

Making Your Case

At a recent industry conference, I saw and heard several different sales presentations as sponsors of the conference presented their products and services. Unfortunately, most of them missed the mark. But they are not alone; many sales presentations are ineffective. Having been subjected to dozens of sales presentation over the years, I have discovered that most sales people fail to deliver a great presentation. Yet, delivering an effective sales presentation is critical if you want to succeed. Here are few key points to consider as you prepare for your next meeting.

Start with impact. Don't waste valuable time talking about your company or your products, services or solutions. Instead, demonstrate that you understand your prospect's pain, problem, concern or issue. This will capture their attention. One of the most fatal blunders sales people make is to spend the first five to ten minutes of their presentation talking about their company. I have heard far too many sales people tell prospects how long they have been in business, about the awards their company has won, or what makes them different. But this approach does little to interest or engage the prospect because it does not address their key concerns. Here's an example.

Instead of thanking your prospect for taking the time to meet with you, highlight a current problem that the prospect is facing and the potential impact on their business. This means that you **MUST** conduct due diligence **BEFORE** you meet with a new prospect. Once you know their problems you can offer your solution to this problem. Repeat this process as you continue your presentation.

Show, don't tell. Whenever possible, use props in your presentation. Instead of telling your prospect the results you can help them achieve, show them what you do. During the conference I mentioned at the beginning of this article, one sponsor showed an example of her work to help people connect what she was saying to an outcome. As she said, "I can help you develop marketing materials," she held up a brochure, a postcard, and a letter she crafted for a client.

Third party testimonials are one of the most powerful presentation tools you can use. Consider the late-night infomercial. The proven formula consists of identifying the problem followed by several testimonials that state how much better life is since using that particular product. You can use this approach, too by showing your prospect a testimonial letter or video that outlines a key outcome that is similar to a situation they may be facing.

Focus on your prospect. Most sales people fail to make the presentation about the other person and use a lot of "I" or "me" or "we" language. But your customer

doesn't care about you. They want you to talk about them. They want to know how you, your product or service will help them solve a problem. Before you actually deliver your presentation or present your business case, run through it to make sure that everything focuses on the prospect, their business, their company, and their problems. If possible, rehearse it at least one time and record it so you can hear exactly what you say and how you say it.

Show the ROI. Also known as the WII-FM theory—What's In It For Me? Every sales presentation **MUST** focus on how your customer will benefit from using your product, service, solution or company. Will your product or service reduce expenses, improve productivity, eliminate errors, shorten shipping time, or increase sales? When possible use figures, numbers, dollars or percentage to demonstrate actual results. However, make sure that it is easy to understand the bottom line. The less you try to "sell them" and the more you focus on helping them solve a problem, the more you will stand out from your competition.

Address the risk issue. Virtually every new prospect you meet with has some concern about using your product, service or company or about changing vendors or suppliers. In today's tough sales environment, it is essential that you address this in your presentation. Don't ignore it! Here is how you do it.

First, ask your prospect, "What concerns, if any, do you have about changing vendors?" This demonstrates that you recognize that they may be concerned about switching suppliers. It can instill confidence, and in many cases, it will uncover additional information you can use to improve your presentation. Pause briefly before offering a reason why it makes sense to make the change. This is much more effective than simply telling your prospect why they should do business with you. It separates you from most of your competition.

Modify your approach and use these steps. You will quickly notice an improvement in your results.

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