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You Can Lead a Horse to Water — So What!



Good salespeople ask good questions. The kind of questions that you would ask at a function when you first meet someone...

We all know the old saying about horses, water and drinking. That's just the trouble, it's an old saying and it needs updating.

When selling your products and services today, just taking a potential client to your water trough won't get you a sale. Unless of course you make them thirsty.

Here are some steps to get your clients thirsty to do business with you:

Differentiate your benefits

I was walking past a car dealership recently, when one particular car caught my eye.

It had all the smooth curves and lines of the latest designs but there was a problem. I couldn't tell what type of car it was until I found the maker's badge.

The amount of choice in most products and services today is wide and increasing. Your ads, marketing, service and sales people must clearly differentiate your best benefits to your prospects so they can easily recognise you and your company.

Good salespeople can't always sell anything

My first sales manager was not only a good salesman, he was also a good manager. He taught me all he knew and he was thorough. The challenge was however, because our individual personalities were different, we sold very differently.

Passing on sales techniques back then, was done the same way parents pass their knowledge and experiences on to their children. Consequently, the strengths and weaknesses were carried from one generation to the next.

Neil Rackham changed that.

How?

He and his team reviewed 35,000 sales interviews and established by research and

observation, which factors were needed for success in today's situations.

The research showed that large and small cost items, demand different approaches and skills. 'Constant closing', isn't effective if you sell big ticket items but it can be if you are selling low priced higher volume products.

I couldn't summarise all the findings here so I strongly suggest you read SPIN Selling. (McGraw Hill).

Determine the appropriate skills

Prescription without diagnosis is malpractice. Before conducting Sales Training Workshops it is essential that I help my clients determine the appropriate skills and approach for their particular market



"I was so busy rehearsing my new sales pitch, I forgot who I want to see"

and customers.

And the Winner is...

The research highlighted (and it is now incorporated into our sales training workshops) that good salespeople will ask good 'preliminary', questions. The kind of questions that you would ask at a function when you first meet someone.

"What do you do? How long have you been doing it?", etc. etc.

They then move on to the area of opportunity and problem questions and they do this quite well.

"Do you like what you do? What are the challenges in your business", etc.

AND THEN THEY STOP!

The next stage is the most critical and it is often omitted entirely or overlooked.

Questions that explore effect

Simply put — the effect the challenge or problem would have on the prospect.

The ramification of handling or not handling the issues raised in the earlier investigation stage. These are the, "What would happen if...", questions.

Why do they get missed by sales people? Why do they go straight to presenting the solution or product?

Two simple reasons:

Firstly, they (or you, until now) didn't know how important it is to ask questions that let the prospect see and feel the outcome of their situation with and without your help.

Secondly (and this is probably the easiest to understand), these questions raise the tension level in an interview.

So, rather than raise tensions (which needs to happen), salespeople go to where they are most comfortable — describing their products and services.

What to do

So, what can you do now that you know about it? It's time to do your own research.

Watch and see if only getting to the first two questions is happening in your business. (It will be unusual if it's not happening and you should celebrate if you don't find it.)

When you see this happening, think about what the impact is on your business and what you could achieve if your sales effort was aligned (by training), to install fully researched strategies for success in selling.

Once you have determined the extent of the symptoms, you need to carefully prescribe the remedy. (*If you need help in the diagnosis, call me*).

Your treatments include looking at your sales culture, checking what your successful competitors are doing, communicating with your people to alert them to what you find with your observations and of course, *training*.

Invest some time here, the results are more than worth the effort.

Iven Frangi is a business builder. He builds your business with higher sales results. Presentations are researched, customised and use humour to weave in relevant day to day examples.

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