

Special Edition

Developing a Winning Sales Program Part 3

Over the last several weeks, I have discussed developing a sales and marketing program for trucking companies. I indicated that a good sales person needs to be consistent, persistent and he/she has to have a strong belief in themselves and the product or service they're selling.

I also indicated that a successful sales person has to;

- Establish goals and objectives on a daily and weekly business.
- The sales person must start with small goals.
- Establish higher goals and aspirations, and;
- That sales person needs to revisit their goals and objectives daily.

I outlined the characteristics of what I believe to be a successful sales person and I indicated that a sales person needs to know how to sell something other than price. A successful sales person is a person that understands how to open the window of opportunity and create a sale and they also know how to explore those opportunities so that they can close the sale and that's what I will be focusing on in the next several issues.

I indicated that the Buyer has the answers. You can't make a sale without a Buyer. I also said that people buy only when they can't fill their own needs. Until a sales person understands those basic dynamics, it will be very hard for that sales individual to be successful.

It's also important to understand that people don't like change. Change presents disruption to the "status quo". Teams, companies, families, and individuals which compromise the decision makers in the buying cycle, would much rather fix what they've got then bring a foreign element into the system.

In order for a sales person to be successful, they have to convince the Buyer that;

- Something is missing.
- The sales person needs to verbalize, or in some way determine what the problem is and set steps to get to a resolution for the Buyer.
- Explore all possible ways to solve the Buyer's problem, and;
- Understand how to support existing personnel and systems during the disruption.

We've all heard the statement "hot button selling". In other words, if you want to make a sale, be sure you push the right button, but how do we know what the right button is? It's normally staring at us. It's within our asking distance, and it's within our listening distance, yet many sales people are not alert to what the "hot button" is.

THE AHERN ADVISORY

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Ahern & Associates, Ltd.

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Hot button selling can only work if you find out what it is. It's important that the more you know about a perspective customer, the better chances you have of closing a sale. **Therefore, in order to be successful, you must:**

- **Gather** as much information about your customer's products or services as possible.
- **Prepare** an interest and make a statement which will focus the attention on how the Buyer can benefit from your services.
- **Show** that you're aware and concerned about his/her business.
- **Prepare** your sales message and stress the benefits over price, and;
- **Create** a presentation that you are comfortable with.

As part of the process, you must prepare a fact finding question for two purposes:

1. **To confirm information**, which you already have (closed end questions), and;
2. **To obtain new information** (open end questions).

You need to ask questions about the status and situation. You need to develop a report;

- **You need to ask questions about issues of pride** – biggest success in business, biggest goal this year.
- **Ask questions about personal interest** – what does he/she do with most of their free time? What sports or hobbies do they have?
- **Ask your Buyer what they would do if they didn't have to work** – what are their other dreams and ambitions?
- **Ask other related questions** – what is the prime objective of the company this year? How are they going to meet that objective? What does the Buyer see as the biggest barrier to that goal?

Look at everything in the office. Look for something outstanding. Something that stands out, whether it be; pictures, awards, plaques, etc. and then ask that Buyer how they got them. This is the key, asking questions and requesting responses are the easy part of the process. **For most sales people, listening is the hardest part.** However, listening is the most important part. The "hot button" is in the answer.

Most sales experts have stated that the "hot button" is like an elevator. It will take you all the way to the top floor for the sale; but it only works if you push the button. Part of the process of being successful is that you need to be able to be an effective listener and probe for the "hot button" which is the bridge that can get you from the presentation to the sale; your job is to find **-an easy response to a very difficult question In order to find the proper response, you need to be able to effectively probe without irritating the Buyer.**

In essence, you need to learn how to probe effectively:

1. **Listen to the first thing said or alluded to** – in many basic sales courses, they tell you that the thing most on your mind is usually what you talk about first. It may not be the "hot button" but it provides insights to it.
2. **Listen for the tone of the first response** – the tone will depict the urgency or importance. Gestures and loudness will indicate passion.
3. **Listen for immediate, emphatic responses** – "knee jerk" reactions are hot subjects. Absolute agreement.
4. **Listen for a long, drawn out explanation or story** – something told in detail is usually compelling and extremely important.
5. **Listen to repeated statements** – something said twice is at the front of the mind, and;
6. **Look for emotional responses** – something said with a passion or in a different tone.

Assuming that you believe that you have found the “hot button”, you then need to deliver with appropriate probing:

1. Ask questions about importance of significance – questions that will help you understand the situation better.
2. Ask questions about the area you think is the “hot button” – try to generate an enthusiastic response.
3. Ask questions in a subtle way – work them into a “pitch” as part of the conversation, and watch the reaction. If you believe this is a hot button, offer solutions that satisfy that particular challenge.
4. Don't be afraid to bring up the hot button throughout the presentation – reconfirm it and listen for emphasis of response from the prospect.
5. Go for the sale by using a question – for example; if I can solve your challenge, will you purchase my product or service?

This type of question normally gets a response because it consists of a possible solution to the individual Buyer's needs.

In closing, a successful sales person needs to be prepared. They need to gather as much information as possible about their customer's products or services. They need to prepare an opening statement; they need to prepare interest and need to create a need for their service. **Prepare fact finding questions and prepare for objections.**

In my next article, I will discuss how Buyer's don't like to be sold; but how they love to buy.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK: “Rivers, rocks and trees have always been talking to us, but we have forgotten how to listen”.