



Focus On Your Customer's Need To Buy, Not Your Need To Sell!

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Dimensions of EXCELLENCE™ is based on the four dimensions of performance and organizational excellence. These are the foundation for our development programs oriented to achieving performance and organizational excellence in sales, marketing, and customer service.

These white papers provide concepts and ideas based on the application of these principles of these programs and our work with our clients. We welcome your comments and observations on these topics.

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Sales people, today, sell solutions. At least that's what most sales people say they are doing. If sales people are really acting consultatively, selling solutions, why are so many customers sick of sales pitches? We hear customers saying:

- "They (the sales people) always come in here pitching their latest products and technologies without telling me how it solves our problems."
- "They say they have solutions before they even know my problems."
- "The sales person doesn't understand my business."
- "They tell me about the products, I have to figure out whether it will solve my problems!"
- "They just want to push their products without understanding our needs!"

Most sales people focus on their need to sell, not their customer's need to buy.

Putting the customer first in the selling process is simple, yet enables sales people to achieve real success. It enhances the sales person's relationships with their customer. It enables them to clearly demonstrate their value. Finally, it is key to competitive success!

What is the Sales Person's Need To Sell?

Sales people have a need to sell. We focus on sales targets and commissions. We love our products and "gee-whiz" technologies. We want our customers to be as excited about the latest widget our company has introduced as we are. We want to please our managers and gain the approval of our peers. It could be the latest in semiconductor, computer, software or communications technology, or the hottest new fashions, or the best new consumer products, or the great new financial services products.

How many times have we gone to our customers to present them our hot new products, only to find them not as excited as we are? How can that be? Why won't they buy? Don't they really understand what these products can do? Don't they understand we have quotas to meet and commission to earn!

What about the mid-year push for orders? Why don't customers take advantage of our fantastic deals?

What about the retailer who won't give us that end-cap for our latest merchandising scheme? Doesn't she know that our hot new advertising programs will have the products flying off the shelves!

The answer to all these issues is simple. Customers don't care about our need to sell; they are only worried about solving their business problems! Focusing on the customer need to buy is critical understanding how we can help solve our customers' business problems.

What is the Customer Need To Buy?

All customers have goals and objectives. The customer need to buy is the result of business problems, opportunities, or "pain" influencing their ability to achieve their goals or objectives. In any situation, these needs may be ***business oriented*** like:

- Achieve X% revenue growth in the next 12 months.

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- Increase market share to establish leadership within their market segments.
 - Decrease costs by Y% in the next 12 months.
 - Increase profitability in the next quarter.
 - Improve the R-acronyms: ROI, ROA, ROE, ROS, ROCA.
 - Decrease “design” cycle time - or whatever cycle time they care about.
 - Improve quality or customer service or satisfaction.
 - Overcome a competitive threat.
 - ...and the list can go on!

The need to buy can be *personally oriented* like:

- Assure success of a project in which the individual has committed a lot of personal time and energy.
- Achieve success on this project to get that next promotion.
- Reduce workload, hassle or stress on the job.
- Accomplish certain objectives so that I can maximize my bonus or get a salary increase.
- Achieve goals to get a good performance review.
- ...and, likewise, this list can go on!

Whatever the business or personal goals, these establish the customer need to buy. Concentrating on these needs will shorten your selling cycle and maximize your odds of success.

Determining The Customer Need To Buy

Let’s take the mystery out of using these to determine the customer need to buy. Following a few simple steps will help you improve your ability to be customer focused:

Do your homework. Become a student on your customer’s industry and markets. Learn what their customers are asking of them. Learn what their competitors are doing. Understand important trends and directions driving the industry. Understand their key measures of success. Try to anticipate the problems, challenges, and opportunities they face. Consider the following:

- Read the customer’s annual and quarterly reports, 10K’s, 10Q’s and proxy statements.
- Read their press releases. Read their product brochures and sales literature. Read the speeches the CEO and other executives are making.
- Surf the Internet to find their web site and those of their competitors. See how they present themselves to the world.
- Read the trade magazines and press representing their industries.
- Read the Wall Street Journal, Business Week, Fortune and other general business publications to “scan the environment.”
- Do the same with their competitors.
- Use this knowledge to prepare your meetings with the customer.

Determine the need to buy very early in the selling cycle. In qualifying an opportunity, one of the first things you need to understand is if the customer has a real problem. If the customer doesn’t have a real problem---one that you can solve---you’re wasting your time! No need to buy equals no sale!

How do we determine the need to buy: Ask the customer, shut up, listen, then probe. Consider some of the following areas:

- Determine the customer’s overall business goals, strategies and their customer and competitive environment. In addition to understanding the business, try to understand how these impact the customer personally.

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- Understand the problems, opportunities and challenges your customer faces in achieving the business goals. Seek to quantify these to understand the magnitude of the impact on the customer.
 - Learn how the business problems affect the customer's job performance. Ask your customer how management will measure their performance. Attempt to understand the personal stake the customer has in solving the problem.
 - Prioritize and quantify each of the needs the customer has identified. Understand those that are most important and separate those from those that represent annoyances.

Write down the customer need to buy, validate it with the customer. Develop a simple description of the problem or opportunity:

- Write their need to buy in clear sentences. Typically, they have multiple needs. If you have done the right job, you can define these needs in a few short sentences. Make sure that you have quantified the impact of each need.
- Beware of describing the problem in terms of your need to sell! Customer needs to buy are rarely described in terms of your product and services. If you are describing the need to buy in these terms, you are more likely describing your need to sell.
- Verify what you have written down with the customer to make sure you have understood and prioritized the needs to buy appropriately. Gain the customer's agreement on the problem.
- Gain their agreement that if you can present the solution providing the greatest value in solving the problem, they will buy your solution.
- Before spending any more time on the opportunity, make sure you have a solution that addresses their need to buy.

Focus your sales strategy on demonstrating how your solution provides the greatest value in solving their problems. Clearly understanding the customer need to buy enables you to concentrate your efforts. You won't be sidetracked, you won't waste time. You can clearly and directly present your solution to their problems in terms that are meaningful to them.

Understanding your customer's need to buy is the shortest path to satisfying your need to sell!

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