

The Sale Afterlife

How a dead sale can bring life to your career

Editor's Note: Over the next several issues of *Vet-Advantage*, we will give you insight into both basic and advanced tactical selling techniques that will help you serve customers better than ever before. But let us preface this with a warning. The material in these articles is not for salespeople who are not ready to push themselves harder than ever before. It is for the professional who seeks constant improvement, fresh ways to serve their customers, and constant learners who are never satisfied being average. If this is you, it's great to have you on board. Now let's get to work!

You get a call from a dream prospect who says they want to meet with you to discuss their budget and purchase plans. Yippee! If you could only land this account, 2009 will be looking like your best year ever. You are determined to do everything in your power to make it happen. To prepare for the meeting, you spend several hours researching the client's Web site, putting marketing materials together, collecting customer testimonials and organizing your pricing information. You drive two hours to the meeting, build great rapport with decision-makers, ask relevant questions, energetically convey your solution, skillfully overcome their objections and deliver what you consider to be a competitive pricing structure. In short, you nailed it. They tell you they will review your materials and seem appreciative of efforts. You walk out of the office, confident that you gave it your best and that the effort will be rewarded.

Three days later when you follow up, the decision-maker who you met with tells you they decided to stick with their current supplier, "But thanks for coming by." In the next few minutes, your body and mind goes through four of the five stages of the Dying Sale ... Denial, Anger, Bargaining, and Depression.

Denial: It couldn't have happened!

Anger: What a jerk!



By Brian Sullivan

Remember, more lessons are learned from failure than success, so don't miss the opportunity.

Bargaining: Maybe I should cut my price even more?

Depression: Oh my goodness, how could this have happened?

So what do you do from here? Should you tell the prospect they are making a huge mistake, and that in the long run, it will cost them? Or perhaps you should throw out the great rejection cliché, "Are you sure you were comparing apples to apples?" Why not hit them right between the eyes and ask them: "OK Phyllis! Did you just play me so you can get a better cost out of your current supplier?"

Moving on

As much as your heart and mouth are dying to tell the prospect they made a tragic mistake that they will regret for the rest of their lives, you must quickly get to the acceptance stage. From there your next steps should be the following:

- Sincerely (yes, sincerely) thank them for the opportunity.
- Ask them a question that helps you learn from the experience. "Phyllis, I was wondering if you could help me. Was there something better I could have done to earn your business?" Remember, more lessons are learned from failure than success, so don't miss the opportunity.

- Drop a Thank You note in the mail.
- Tell them that you will always be available and will continue to work hard to earn the opportunity to serve them.

Top of mind

Then create a plan to keep your name in front of them over the next 12 months. One good way to do this is by creating a monthly newsletter sharing with them anecdotes of how your service helped your clients become happier and more productive.

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You could also provide valuable information about new products that your competition is neglecting to tell them about. Add industry trends and news that they would find value in. Personalize it with a picture of you being you. Maybe it's a picture of you showing a prospect a new technology. Or maybe it's just you hanging out with your kids on a recent vacation! Just make sure the newsletter hits their logic and emotion. In other words, it should make them smarter while creating a personal connection with you. Does creating a newsletter

like this take time? Sure, but the sales you get as result will far outweigh the time invested.

Here's the good news. The day will come when your competition slips up. When they do, that prospect will think of you first because of how you handled the first rejection and how you continued to find ways to serve them. Once you get the account, you will then be able accept the fact that your dead sale was nothing more than the first essential step in the creation of one of your best long-term customers. ■

As president of PRECISE Selling, Brian Sullivan helps improve sales, customer service, negotiations, leadership, and presentation skills through seminars and Internet training programs. He also hosts "Entrepreneurial Moments," a radio show on business and personal development. For more on his speaking, consulting or book, visit: www.PreciseSelling.com or email: bsullivan@preciseselling.com.