

# Maslow's vs Messer's Hierarchy of Needs

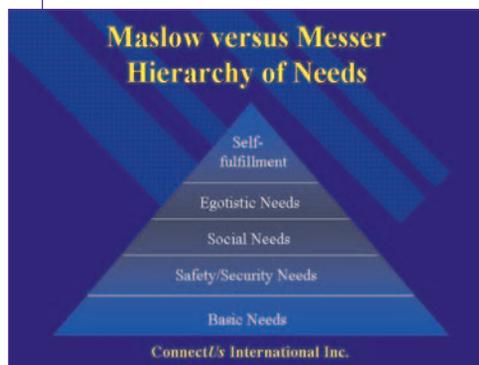
BY DONNA MESSER

**A**braham Maslow contends that man's needs are arranged in a hierarchy. Those at the lower level, if unsatisfied, take precedence over those at higher levels. He states that man is a wanting animal. As soon as one of his needs are met and satisfied, another appears in its place. This process, according to Maslow, never ends. It continues from birth to death. Man continually puts forth effort or work to satisfy his needs.

If we were to look at Maslow's Hierarchy today, with the challenges we are all facing because of the September 11 terrorist attack, we will find that our "hierarchy of needs" has made a dramatic shift. This shift has brought many of us back to our basic needs. If we are to survive and thrive in this new world, we need to identify and modify our thinking and our strategies for maintaining and growing our business.

## Our Hierarchy of Needs

**Basic Needs**—At the lowest level are the *Basic Needs*, the needs of the body. These cover



the needs for food, water, air, rest, exercise, shelter, etc. If these needs are not met, then these needs will assume a priority in the motivation of our behaviour. A starving man can only think of food. Similarly, a frightened citizen of this new world can only think of the needs of his family and their safety. Here in Canada, most of us eat regularly, and have our basic needs met. The crisis in New York was a rude awakening for all of us and we stopped taking those basic needs for granted. All of a sudden, we had a primary motivation

for our basic needs to be met: food, water, air, rest, exercise, and shelter have become more important to us. As small business owners, we need to refocus our products and services, and rise to meet the basic needs of our potential client base.

In our workshops, we suggest you use lateral thinking as a creativity tool. How can we take Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and use it to increase our business potential? The following are examples of approaching our basic needs with a little lateral thinking:

When the Towers were hit, many of those in the Towers used their cell phones to assure their family that they were okay. Immediately following the tragedy, sales of cellular phones went up—not as a luxury item, but as a basic need. Lateral thinking—basic need: safety!

When the Towers were hit and so many were lost, families mourned their losses and wished they had spent more time together. Family traditions suddenly become more important, there was a return to worship and to family ties. Sales of family-related products have increased. Flags have been purchased to show solidarity for the "global family." People have come together with common needs. Stress and panic-attacks have run rampant. Therapists, coaches, and guides are needed to help us cope with our basic needs. The sale of candy and soup has risen dramatically—comfort foods, meeting our basic needs. Lateral thinking—basic needs: tradition, family!

**Safety and Security**—The next level of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. This is the protection against danger and the threat of being deprived of things. The need is for the "fairest possible break." If men are afraid, it is a basic motivator to look for products and services that will help conquer that fear. Think laterally—what will we need to look at differently in order to capitalize on the second level of Maslow's Hierarchy?

Sales have increased for security systems. We have seen an increase in sales for home alarms. Insurance policies have been

investigated and realigned. Financial plans have been reconsidered and repositioned. Travel plans have been adjusted, with more conference calls. Video conferencing is on the rise. People are using a variety of transportation modes—sales have increased dramatically on passenger trains. Safety and Security have become more important and more saleable. What is your product or service? How can you position yourself and your business to move with the trend?

**Social Needs**—Once the first two levels of Maslow's Hierarchy have been met, we will once again see a rise in sales for our *Social Needs*. For the next few years we will see more cocooning, more time spent as a family. Our spending will be within a comfort level, which says we want to be with family, friends, and people we know. People like people who are like themselves, and they will buy from those people! There will be more relationship building; more time spent getting to know neighbours and colleagues. Social Needs will be home based, local and family orientated. Games that are more traditional will be sold, more family dinners, with more holiday awareness, sales or products and services will be targeted towards the family and friends.

**Egotistic Needs**—The fourth level of Maslow's Hierarchy is *Egotistic Needs*. This level satisfied the need to drive the big car, own the big house, and take the big vacation. With the tragedy of September 11, our ego took a big nosedive, and we determined that "big" is not necessarily better. We began to rethink our needs: sales of cars, houses, and vacations changed. We returned to many of our basic needs where safety, dependability, and family values played an important role in our purchasing. Divorces are down. Marriages are up. Mediation is a growing industry. We've seen a rush to move to the country, to a smaller, more friendly and safe community. We want to know who we know, and who they know.

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**Self-Fulfilment**—The fifth level of Maslow's Hierarchy is *Self-Fulfilment*—the need to realize one's potential, for continued self-development and for being creative in the broadest sense of the term. Today, many of us are too busy trying to satisfy the needs we have at the lower level and will not be spending our time or money on this level of development, unless it will provide us with the return we have to basic needs. We see spirituality on the rise, more self-improvement courses, increased customer service training, with networking and relationship building as a key component. We are getting to know ourselves and our colleagues on a more intimate level and it will be part of our Self-Fulfilment.

In today's world, identifying the need that motivates our customers and our clients is most important and by providing the right

incentive consistent with their needs, we will be successful.

With a little lateral thinking, we can look after their Hierarchy of Needs, according to Messer! **SBCM**

*Donna Messer is an international speaker, trainer and coach, she is the founder of ConnectUs International, a company that designs, develops and delivers educational training programs. ConnectUs has developed "Maslow's*



*Vs Messer's Hierarchy of Needs" to facilitate lateral thinking in retention and renewing business relationships. Donna is also the Managing Editor of BusinessWoman Canada magazine. For further information visit the Web site.*