

Winning Them Over

Why providing solutions for your prospects is not enough

Editor's Note: In this column space 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 customers, and constant learners who are never satisfied with being average. If this is you, it's great to have you on board. Now let's get to work!

Salesperson: "Are you having any problems with your current supplier?"

Prospect: "No, not really. They are pretty good."

Salesperson: "Oh, um, OK. If you ever want a quote on something you need or if they mess up, here is my card. I would love to be your No. 2 backup loser supplier."

Pathetic, isn't it? So why is this response being delivered by lame salespeople around your industry every day? It's because since 1963 we have all been told that sales is about finding the pain and providing a solution. In fact, the term *Solution Selling* should now be lumped into the cliché category with "at the end of the day" and "it is what it is." Not because we shouldn't be providing solutions when selling, but because we should not ONLY be providing solutions.

Let me explain. To provide a solution means there is a problem that exists for the prospect. But what if they have no problem? Does this mean you have no chance? Well it shouldn't. You need to retrain your mind to believe that only part of your job is to provide solutions. The other part is to seek out people who are happy with what or who they use, and make them happier.

Creating an opening to sale

For the last seven years I drove around my town of Kansas City in a mildly beat up



By Brian Sullivan

It's time to create a habit that is about to turn your numbers around. It's time to seek out happy prospects.

Ford Escape. I was perfectly happy. I was not looking for a "solution." It wasn't until a savvy car salesman approached (not on a car lot) and began the slow process of learning why I liked my ride. After telling him I thought it had sufficient space to haul my kid's sports equipment to and from practice, was pretty comfortable, and allowed me to blast my XM radio on my drives to and from the airport, he convinced me to test drive a vehicle that had MORE space, was MORE comfortable and had BETTER speakers to blast my tunes. Here we are, just a couple weeks later, and guess what? I am now driving around in an SUV I had no intention of buying only a few weeks earlier. In short, I had no pain but the guy still got an order. And I am happy he did it.

So the next time a prospect tells you they are happy, resist that feeling in your stomach that tells you that you have no chance at selling them something. Because you do! Just find out the following:

- C- Who or what they are CURRENTLY using?
- L- Have they LOOKED at any other suppliers or products lately?
- E- What they find EFFECTIVE or ENJOY about the way things are done now.
- A- What they would ALTER.
- R- Who is RESPONSIBLE for making decisions?

An effective conversation

The most infrequently asked question in the CLEAR questioning formula above is the “E” question, but it’s often the most important. The following is an example of what this would look like in the world of animal health distribution.

PRECISE Salesperson: Dr. Jones, who are you CURRENTLY purchasing your supplies from?

Prospect: Acme Supply. We have been with them for a long time.

PRECISE Salesperson: Have you LOOKED at any other companies recently?

Prospect: No, we have been pretty loyal to Jim at Acme.

PRECISE Salesperson: That’s great. They must be doing a lot of things right. I am curious, what do you ENJOY about doing business with them?

Prospect: They seem to have good prices. The service is pretty good. Plus, they show up every few weeks to check on us. So, I guess nothing special. It’s just who we have always used.

PRECISE Salesperson: Is there anything you would ALTER or change about the way they have served you?

Prospect: No, not really.

PRECISE Salesperson: Doctor, who as well as yourself if RESPONSIBLE for deciding who you purchase supplies from?

Prospect: Me and the office manager.

Now take a look at the above script again. What have you learned? There is no PAIN, right? So how are you going to provide a SOLUTION? Well you don’t have to! From here, you will focus your presentation on the things that the prospect ENJOYED. You just have to earn the right to show him how you may be able to provide better pricing, better service, and perhaps more frequent visits or calls. Had you forgotten to ask the “E” Question, you would fall into the trap of the average salesperson and would have either walked out thinking you had no chance, or would have dropped your tired story about how you can be the “one stop shop.” (Yeesh)

So this month, it’s time to create a habit that is about to turn your numbers around. It’s time to seek out happy prospects. Because the way you will blow out your numbers in 2010 is by not only providing solutions to those in pain, but by creating ecstasy for those who didn’t know they could have it any other way. In short:

“Don’t search for prospect’s pain, search for their happiness. Then offer them ecstasy.”

Because the solution to your lagging sales numbers lies in the halls of happy customers in clinics and hospitals throughout your territory. By going there, 2010 is going to be the year you became famous in your industry. ■

Brian Sullivan helps sales teams become top performers by teaching repeatable strategic and tactical skills that grow territories and increase margins. To learn how Brian can make your next sales meeting one to remember, go to www.preciseselling.com.