
SECTION 8

PROFESSIONAL'S SELLING
PROCESS

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CREATING WANTS

Quick, write down something tangible you need. Now, write down something tangible you want. Put a price tag next to each item. What you generally will learn is that most people's wants are much more expensive than their needs. Your clients are the same way.

If you focus on analyzing needs, you have missed the most important element of selling: emotion. People decide to do things emotionally and then justify it with logic, not the other way around. Once you have discovered problems, you must ferret out the ones the prospect *wants* to solve. You are going to have much more success if you focus on his want rather than your logical analysis.

How to Create Wants

How do you create wants? You must work with the prospect in a consulting manner to help her define the problems and needs, then to clarify the emotional and financial benefits available from solving the problems. A business owner with a net worth of \$5 million, might want to control his business and wealth long after he is gone. He might want to pay the minimum in taxes and preserve the most for his heirs. Another prospect, with the same financial profile, may not want to talk about his demise or mortality. He may want to maximize his results while living, but not face dying. Trying to

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force estate or succession planning on prospect number two will create major resistance.

The questions you ask will get the prospect to tell you what he wants from your service and how he sees it benefiting him or his business. Call these questions “benefit questions.” For example, ask, “How would it help you if we worked with you to provide some succession ideas for your company?”

You can ask about the benefits and then ask further questions about the implied benefits your prospect will receive from the solutions. For example, “If you had things planned out, how would that help your spouse? Or your children? Or your business partner?”

Conclusion

When the prospect says to you, “I want this,” or he says, “I need this” you are getting at the wants. It takes an explicit response from your prospect for you to satisfy his wants. That makes the sale.

LISTENING IS KEY TO CREATING WANTS

Almost every book on selling has a chapter on asking questions. Marketing and sales trainers encourage you to ask, “Open-ended questions.” In many cases, these books and trainers miss the main point: to encourage your client to tell you what’s on her mind. You do not benefit from the question, but from the answer.

I believe listening is suspending one’s own judgments to really hear what someone else is saying. Listening is ten times more important than talking.

Great Listening = Great Relationships

In his book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Steven Covey writes, “If I were to summarize the single most important principle in the field of interpersonal relationships, listening is the key.” Listening is vital to building trusting relationships. Trusting relationships are fundamental to marketing your firm’s services. Of the four ways we communicate, listening skills are rarely taught in formal education. In colleges and CPE programs, you will find many courses on reading, writing and speaking, but few on listening.

Good listening is the most powerful communication device to build trust with other people. When you listen and understand, your client responds by naming you his “most trusted business adviser.” Covey explains five levels of listening:

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ignoring, pretending, selective, attentive, and empathic. Ignoring and pretending will ruin relationships. Selective listeners miss key points. The highest form, empathic listening, is a way to understand emotions and words. I want to help you deal with attentive listening, a higher level of listening to which we can all aspire.

Conclusion

Even great sellers have had difficulty learning to listen. One of the top rainmakers in the country, Terry Orr, partner with Belew Averitt, LLP in Dallas, said, “I had been working with clients for years and suddenly it dawned on me, I needed to learn how to listen better. To help clients with their deepest problems requires my understanding first. When I understand completely, only then can I be a true adviser.”

KEYS TO BETTER LISTENING FOR WANTS

As already mentioned, listening is more important than asking questions, and asking questions is more important than talking. Yet there is almost no training in listening for professionals. Here are three keys to help improve your ability to listen:

Listen Attentively

Picture this. As you arrive home, your child begins to tell you about an event that took place that day. You continue to change clothes, set the table for dinner, and so forth while your child continues with his important tale. Finally, exasperated, your child stops you, grabs you by the face, looks into your eyes and with total honesty says, “Please look at me when I’m talking to you!”

This scenario presents the perfect example of two keys to attentive listening: showing attention in behavior and in eye contact. What message were you sending the child by working on other tasks and not maintaining eye contact? Have you ever met with someone while they opened their mail! Not maintaining attention and eye contact is perceived as ignoring. And, ignoring is insulting.

Do you ever do this? When you are talking with someone on the phone, do you shuffle papers, type or play video games? The other party knows that you aren’t listening, even though

you may not be visible. (For instance, they can often hear the computer clicking.) What about when a staff member or assistant comes into your office. Do you keep working on what you are doing, or do you suspend what you are doing and make eye contact with your associate? Remember, if your associate feels ignored, he is insulted.

Pause Before Replying

Some people speak immediately because they are just waiting for their turn to speak, and are not really listening. Others respond fast because they think fast. In either case, it is not flattering to the speaker. Taking a second or two before you reply to the other person indicates that you are preparing a thoughtful response. This is a learned technique.

Prepare good Questions

One of the best ways to involve your prospect is to ask good questions, and then carefully listen to the answers.

In preparing for a prospect meeting, it is crucial to develop your questions in advance. You should have some key questions that you can use in many situations. Others will be customized for each prospect. Preparing written questions enables you to focus on listening. If your mind is busy constructing your next question, you may miss the deep message your client is articulating.

ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening means showing the person who is speaking to you that he or she has your full attention.

Remove Distractions

In order to listen, you should remove as many distractions as possible. Cut off your cell phone or computer screen. Show that you are not distracted.

Take Notes

Have a notepad or white board available. Taking notes shows you are actively listening. Try boiling down each point into a few words that capture the thought. Writing it so the prospect can see will let her know you have it.

Have you ever had someone finish your sentences before you do? It comes from either impatience or a powerful urge to get our thoughts out of our head, lest we forget them. Rather than jump on someone else's train of thought, it is better to jot your thought down. That way you won't lose your thought either and you can focus on active listening.

Restate and Prompt

Periodically restate what your client is saying as you are capturing the words. Ask for explanation and clarification. A good question to have available at all times is, "How do you mean?"

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Asking this question will encourage the client to talk at a deeper level.

Acknowledge that You're Listening

Active listening includes responding so your client knows you are listening. Phrases like, "I see," "uh huh," or "that's interesting" all let the other person know you are in tune. Be careful. Using these inappropriately shows your client that you are pretending to listen. Pretending is one of the quickest ways to break trust with people.

Conclusion

When talking with another person, most people have a limited capacity to remember things. If your client has five things he wants to talk to you about, let him talk through them once before you begin probing any of the issues. Otherwise, the memory capacity may become overloaded and you may miss "The Key Issue." Often "The Key Issue," that one major, emotional problem your client has, will not come out as the first item.

STIMULATE WANTS WITH PERCEIVED VALUE

Whenever clients work with professionals, they want the perception that they are getting more than compliance knowledge. Business clients want you to understand them. Understanding is the root of almost every person's desires. When you take industry training, attend industry conferences, and read industry journals, you are working to understand the client and his industry. But it is critical not just to know their industries, but that your clients and prospects *know* that you know. You may develop deep expertise, but if the prospect doesn't perceive your expertise, he won't be affected.

The most successful and profitable firms help their people relate to *clients'* perceptions of value. Yet it is likely that you and your clients have differing views on the value of your services.

Show You're On Their Side

Clients and prospects want an advocate. When a prospect meets with an attorney, an accountant or consultant, he wants the professional to be on his side before telling the prospect all the things that are wrong. Clients want proactive advocates as well. Recommending creative ideas and informing clients and prospects of pending legislation or conditions that

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might help or hurt business is a good way to be proactive in delivering ideas.

When asked, many professionals rate the value of their work in terms of the hours they have worked, the accuracy of their work and the compliance of the work to the appropriate standards.

On the other hand, what your clients see as value is completely different. They're probably not capable of judging the technical quality of your work. Instead, clients of professional firms see perceived value in terms of trust, response time, and the quality of the relationship.

Conclusion

What are you doing to improve *your prospect's perceptions* of your value? A well-managed firm increases a client's confidence and comfort. Trust and relationships are key. You can build these by implementing a policy to improve your response time, and by increasing the friendliness to, and personal treatment of, each client.

DOING THE “NEEDS TO WANTS” TWO-STEP

by Charles Flood

Step One: Knowing the “Why” and the “How” Is What You Are Trained to Do

Before you start any engagement, ask yourself– “Why did they really come to me?” Exposing the client’s *Why* behind your solution is how you build a client’s transactional needs into high-impact wants.

There is a difference between preparing an audit, and preparing that same audit with a strategic planning offer letter attached based on an analysis of the audit results for the client. The audit shows where the business is today, while the letter offers a vision for the future – it highlights the needs of the company for the management team. It helps the client focus on their wants and creates an opportunity to realize a greater return on your investment of wisdom and time.

Management guru Steven Covey tells us to “begin with the end in mind.” We want our clients to understand what it is they really want when they come to us with a “simple need.” Remember: your clients want you to help them meet their needs. They come prepared to tell you what they want. Are you really listening to your clients?

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Step Two: Add Two Emotionally Driven Ego Questions

Asking “Why do you want this?” or “What is the worst that can happen if you don’t do this?” help the client to build a deeper personal understanding of the value you bring to the process.

Conclusion

Understanding the prospects’ or clients’ needs and wants helps them better understand the value of your services. When you give your client what they really want, they will want more in the future. In the end, isn’t this what we want, too?

(Charles Flood is a consultant for The Rainmaker Academy.)