

Sales as an Art and a Science

By: Vicki Lock

Good salespeople follow a strict process, and they also possess the natural ability to sell. The sales process, a series of steps that are carried out in order to achieve a predictable result, includes:

1. **Marketing** – This includes name and product education. Keep in mind that different people absorb information in different ways. Be sure to use a variety of marketing tactics. Illustrate your partner and staff reputation. Utilize lead generation and targeted lists. Determine monetary goals for new and add-on sales and required activities that will help in accomplishing that goal.
2. **Qualification** – There is a funnel of qualification: universe, suspects, qualified suspects, prospects and qualified prospects. The job of marketing is to continually fill the funnel of qualification. The key qualification criteria includes: the key decision maker, competitive knowledge, timing, available funds and identifiable needs. You should only respond to RFPs if you get to meet with the decision makers before submitting a proposal. Otherwise, it can be a waste of time.
3. **The First Call** – When you are talking to prospects, are you peeling the onion? (Are you asking clear and concise questions?) The first call should be short, about 20-40 seconds. Include who you are, why you are calling, the value you can provide and the appeal/next steps. Always be sure to qualify people before scheduling the next step - a phone meeting.
4. **Preparing for the Meeting** – In order to have the information needed to ask the right questions, benchmarking and performing industry research are essential. Also, it will help to review client/prospect materials that they may provide to you.
5. **Meeting Format** – The sales meeting profile includes:
 - a. Relationship building – for about 5-10 minutes
 - b. Set an agenda
 - c. Overview statement – short concise elevator speech
 - d. Get their expectations
 - e. Accelerating the opportunity
 - f. List of questions
 - g. Questioning to develop needs and pain
 - h. Overcoming objections
 - i. Presenting a solution
 - j. Closing/continuance
6. **Questions** (in order to get to needs and pains) – The biggest mistake a salesperson can make is talking too much and not listening. We ask questions for a variety of reasons including to:
 - Get them talking to us
 - Establish relationships
 - Obtain information
 - Position us as a business advisor
 - Differentiate our firm
 - Show we care

- Add value versus providing a commodity
- Demonstrate that we are a business resource versus a commodity provider
- Show that we can be a trusted advisor
- Show that we can be a valuable member of their team
- Show that we understand their business

And, what do we want to get out of asking all of these questions? We want to find out:

- What keeps them up at night?
- What inhibits them from getting from point A to point B?
- Where would they like to be in one, three or five years?

7. **Overcome Objectives** – Objections should not be feared. They are simply a request for more information. Objections should be proactively anticipated, and salespeople should avoid appearing defensive. A good format for issue resolution includes:
- a. Restate and acknowledge issues or concerns
 - b. Clarify and assure that you understand
 - c. Determine why it is an issue
 - d. Get prospect input on the best way to solve
 - e. Present approach and receive agreement
 - f. Keep looking for any other issues

In presenting your solution, summarize the pain, review the technical solution, illustrate the elimination of pain and justify the ROI.

8. **Continuance** – Agree upon decision making steps and the timeframe. Do not leave it up to the prospect to “call you in a couple of weeks.” Be specific. Identify and overcome any remaining objections, but keep in mind that it is okay for someone to say no. If the solution you present is not viable for them, move on.

The four levels of a salesperson are as follows: The *unconscious incompetent*, simply not good at selling and 90 percent of the people who fall into this category choose another profession; the *conscious incompetent*, not very good at sales but does understand some of the mechanics; the *conscious competent*, a good salesperson with a solid understanding of the process; and, the *unconscious competent*, the highest level of salesperson whose sales skills are instinctive, and they are the rainmakers in their organizations.

Implementing a good sales process can help you increase the level of your sales force.

This article is a summary of material presented by Gary Kravitz, co-founder and Executive Vice President for all sales and marketing activities at BizActions LLC, during his “Sales as an Art ad a Science” presentation at the 2006 AAM Summit: Mile High Marketing.

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