

David recalls running a workshop where a very senior consultant was role-playing a conversation with a client. The client was played by a role-play actor who took her part very well.

In the scenario, the European client was looking to set up a distribution centre for their clothing business in Asia. They were also considering entering Asian markets once the distribution centre was established.

The consultant came back with advice that they had listened to the client's plans and that their advice was that the company consider Vietnam and The Philippines as alternative to Indonesia for the location of their distribution centre.

The client looked confused. The meeting was paused and David asked the client how she was feeling. She said the consultant had not listened to her.

The consultant was visibly upset and said he didn't understand why the client had a problem. He'd listened to the discussion of the challenges they faced and had come back with alternative locations – surely that was giving value to the client.

David asked the client if her feeling would have been different if the consultant had first of all said that he had some options to Jakarta and ask if she'd like to hear about them, as opposed to just stating that there were better alternatives.

Yes, she said, that would have made all the difference because then she would have felt in control of the conversation as opposed to the consultant taking control and pushing his ideas.

It was a memorable moment because you could see the light go on in the consultant's head.

This supports Honey's finding and the old adage that people like to buy, they do not like to be sold to.

Changing your verbal behaviour to offering options as opposed to proposing ideas drastically improves the likelihood of the other person being able to take some ownership of your ideas so that they feel comfortable moving forward with you.

