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Welcome to the Land of Metaphoria^{RM}
Anne Miller, Author Metaphorically Selling

When Fortune magazine did a story on charisma a few years ago, they said that charismatic communicators were able to make the abstract simple and the simple meaningful. These successful people achieve that effect with metaphors and stories. The magazine cited Jack Welch and Ronald Reagan as outstanding users of these techniques. Like these well-known master salesmen, in selling anything today, it's critical to make the complexities of your products, services, and ideas simple and the simplicity of your points meaningful to your clients/listeners.

In our information overload society, metaphors are your best persuasion tool to rise above the noise, drive home your points, be remembered, and gain commitment to a deal, a cause, or a point of view. Metaphors are the imaginative tools of poets (Juliet is the sun), but they are also the sharpest strategic tools used by persuaders everywhere from presidents to savvy salespeople.

Why? Because we remember what we "see" more than what we just hear and we have a raft of associations with what we have seen and experienced. Those emotions move us to act. Even Einstein said, "If I can't see it, I don't understand it." Compare the following information with the *image* that follows it and you'll see why metaphors are powerful "weapons of mass understanding."

An advertising sales rep for a women's magazine scored with a media buyer with this imagery.

"Our reader has a household income of \$63,000, has 3.4 years of college education, 2.1 children, a median house worth \$267,000, and owns 2.2 cars.

In short, we are talking about the Bloomingdale's shopper and not the K-Mart lady."

What an impact that last sentence has on us! We "see" the two shoppers. We have associations with each of these stores that speak volumes about the likely buying habits of each shopper. We "get" the stronger buying power of this magazine's reader because of the *image* that passes through our right brain rather than through the cold numerical facts which our left brain processes.

Most people use examples to help illustrate their points. However, the *most* skilled persuaders consciously use distinctive and meaningful metaphors, analogies and comparisons (imagery) to really dazzle and drive those points home.

Imagery Peppers the News

When the White House had to respond to the heat that was generated against it by Michael Moore's movie "Fahrenheit 9/11," they distanced themselves from the film by saying, "*The eagle does not talk to the fly.*"

Imagery Colors our Conversations

Creating imagery is not unnatural. You use it everyday.

1. *Bricks and mortar* companies need to become *clicks and mortar* businesses to survive in the millennium.
2. *Bulls and bears* invest in stock markets that *crash, tank, take-off*.
3. We avoid putting all our eggs in one basket, build a nest egg, save for a rainy day.
4. Some of us are *road warriors* working in a *dog-eat-dog world*.
5. Is your company the *800 pound gorilla* of its category or is it only a *blip on your customer's radar screen*?

Analogies are extended metaphors that drive points home:

1. Minds are like parachutes. *They work best, when open.*
2. Reagan was the Teflon president. *Nothing ever stuck to him.*
3. Information is coming at us very quickly. It's like drinking water from a firehose. *If we're not careful, we could drown.*
4. "A woman is like a tea bag. *You never know how strong she is, until she gets into hot water.*" (Eleanor Roosevelt)

When Do You Need a Metaphor?

President Bush could have used one in his first debate with John Kerry. Kerry had the President on the ropes and you'll recall that all Bush could say several times was that the war in Iraq was "hard work, it's hard, it's very hard." A well-crafted metaphor would have come in handy to drive his point home with a win, rather than with what came across as a series of weak claims, if not outright whining. He might have said, "Yes, the war in Iraq is hard work, *just like winning the Cold War was hard work. There will be setbacks, but freedom and liberty will prevail in the end for the benefit of the entire world.*" His inability to frame the war in strong, positively charged metaphoric terms nearly cost him the presidency.

Similarly, the Kerry campaign suffered for most of 2004 for lack of a strong image and was seriously compromised when the Republicans used his famous wind-surfing picture against him. In a TV commercial, showing Kerry surfing in one direction with one viewpoint and then in another with the opposing view, the voiceover in the Republican ads said, "Any way the wind blows." In their efforts to characterize Kerry as a flip-flopper, this image was very effectively used and hurt Kerry in the polls.

When You Are Not Running for President

For those of us who are not on the campaign trail, do you encounter any of the following when you are trying to present your case: Resistance? Negativity? Indifference? Confusion? Hostility? Skepticism? Fear? Controversy?

That's when you need a winning metaphor!

An investment banker was talking to the CEO of a willing take-over target company by the biggest company in their industry. The CEO was stuck on the fear that once word got out, his company would be put "in play" and that would trigger hostile take-over activity. The investment banker won over this CEO when he said, "*Bill, think back to high school. Remember when the star football player, let's call him Big Joe, had a girlfriend? Remember how no one else would dare to date Joe's girlfriend? Don't worry. This company is 'Big Joe'. If they want you, no one else is going to step in and go against 'Joe.'*"

Become a Metaphorian^{RM}

Outstanding salespeople and communicators from Aristotle to Lincoln to leading business executives like Steve Jobs use carefully thought out, hard-hitting imagery to achieve emotional, visceral, gut understanding. I call this imagery *Metaphoria*, the visual language of persuasion, and people who use *Metaphoria*, are, (what else?) *Metaphorians*. Use *Metaphoria*

- To position your products and services vs. the competition
- To neutralize objections, resistance, fears, skepticism, negativity
- To help buyers "get" your story

The toughest sale is frequently won, not only with the tools of a logician, but with the techniques of a poet. Welcome to the land of Metaphoria.

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