
SECTION 10

PROFESSIONAL'S SELLING
PROCESS

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DEMONSTRATING YOUR CAPABILITIES CORRECTLY

In every commercial relationship, there is an appropriate time to demonstrate your capabilities to solve the problems of a prospect. Demonstrating your capabilities too soon will create the perception that your solutions are not client centric. Clients who do not believe you are addressing *their* concerns will not be positively impacted with your recommendations.

At the right time, written and oral proposals can be helpful selling tools. If you want your demonstration of capabilities to be competitive, keep in mind the following guidelines:

Focus on the Benefits the Client Will Receive from You

You must articulate your in-depth understanding of the client's problems, needs, and wants. Your ability to prioritize these issues will clearly set you apart from many of your competitors. Benefits are only derived from explicit needs (wants), so you must insure that your client's interests are foremost. In his book, *Strategic Proposals*, Bob Kantin says that clients want two types of benefits: financial (quantitative) and nonfinancial (qualitative). Make sure you include elements of both in your proposals.

Include Recommendations for Implementation

Specific approaches for services, products, approaches, or designs will be more convincing than generalities. You must tailor the specific approaches to assure the prospect he will receive the benefits you have promised. Show a step-by-step approach for action. Clearly state what you will do, what your client will do, and what happens if either party needs help doing his job.

Show Evidence of Your Past Successes

Testimonials or descriptions of past assignments can be powerful evidence you can handle the client's needs. Mentioning your experience with similar clients in the same industry is helpful. Discussing your access to other resources, such as banks or international alliances, can be helpful if you cannot help with the specific benefits the prospect wants.

Give Convincing Reasons Why the Prospect Should Choose You

Compare and contrast your firm with your competitors to show how you are uniquely suited to serve this client. While you shouldn't speak negatively about your competitor, you can draw fair comparisons. For example, you could say, "That firm has a great reputation in working with governmental agencies, but their experience with sophisticated manufacturers is limited. You do want a firm you won't have to train, don't you?"

Conclusion

Using a written proposal document, PowerPoint™ slides, and other visual aids can be helpful in making successful presentations. However, you must not make the visual aids the presentation. Many successful sales presentations are made on a legal pad. Keep this in mind, so that your sales aids support the points you make, not replace you.

TELL A STORY—DRAW A PICTURE

A picture is worth a thousand words. You may not be much of an artist, but everyone can tell stories that sketch powerful word-pictures in the mind of a prospect. A good story can punch up your presentation of capabilities more than any fancy brochure.

Telling stories helps sell intangible services. With a tangible product, prospects can see it, touch it, and try it out. With intangible services, there is nothing to touch, so craft a carefully worded picture to entice your prospect.

Case Studies Sell

Telling the right story in the right situation can be a powerful sales tool that demonstrates your capabilities to deliver quantitative and qualitative benefits. Using stories is a form of persuasion. Relating a story is a more compelling way to make your point, rather than just stating some facts. Stories appeal to the emotions and can give you a decisive edge in the competitive game of demonstrating your capabilities.

Dr. Paul Homoly, an author, coach, and storyteller says that the most compelling reason for people to engage your professional firm is other people who found that your solution solved their problems. After all, what is a service firm? In one way, it's the success stories of its clients.

How to Construct Stories

Dr. Homoly says the best way to tell stories is to combine them with business objectives. Homoly trademarked a phrase, StorySelling, to describe the concept that includes narratives, colorful comparisons, metaphors, and similes to help clients understand, believe, and remember what you say—to actually feel your message.

Suppose a prospect asks why your service cost more than others. Instead of launching into a spiel heavy on numbers, create a story:

1. Think of a client who had the same objection, but is now a happy client.
2. Tell your prospect about the client.
3. Recount the specifics.
4. Describe the client's current situation.
5. Explain the lesson the client learned.
6. Transfer the lesson to the present situation.

To have the greatest impact, your stories should include some personal experience. One of the best resources you can use on the subject of Storyselling is Scott West's *Storyselling for Financial Advisors*.

Conclusion

To have the best impact when demonstrating capabilities, tell a story to illustrate how your new client will enjoy the benefits of working with you. By telling a story, you cover the qualitative as well as the quantitative reasons for hiring you.

DEMONSTRATE YOUR VALUE

When demonstrating your capabilities, it is crucial to illustrate the value of your services compared to your potential competitors. Illustrating value will create less price resistance when the time comes to hire you.

Prospects want a superior service, one that comes with added benefits such as strong technology and staff training. They want assurance that their delivery schedules will be met and that if they have a problem, you will be there for them.

Many prospects want a professional firm that can provide a variety of services, rather than just one specialized service. This is called a business relationship. To the extent your firm focuses on building relationships by solving a variety of business problems, you should demonstrate that you can provide value by developing long-term relationships. Using client testimonials is a good way to illustrate the value clients have received from your services.

Stay Away from Feature Language

The key ingredient to demonstrating value is to insure that your language is benefit oriented, rather than feature oriented. Many professionals talk in terms of the features provided by their firms. Size of firm, number of partners, services provided, and location of offices are all features of your firm. I have heard many a boring partner attempt to wax eloquent

about the size and scope of his firm. Features are of interest to the seller and of very little interest to the buyer.

Advantages Are an Improvement

Each feature of your firm has an advantage. For example one could say, “We have 12 partners which gives us the ability to provide our clients with a diversity of experience and specialty.” Advantages are slightly more powerful than feature language because you are talking possible benefits. So long as the prospect is interested in “a diversity of experience and specialty” you might hit a hot button. Or you might not.

Benefits Express Value in the Prospect’s Terms

Demonstrating the quality you build into your service is crucial to clients’ understanding the difference in your value compared your competitors. However, make certain that the prospect cares about quality level. If the prospect asks about how your associates are trained, you can talk about the quality education each of them has, and about your professional training programs. This is benefit oriented.

Conclusion

When you sell value rather than features or services, prospects better understand what they are buying.

DEMONSTRATE CAPABILITIES WITH PASSION

When demonstrating your firm's capabilities, it is important to feel and demonstrate the passion you feel about delivering services. For instance, in a survey performed by Huthwaite a few years ago, clients of accounting firms indicated that while the candor and competence of their professional was high; less than 35% thought their accountant *really cared about them*. When you are passionate, clients believe that you care.

Are you passionate about *delivering* technically correct documents, or are you passionate about *helping* clients make better business decisions, develop win-win relationships with their customers, obtain financing and use their core competencies? If you are passionate about delivering products, then your branding and strategic positioning will take one approach. However, if you are passionate about helping, your message will be completely different.

When You Sell Relationships

Let's take a common example: You have decided that your best clients want relationships that are not built on price or upon you having the latest "doodad" connected with your technical services. A relationship means that the clients want you to become an expert in their businesses, help create custom solutions to their problems, and serve as a valuable

extension of their decision making team. You need to be passionate about what your best clients want all year round. Or are you too busy doing technical work much of the year?

If you are going to develop a successful capabilities demonstration, you must connect what your best clients want with what you provide, with passion.

Conclusion

Even commodities can be demonstrated with passion when you connect with an interested customer. One of the hottest selling and most profitable items is bottled water, a commodity that is available almost for free. So don't tell me, "Our products have become such commodities, we can't demonstrate with passion." If you are serving a passionate client base with a passionate service team, you can demonstrate with passion. And passion is contagious: Your clients will be passionate about you too.

BUNDLING YOUR SERVICES

Clients want professionals who recognize all their needs and wants.

We have learned that firms that adopt a clear marketing strategy when they add each new service are those that succeed while others languish. The number one strategy of a successful marketing effort is to use bundling to add new services onto old ones. Bundling is simply the process of offering two or more services together. Bundling services often requires a new name for a traditional service.

An Example

Let's look at products for a moment as examples of bundling. Often, bundled products are complimentary in nature—toothbrush and toothpaste, computer and software. However, this is not always the case. Multi-product bundling combines products that satisfy different needs for the consumer, for example, Hasbro Play-Doh bundled with Lucky Charm cereal. While some forms of product bundling are promotional in nature and have a short life span, other forms of bundling can develop into long-term, sustainable "new" products. Automobile bundling takes place when the new car dealer offers you financing, service, and insurance services as part of the purchase. Bundling takes place from your credit card company

when travel, credit, insurance, and many other services are included. Bundling can also take place when you bundle your services with another provider. Law firms routinely bundle their tax services with an accounting firm.

The Advantages of Bundling

Bundling services can provide your firm a strong competitive advantage in the market place. It can dramatically improve your marketing return on investment. And because bundling should be client driven, your selling process is more productive.

In marketing circles, bundling is categorized by two different theories—the Price Discrimination Theory and the Leverage Theory. Originally, the Price Discrimination theory saw bundling as a method used by a monopolistic firm to engage in price discrimination. Today, however, bundling can be seen as an optimal selling strategy for a multi-services firm with access to a client. In contrast, the Leverage Theory views bundling as an instrument enabling a firm with some monopoly power in one market, to use the leverage provided by this power to achieve sales in, and thereby monopolize, a second market.

Conclusion

In their book, *Rethinking the Sales Force*, authors Neil Rackham and John DeVinentis classify customers into three different categories: intrinsic value (commodity buyers), extrinsic value (brand and image buyers), and strategic value buyers. Bundling services will enable you to move clients from commodity buyers to extrinsic value buyers, and others who are extrinsic buyers to strategic buyers. Bundling services can dramatically improve your revenue yield per person or per hour.

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**IMPROVING YOUR PRESENTATION
VERSATILITY**

Novice professionals develop only one method for presenting because it is the method they are most comfortable using. However, consider this question: To persuade a buyer, should you use a method of communication that *he* is most comfortable hearing or should you use a method *you* are most comfortable using?

You will be most effective using a method with which both you and the buyer are comfortable. If you are left-brained, linear thinking, and logical, you will have difficulty with raucous, table pounding, emotional presentations. But it can be very effective to be more versatile with your presentation styles.

Different people respond differently to the same demonstration. The following five approaches can be combined to match your style with the styles of your prospects.

Enthusiastic

Enthusiasm is a powerful form of influence because it tends to be contagious. Your prospects get excited when you infect them with your enthusiasm. How many times have you felt low and had someone inject a bubbling personality into your day? It lifted your spirits, didn't it? Prospects are more inclined to buy, when they are in a good mood. Enthusiasm is effective with most all people.

Congruency

Sending a consistent message is best achieved when your words, tempo, gestures, and body language send the same message. When you describe your firm's aggressive approach to client service, do you talk in a matter-of-fact fashion or do you lean into the conversation? When you verbally speak "Yes" so should your body language.

Logic

If your client is the logical, pragmatic type, you will be most effective talking about practical issues. Talk about cost-effectiveness, delivery schedules, and sequential implementation. Make your points so they follow a logical train of thought that satisfies your prospects needs and wants.

Language

When talking, do you use words that have a negative or positive connotation? For example, when describing your competitors you might want to describe them as a cheap alternative. But, when describing your services you would say, "we pride ourselves in being cost effective." Words and phrases have the ability to depress or excite your prospect. Stay away from negative words like busy, cost, problems, objections, and no. Use power words like opportunity, investment, challenges, concerns, and yes.

Word Pictures

Most people think in pictures. The most effective presenters use many word pictures to convey and color meaning. For example, when describing your responsiveness, you could say, "faster than a speeding bullet." This connotes your speed with a word picture. The more you can use illustrations so that your prospect can draw a picture in his mind, the more effective a presenter you will be.