

Morris Services

Edith and Reg Morris, owners of Morris Services, a small company providing cleaning services to industry, had reluctantly come to the conclusion that a new personal computer was needed for their business. Their immediate problem was cash flow monitoring; a year ago they had fallen into cash flow difficulties because, for a variety of reasons, their short-term expenditures exceeded their receipts. Consequently, they were looking for a computer that would store information on outgoings and receipts so that, at the touch of a button, they could monitor cash flow at the same time. They were also concerned that customers were expecting to be able to communicate by email which currently they were unable to do. The only computer in the company was ancient and was used by their secretary, Helen Miers, for word processing only. She was constantly complaining about its out-of-date features and suggested that it should be replaced with the latest word processing software. Edith and Reg had come to the conclusion that a new computer would solve all three problems.

They viewed their visit to a local computer outlet with trepidation as they knew little about computers. They decided not to ask Helen to go with them as they felt they did not want to risk being embarrassed by their lack of knowledge in front of her. They approached a salesperson seated behind a desk.

Edith: Good morning, I'm looking for a personal computer for my business.

Salesperson: I think we can help here. We have a wide range of computers as you can see. I have to go to the storeroom for a few minutes but here are some brochures. Have a look around and see if there is one that you like.

The salesperson hands over the brochure, and leaves Edith and Reg alone in the shop.

Reg: These look really complicated. Why are some bigger than others?

Edith: I don't know. Perhaps the bigger they are the more they can do. What worries me are all these buttons. I don't know what half of them mean.

After five minutes the salesperson returns.

Salesperson: Sorry about that but I had to sort out a delivery problem. Have you seen anything you like?

Edith: No. They all look alike to me.

Salesperson: Don't worry. You say you want a computer for work. I have just the one for you. If you come this way I would like to show it to you. (Edith and Reg follow.)

Salesperson: This incorporates the latest technology. This machine is based on the Intel 750 MHz Pentium IV processor. It has 512 megabytes of SD RAM and an 80 Gb hard drive. It contains ATI's best selling Rage Pro AGP graphics card and the latest DVD-ROM drive. It also comes with a 19" flat panel monitor. The machine comes with nine software applications to cover all business requirements.

Edith: I bet it is expensive. How much will it cost?

Salesperson: Not as much as you think. The price of this machine is £1000 which is good value given its high tech specification.

Edith: I have seen advertisements in newspapers for computers for a lot less than that.

Salesperson: Yes, but do they have graphic facilities and Pentium IV Technology?

Edith: I have no idea but they looked fairly good to me.

Reg: It looks quite complicated to use.

Salesperson: No problem at all. My 10-year-old daughter uses one of these. But I've left the best until last: if you buy this month we are giving an extra 10 per cent discount reducing the price to only £900. What a bargain!

Edith: Actually my business is quite small. I only employ ten people. I do not think it is

ready for a computer yet. Perhaps when we grow a little we'll be ready. Anyway thanks for your time.

Edith and Reg retire to a nearby coffee shop where they discuss their reactions to the sales encounter. Undismayed they decide to visit another computer shop to give themselves one last chance to buy a computer.

Questions

- 1. What choice criteria were important to Edith and Reg?**
- 2. Did the salesperson understand what was important to the customers? If not, why not? Did the salesperson make any other mistakes? Why do you think the salesperson chose that particular computer model?**
- 3. You are the salesperson in the second shop they are about to visit. Based upon your knowledge of buyer behaviour, plan how you would conduct the sales interview.**

This case was prepared by David Jobber, Professor of Marketing, University of Bradford.