

Special Edition

Developing a Winning Sales Program Part 7

Since I began writing my series on “how to develop successful sales people”, I have received very positive feedback. In one particular instance, I received a letter of frustration from one of my readers. The reader indicated that; “Now with business down, I realize that I no longer enjoy sales and I get annoyed of people who refuse to see or talk with me when I know I have something to sell.....you say pricing is not even 50% of the sales, but I find it being of utmost importance at this time in the economy.”

This comment echo’s the opinions that many sales people have in the industry and that’s what I’m discussing in these series of articles. If you’ll remember, I stated from the beginning that all things are possible if you believe. I also stated that sales people aren’t born, they’re created and regardless of what the economy is like and regardless if Shippers are demanding rate reductions, there is still an opportunity to succeed, but you have to do it differently.

You need to be:

- Creative.
- You need to differentiate yourself from every other sales person that calls on that Shipper.
- You have to be an effective listener.
- You can’t talk to hear yourself talk – you need to talk to probe so that you can find out what your customer or prospect is trying to accomplish.

I never said that price wasn’t important. It is important! It is not the sole reason that a customer buys from a particular individual – there are other reasons. That’s what an effective sales person needs to do;

- Get past the gate keeper.
- They have to be an effective listener, and;
- In a very concise and precise manner, they have to determine what that customer needs.

These are very frustrating times, but when you’re frustrated; not in a good mood, and calling on customers or attempting to get past the gate keeper; That body language transcends to the person that you’re talking to. Every time that a sales person calls on a prospect, they must be;

- Enthusiastic – enthusiasm sets the tone.
- They need to create excitement – they need to sell the “sizzle”;

It’s important for sales people to understand that people only buy when they can’t fulfill their own needs with the resources at hand.

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That is the challenge; a sales person has to create “the need”. Unfortunately, many of my sales people don't understand what a prospect must deal with in order to change how he/she is currently handling a problem. **They don't care; but they should.**

- People don't like change.
- People get comfortable with the people that they're dealing with, but:
- **9 out of 10 times, that prospect is not completely satisfied and it's up to the sales person to find out what that “hot button” is.**

That's what the most exciting part of a sale is. Each time that a sales person is rejected by a prospect, which leads to another opportunity to be successful. In one of my newsletters, I provided a list of excuses that prospects provide and one of them is price. Sometimes it is price, but many times it's simply a “stall” tactic.

There are basic fundamentals that each sales person has to understand and the first fundamental is that:

1. **People buy using their own buying patterns,** not a selling pattern. If you can't get in the door, it's because you're using the wrong approach.
2. People buy only when they can't fulfill their needs.
3. **Service is the goal; discovery is the outcome.** A sale may be the solution.
4. **The Buyer has the answers,** the Seller has the questions.
5. **Relationships come first,** tasks second; you have nothing to sell if there is no one to buy.

A buying funnel, as well as a selling funnel, are processes that we have to go through, and what I have noted with some trucking companies is:

- They don't establish set goals.
- Time frames, and:
- A sale is something of an “after” thought.

I will tell you that if things aren't working and you're not where you need to be, it's time to create a new solution.

There's a fundamental process I ask all companies to go through, whether it's a Buyer or a Seller, consisting of the following:

1. **Where are you now?** You need to look at your entire environment as it is in the present.
2. **Where are you going?** Look at where you want the company to go in the future, short or long term, and intermediate.
3. **What internal resources are in place to accomplish your goals and objectives?** If all the components are not in place, then you have a fundamental problem.
4. **What specifically is missing from what you need to get from point A to point B?** If there is a missing piece that hinders the process, the missing piece must be found and added.
5. **What resources do you have that might fix the problem?** Look around! Talk with your colleagues, management staff and collectively search for ways to use your current resources to supply the missing piece.
6. **If things aren't working, you have to agree that you can't handle it internally.** If there are no internal resources that will fix the problem, then you need to look externally to change a situation and management has to be in agreement.
7. **What's your criterion for choosing an external solution?**
8. **What are the possible solutions available and where do you find them?**
9. **How do you know when it's time to look for an alternative?**

10. **Solution;** bring in an external “fix” and integrate into your existing environment.

It’s very important for sales people to avoid using selling patterns. When a sales person uses a particular approach, they play the numbers game. However, when they have one selling pattern, that sales person is only able to sell to those people who buy the way they sell. **All those people who need your product or service are uncomfortable with the way that you sell, will not buy from you.** You are cutting out at least 2/3 of all the prospects who are potential Buyers because your selling patterns are out of rapport with their buying patterns.

Sales people have to remember that their job is to serve and listen and solve a customers needs. If a sales person is not reaching their goals and objectives, then there is something fundamentally wrong with their behavioral patterns. You should review;

- How the sales person opens the call.
- How they “pitch” or enter the call.
- How they get the prospect or client talking.
- How they answer specific questions.
- How they position their service.
- How they deal with objections. Also;
- Review the types of objections that they get, and;
- How they close.

Sometimes it’s better not to use a selling pattern because sometimes a selling pattern can get you into a “rut”. Many times, I’ll ask a sales person what issues come to mind when they consider being in the service business rather than having a selling job. **What is your thinking and how you will close sales and reach quotas without using a selling pattern.** Are you clear about the difference between selling and supporting someone’s buying decision? These are clear cut objectives that a sales person needs to utilize to be successful in a very difficult market.

It’s important to understand that sales people are like everyone else; they do not like change. They become very uncomfortable when they have to alter their sales approach. They’re afraid they’re going to make a mistake, they’re afraid they’re going to look unprofessional; not knowledgeable, but these are things that are necessary in order for that sales person to grow and mature.

Most sales people believe that unless they’re calling on a customer to sell something, it’s a wasted call and nothing can be further from the truth. I’m amazed that many sales people make a sale and then move onto the next prospect and forget to recognize that their last customer is their best prospect. **How many times have you seen a sales person?**

- Make a sale, but;
- Then they don’t try to sell that customer anything else?
- **9 out of 10 times their response is; “I’ve sold them everything I can sell them.”**

What that really means is that;

1. That sales person has failed to establish enough rapport with their customer.
2. **They have probably not followed up currently after the sale – if at all.**
3. The customer has some problems and they’re reluctant to call and open up “Pandora’s box”.
4. That sales person needs more training, not only in their approach, but also in their creativity, and;
5. **They have not developed a proper relationship with a customer.**

For example; if you're a flatbed carrier and you have a brokerage operation and you're calling on a customer, why not cross sell other services if he will allow you to broker the service? Therefore, you're taking a one dimensional sale and making it a multi dimensional sale;

- That flatbed prospect now becomes a refrigerated prospect, a van prospect or an intermodal prospect.

In other words, take your existing customers, and;

- Sell them additional products and services.
- **Take your existing customers and sell them more of the same at a different place** – maybe it's in a different geographic area.
- **You may have to dig a little, but if you have a relationship with a customer, you're going to be able to create additional needs** if you're servicing the customer properly and you have the proper rapport.

Try to sell them something new! Again, a sales person's mentality is; "I've sold them everything I have to sell them", but there are always ways to enhance your services. Give you customer one referral a month and ask your customer to give you one referral a month.

In my sales training with my own sales analysts;

- They are required to ask for referrals every time they're on the telephone, and;
- You would be surprised the results they get.

In closing, your sales people need to look carefully at their customer list because I will guarantee you there are many opportunities to sell something additional or cross sell that customer and that sales person is ignoring that opportunity. For a sales person to be effective;

- They must be consistent.
- Persistent.
- Creative, and;
- Work hard.

They must always be willing to learn something new, must make a lot of appointments, and must work frantically at work (including Friday's) because the last day sets the tone for the next week. Most sales people slack off on Friday's. They would be surprised if they worked intensely on Friday, it would ensure success the following week and it would give them a good reason to have a great weekend.

Sales people have to learn something new and should be confirming and solidifying their appointments for the following week, and they should use Monday as a "spring board" for success throughout the week. I know this sounds simple, and it is, it's just not easy. However, if sales people work intensely;

- They continue their education.
- They continue to make appointments.
- They continue to stay focused.
- They listen to CD's, and;
- They work intensely on Friday, they will have sales consistency and you, as an owner, will have income.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK: "Never be too proud to change."