifics in life, we also expend a huge amount of energy considering the broader questions such as “who am I?”, “why am I here?” and “what is my purpose?”. Fulfilling this learning drive includes providing information, skills or knowledge to help us reach our personal potential.

### How do businesses make use of these drives?

Appealing to these drives allows organisations to meet the needs of their customers much more fully, which in turn means that those customers will feel more satisfied and more likely to repeat the experience.

If you would like to discover more about how businesses are using these drives to build strong and profitable relationships with their clients, then you can request a longer version of this article by [email](#).

Gareth English is a Business Psychologist and Director of Customer Psychology Ltd.

