



The Un-Selling of your Product

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Do you have topic ideas? Comments or questions?

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The number one concern expressed to us by the people we coach is how to get more sales. Within the context of coaching, more specifically, it is about “How can I, personally, sell my company’s products better?” The business owners tell us that they want their listeners to understand their huge complicated product story, and have it reduced to a simple, apt message for the prospect. While there are some positives you can address in your selling process, you can also unknowingly, un-sell yourself, so this article includes addressing that acute possibility.

We say there are four principles to successful selling – which anyone can follow.

0. The Normal Stuff

First, let’s deal with all the obvious stuff that you already know: show up on time, dress appropriately; don’t talk too much; don’t put down competitors; don’t criticize the way the prospective customer operates; etc. Having got that out of the way, the three main principles to successful sales interviews¹ are as follows:

1. Let the Prospect go through the Pain

If the prospective clients are allowed to re-enact the hurt they feel, they will reach a repeating pain threshold and dearly look to you for a solution. All you have to do is listen. If they hurt, they will want to be offered a cure. You need to have a few key questions to help them go down that painful remembrance road on their own. THEN YOU MUST LISTEN. Do not attempt to jump in with a solution or explain how appropriate your product is. The following pain-experiential questions must be asked and answered, in one form

or another. “What is it that concerns you?” “How does it manifest itself?” “In what way does it hold you back?” “When that happens, how does it make you feel personally?” “What would you like us to do?” “What results would you expect us to deliver to you?” (Even if you think you know the answer, let the prospects phrase it for you. Remember, we all like to buy but nobody likes to be sold to.) With the prospects driving the selling process you will quickly get to the aptness of your product as it applies to their situations.

2. Know your Prospects’ Limitations or Situation

If your prospect has a budget limitation of \$10,000 and your services cost \$30,000 you may be wasting everybody’s time. (However, by going through the pain first, often, many prospects will find a way to come up with the \$30,000.) If your prospect needs delivery by the end of the month and your ability to provide is four months away – ditto. If your prospect ex-

¹ Notice that this is not about a clever trick to fool your prospects. Your words will be the same ones the prospect really wants to hear.



pects you commit to delivering a specific result, you must make that commitment. Cover all such limiting deal-breakers in as gentle a way as you can.

3. Know your Sensitivities

Think of the questions you hope the prospect would never ask. These usually are unique to each vendor company. For example imagine that you have only have had two customers for this product so far. Perhaps you might dread them asking “Who else is using it?” It really doesn’t matter what your sensitivities are, we all have them. Our advice is to sit with your associates and list all such sensitivities and then, with the objectivity of the group assisting you, come up with a plausible response to the relevant question. In the case of the limited application above, your group might formulate the answer: “So far we have two companies using our product. One has saved \$10,000 already as a result and the other is projecting \$15,000 savings.” Whatever the reply is, it must be truthful.

4. The Un-Selling Dilemma

Here’s the clincher. The prospect wants to hire you!!!!!! They are praying and hoping that you can deliver what they want. They brought you in for the sales meeting with the goal in mind of hiring you if you could help them. They really want you if you can operate within their limitations. They desperately need someone to solve the problem and they believe that you could be that person. Otherwise you wouldn’t be sitting in front of them. People are far too selfish to give you their time, just to hear your story. They might even have spent a lot of money (i.e. time) getting you this far in the sales process – culling, discussing and now interviewing you. So what we are saying here is that it is no longer about selling yourself because in their

minds your product is already sold to them. The sales interview, from your perspective, should be about ensuring you do not un-sell yourself. That is, you are not trying to win them, you are making sure you don’t lose them.

Has this ever happened to you? You wanted to buy something. You had already made up your mind to make the purchase. Then after five minutes with the salesperson you became so disenchanted with the individual, you decided to go elsewhere to buy. That salesperson un-sold the merchandise. This is precisely what you want to avoid at the sales meeting; you do not want the prospect going to the next person in line because you have turned a wrong phrase, said too much, or whatever.

The rule is, say no more than is asked. Answer completely but no more. Ask them if you provided enough detail. Every extra word (no matter how elegant, how clever, how appropriate, how necessary or how erudite you may think it is) creates one more opportunity for the prospects to be turned off. Why would you ever want to take that risk? You wouldn’t and you shouldn’t.

So, in summary:

1. Encourage your prospects to express their pain
2. Discover your prospects’ limitations
3. Know your own sensitivities
4. Know when to stop talking

Good luck with the sale!

Bill Caswell