

Develop a sales strategy, not a sales style

Interactive Selling



Jim McVay
jamespmcvay@aol.com

'To keep it simple, interactive selling relocates the delivery of the formal proposal to the end of the sales process where it belongs, not in the middle of the sales process.'

—Jim McVay

don't hide the fact that I go against the grain in my search to improve procedures and systems to superserve clients while strengthening a company's bottom line. In that quest, a book called "Close Like the Pros," by Steve Marx, had an impact on me. It's the closest strategy that I have found to date that I totally agree with in terms of realistic sales.

"Close Like the Pros" is not a sales style, but rather a sales strategy for sales professionals who already understand why and how to focus on customer needs. The book explains that providing the focus, power and direction for the sale are important points to make during the transaction. Oftentimes, management forces its own sales style on other members of the team and ultimately loses focus of the common goals to fulfill a client's needs while generating revenue for the company.

Selling is not as easy as people think. It is much more than smiling and dialing, writing the proposals and making one more call at the end of the day. If not done properly, sales prospecting is a waste of time. As advertising choices in the market become more competitive, buying decisions become more difficult. It is easy to spend too much time working on the prospect, and too little time working with the prospect.

Calls you make after delivering the proposal won't have the same value as the calls you make beforehand. This is where the strategy of interactive

selling comes into play. Marx writes, "Interactive selling is founded on the notion that the 'Two Call Close' is the great exception, not the typical case."

Interactive selling can mean a lot of back-and-forth dialogue, questions and answers, along with modification. Interactive selling relocates the delivery of the formal proposal to the end of the process. It is about modifying your uncomfortable follow-up calls into pro-active, problem-solving and partnership-molding calls.

This strategy is one that I have practiced for years. Placing black ink on white paper and pumping out proposals does not guarantee a higher success rate of closing deals. You first have to learn about the client and assess its needs before putting a proposal together. To keep it simple, interactive selling relocates the delivery of the formal proposal to the end of the sales process where it belongs, not in the middle of the sales process.

You need to focus equally between your selling and the prospect's buying, acknowledging that every big decision is the result of a series of logi-

cal, sequential and incremental mini-decisions. Sales professionals who are the most successful understand that they gain power when they empower others—recognizing that their prospects have the power not just to choose which product, service or solution they'll buy, but to help craft it as well.

To achieve interactive selling success, remember these 15 points.

1. Selling is tough, but so is buying. Both become more effective when merged into an interactive process.
2. Spend more time working with the prospect than on the prospect.
3. Pay more attention to the buying going on than to the selling.
4. Your prospects want to buy. If they didn't, you wouldn't be sitting in front of them.
5. When you offer true help, you'll encounter no resistance.
6. Create a proposal that comes as close as possible to meeting your client's needs.
7. More sales are lost early on, because the salesperson failed to discover, disclose or manage expectations.
8. Misaligned expectations are rarely forgiven or forgotten between salesperson and prospect.
9. Don't wait to see if the client wants to contract. Lead it there.
10. Don't fear hearing some disagreement when you lay out your expectations. What you should fear is not hearing it.
11. Prospects can't be hurried, but everyone can be helped. Turn your prospect's mountain of doubt into consecutive, logical, incremental molehills of decision.
12. Ideas are not worthy of a big buildup. What makes an idea worthy is mutual sculpting and polishing.
13. Price is a pertinent topic at various stages in the selling cycle, but budget discussions are often misleading, distracting and risky for everyone. Each year in America, billions of dollars budgeted to be spent never are; and billions more are spent that were never budgeted.
14. A "yes" decision is not always a fast decision.
15. The day you deliver the formal proposal is the day you remove yourself from the buying process. Hold the proposal back until you believe the decision is ready. R&R

Jim McVay is VP of sales for radio consultant McVay Media. He specializes in syndication, marketing, sales, operations and corporate consulting.

THE 60-SECOND COPYWRITER

Listener As Hero By Jeffrey Hedquist

We've all heard the advertising phrase "product as hero." For decades, advertisers have endowed their products or services with powers to help us overcome obstacles in our daily lives and bring us happiness.

In this era of targeted, niche and permission marketing, there is a more effective way to sell. Empower your target audience—the listeners.

As you create your story about the listener, have that listener become the hero. Make her the protagonist. Show her on a quest, overcoming obstacles, meeting challenges, finding love, fulfillment, hope and happiness.

The advertiser's product or service then helps the listener achieve her goals. They act as catalysts to help the listener solve problems, save time and money, and get

happy. Instead of being the heroes, they become tools, methods or paths that the listener is smart enough, brave enough or perceptive enough to choose.

Give listeners the power, treat them with respect, credit them with the wisdom to make an intelligent choice and they will often pick what you have to offer and feel good about it in the morning.

Jeffrey Hedquist is president/creative director of Hedquist Productions and can be reached at 641-472-6708 or jeffrey@hedquist.com.