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Getting Ready for 2019 **Crack The Prospect Code And Win More Sales**

By
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Why do so many meetings with prospects fizzle out and go nowhere? Is it just the way it is, so we should just accept it? Or, is it possible that our “this is what went wrong” explanations are merely excuses for failing to turn prospects into customers?

As sure as Friday is pizza night, salespeople are drawn to prospects like kids to puddles of water. No argument. But what about the other way around? How much thought do salespeople give as to whether or not prospects are drawn to them? Is it possible that the drive to make the sale blinds them to the possibility that prospects may reject them?

The key to getting prospects to buy what you’re selling starts with getting them to buy you. It requires cracking the prospect code and here’s how to go about it:

Abandon the urge to impress

Sure, you want prospects to like you, but efforts to impress them can make the wrong impression. It sends the message you are *overly* impressed with yourself. In other words, you come across as being less interested in understanding their situation and more interested in selling yourself.

All this occurs when salespeople use confusing terminology, dominate the conversation, speak too fast, and make prospects feel inadequate. It’s the perfect prescription for rejection.

Set the stage for success

Productive sales calls don’t just happen. They are carefully choreographed to give the salesperson an edge in getting the order. The first step is disarming the customer, neutralizing a prospect’s natural reaction to become defensive, to clam-up, or even to get away.

The task is to figure out and focus on what customers want, what they are looking for, and what satisfies them. Why is this important? They are trying to decide if the salesperson cares or just wants to make a sale.

Issue a challenge

It may sound odd or strange, but this is what it takes for prospects to clarify their thinking and commitment to making a prudent purchasing decision—and avoid experiencing buyer’s regret.

It’s time to ask what some may consider a risky question. “Are you sure this is what you want to do?” is a necessary question, one that helps prospects clarify their thinking. If the answer is “no” or “I’m not sure,” then it’s time to stop and probe until the concerns and doubts are explored and resolved to the prospect’s satisfaction. This is how trust develops and what it means to be a sales consultant.

Stay with them

No one wants to feel ignored, abandoned, or rejected. Yet, this happens when a salesperson makes an “exit” after deciding a prospect isn’t going to buy. When this occurs, prospects react negatively and get even by badmouthing the salesperson and the company.

Even so, it’s easy to avoid. Let them know you appreciate the opportunity to help them, but you also recognize it doesn’t always work out. Do it correctly and there’s a good chance should they leave they will be back or refer others.

Second guess yourself

It’s tough to recover when you’re put on the defensive while making a sales presentation. Even if you’re fast on your feet, it’s difficult to think clearly, let alone to organize an effective response.

The way to avoid getting caught with the unexpected is to second guess yourself. Lay out possible objections and anticipate possible responses and disagreements that could undermine your proposal. Show their deficiencies and why your position is the best solution.

Focus on why, not what

Salespeople like to talk about *what* customers get when making a purchase—long lasting, the latest, solid, fashionable, popular, convenient, and so on. But that’s changing. Today, it’s the *why* that motivates customers.

Here’s are examples of how to make *why* work for you:

- A solar energy company says its installations do more than lower energy costs. *They help reduce the carbon footprint.*
- A janitorial services company builds its case for clean facilities: *reduces lost time due to illness, increases employee satisfaction, and helps improve productivity.*
- British engineer James Dyson, who invented the Dual Cyclone bagless vacuum cleaner, sells a cordless version. In a TV ad, Dyson explains why: *“It’s right to do something better.”*

Ask the right questions

Salespeople don't set out to alienate prospects. Yet, it's easy to "trip" during the "sales dance." To avoid making a misstep that can turn prospects off, it helps to have them talk about what customer satisfaction means to them and what they expect from a salesperson. Besides providing helpful information, it lets prospects know you want them to become satisfied customers.

It can also help to ask what's bothersome about salespeople. Urge them to be candid. The more a salesperson knows, the better.

Don't leave feedback to chance

"We need your feedback" or the various versions of these over worked words are tacked on countless marketing messages. Some call it the electronic "complaint box." But feedback is too valuable to be left to chance.

Nothing is more important than making sure you and your prospects are on the same page, that there's no misunderstanding. This is why it's helpful to think of presentations as an opportunity to ask prospects, "Is something not clear? Am I missing something that's important to you?"

Rise to the occasion

It's inevitable to get bored with what we do every day, including those who say they love their work. Even salespeople, who take pride in being "always up" get bored. But that's the challenge. The test is our ability to push aside the "dark stuff" and meet the expectations of others.

If there's one quality prospects (and customers) look for in a salesperson, it's vigor—an alive feeling. It's catching and it moves prospects to action. It should be as much a part of a successful sales presentation as the words said.

What it takes to turn more prospects into customers is cracking the prospect code. Get them to buy you before trying to get them to buy what you're selling.

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