

sales & marketing ideas

Regular ideas for business clients and associates from John Lees, sales & marketing specialist
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When dealing with clients and prospects, do you talk your language or theirs?

You hear a lot these days about the need to build 'relationships' in business, and most of what we hear is nonsense because in fact there is a lower and higher form of relationship to be experienced with customers and prospects...and most sales people only ever get involved at the lower, less productive level. The word relationship is based on the word relate, meaning 'to connect', and regrettably most sales people relate to customers and prospects...as 'suppliers'. This is the lower form of 'relationship' and it has very little value in business. The higher form of 'relationship' is based on a connection that deals with mutual business development...in areas that are critical to the market. This raises the question 'what aspects of business development are critical to the market?' There are three areas that make up the daily concerns of the market: sales revenue, costs and profit. Please note that 'suppliers' is not one of the concerns! So, aside from occasional sexual fantasies and dreams of higher pay packets, all of your customers and prospects are only interested in sales, costs and profits...which in turn creates the next question: 'do you speak the language of sales revenue, costs or profits when talking to customers and prospects?' If not then you are definitely not speaking their language, and so you must therefore be speaking your language...which would involve your products or services, mixed with information about your company, your promotions, your service, support, etc. Talking about your products and company will consign you to the lower form of relationship, and while customers and prospects will never complain about you using such indulgent language (after all most

suppliers use this lightweight language!)...you will not 'relate' to their main daily concern for improved results, and so winning new customers and achieving business growth with established customers will elude you. Here are two simple, critical examples of language that is either voluble or valuable. In the printing industry sales people either talk to customers and prospects about 'the printing side of business' ('asking' if quotes are needed, etc.) or the 'business side of printing' (generating ideas to improve business for the customer or prospect...which will in turn involve printing projects!). Now try to guess what most print sales people talk about. The market has no problem accessing printers but they are desperate for ideas on how to improve sales, reduce costs or raise profits! Next, take the topic of commercial insurance and in this industry sales people either talk about 'the insurance side of business' ('trying' to quote on insurance product) or the 'business side of insurance' (matching insurance cover to the current and future needs of the business to survive difficulties or disasters). Companies have no problem finding cheap insurance cover and yet the vast majority of organizations are seriously under-insured...and so the need for language that addresses the 'business side of insurance' is significant to say the least. What language do you use when aiming to a) attract new customers, and b) build new business with partially developed customers? I receive newsletters every day from small and large businesses, and I can't think of one that deals with my problems versus their products. I sincerely hope that my weekly articles use language that relates to your business problems and search for growth.

Remember this: you do not deserve to be in front of a prospect unless your purpose is to aim to create a 'much better business result' than they are currently achieving with their chosen supplier!

Joking aside... Five mates were planning a holiday to an island destination but when the discussion turned to which airline they would use and what flights they would take, one of the guys confessed that he was too afraid to get on an aeroplane...for fear of crashing. His mates told him how irrational this fear was but he stood his ground and so he arranged to travel to the island by boat. Accordingly, his friends went by air and he went by sea, however...inexplicably, just before his boat reached the island it sank. Talk about luck...and to make it worse the boat had been hit by their crashing plane!