

Constants of the Sales World

The three most consistent challenges to sales reps, and how to overcome them

In working to help animal health companies improve the effectiveness of their sales force, I consistently run into three situations that I am beginning to believe challenge most companies. Many distributor reps are unable to:

- Determine if a sale is makeable before investing too much time and too many resources.
- Stop selling and start helping their prospective customer.
- Manage objections without creating a win/lose environment.

While every sales situation is different, there are some constants that can help every rep effectively deal with these challenges.

Determine if the sale is makeable

Prospecting's only connection to sales is that it proceeds the sales process. It is the systematic gathering of information to determine if a sale is possible. At the very least, your suspect must have a need that your product/service will fulfill. Secondly, your suspect must be a decision maker or at the very least a decision influencer. Finally, your suspect must have the resources (money, time, space, expertise, etc.) to implement your solution if it is an appropriate fit.

So the basic mission of an effective distributor rep is to obtain that information in order to determine whether or not to invest more of their personal and organizational resources. If any one of those three elements is missing, it is time to move on and stop chasing deals that will not close. Only when all three are present does your suspect become a qualified prospect.



By Patrick T. Malone

Start thinking about objections as your customer says, "I can't get there. This (the objection) is standing in the way. Can you help me get by this obstacle?"

Stop selling and start helping

Nobody wants to be sold, but almost everyone welcomes help in deciding whether or not to buy something. A professional distributor rep's mission is to help prospective customers to decide whether or not their product/services meet the customer's needs. Start by mentally redefining your mission. You are in the decision-getting business, while your prospect is in the decision-making business. Here are four tips that will help:

- Give the customer 100 percent attention rather than trying to get their attention.
- Respond to the customer rather than trying to get the customer to respond to you.
- *Prove* that you understand the customer, do not *tell* them you understand.
- Respect their right to a different point of view than yours during the conversation. By giving them respect you will gain their respect. A word of caution, respect does not mean you agree if you don't. You can respect another's point of view without compromising your integrity.

Managing objections

For too many distributor reps, objections have become a game of "If I can prove my point, will you drop yours?" That almost always creates a win/lose scenario, and that is a game no customer wants to play. Again, this requires a change of mindset. Start thinking about objections as your customer says, "I can't get there. This (the objection) is standing in the way. Can you help me get by this obstacle?"

If the objection is apathy, your object is to find out what the customer cares about and then see if your product/service can help with that.

If the objection is a complaint, the customer is saying “help me.” Find out what would help and then demonstrate how your product/service could help resolve that problem.

If the customer is apprehensive, they need the perceived risk minimized or eliminated. Reposition your approach to do just that by adjusting quantities, time, decisions that fit into the customer’s definition of safe or are at least less risky.

If the customer tells you “No,” immediately stop what you are doing, prove you respect their current point of view and investigate the reason for resistance. Done right, a “No” in the sales interaction become either “No not that way” or “No for now”.

If your customer is skeptical, they need proof. The key here is determining what type of proof the customer would accept and then simply providing it.

With these types of responses to the typical objections, you’re actually creating a win-win situation for both you and your customer. You are well on your way to earning their respect and establishing a working relationship that will elevate you above simply a vendor and provide a sustainable competitive advantage for years to come.

You can join the ranks of the most successful distributor reps if you are able to:

- Determine quickly whether or not the sale is makeable.
- Help your customer reach decisions whether or not to buy.
- Manage resistance in a way that removes the barriers to decisions. ■



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