

LET YOUR CUSTOMERS SEE YOU AS A CONSULTANT, NOT AS A VENDOR!

So you thought by now you'd stop hearing the words, "No" or "I'm not interested", from your prospective customers. Yet, time and again it appears that there just isn't a need or worse: Salespeople are being told that prospects just aren't buying or that their decision to purchase is "on hold". What many salespeople do when they hear the bad news is to mark on their calendars a reminder note to call in 60 days to see if the prospect's decision to buy has changed.

If you fall into this kind of postponement thinking where you plan for success at a later date, your chances for success are significantly reduced. Think about it a minute: Why would you accept at face value that your prospects don't need what you have to offer, regardless of what the economy is doing? You know yourself that you will always find a way to purchase if you see that the value of your purchase outweighs the financial or emotional risks of buying. In other words, if your prospects are like most people they'll find a way to buy what they need and justify why buying was the smartest decision they could ever make.

Your role in fostering a good buying decision is in knowing how your customers measure a good return on investment. Before you assume that paying as little as possible is the highest priority on your customer's wish list, consider some other possibilities:

- Would your customers spend a few extra dollars if it meant saving them huge amounts of time?
- Would they invest a little cash to get control of a perceived chaotic work environment?
- Would your prospects talk to you if you could show a way to move them to the forefront of their industry and increase their sales revenue?
- Would your customers pay for a way to improve their working relationships with their own customers?

Regardless of market conditions, customers are still buying. Fortunately for those of us who can meet their needs, they've become highly selective concerning who they'll buy from. They're looking for straight talk and for salespeople who can see beyond an immediate sale. Let's face it: Some of your customers are still getting less business

than usual from their own customers. The main challenge, then, for the smart salesperson is to create ways in which to improve your customer's profitability.

Ask yourself: What is my role as a salesperson? What do my customers expect from me? How can I be of the most benefit to my clients? While salespeople are notorious for wanting to close deals quickly, a sales consultant positions him or herself as a partner who can help customers in reaching both their short and long-term business goals. If you're not sure how your product or service will positively impact these goals, it's time to go back to the drawing board and take a look at the bigger picture.

Once your customers see you less as a vendor and more as a consultant or strategist, your opportunities to solidify long-term business relationships increase significantly. Position yourself to succeed.

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