

# Long-term strategy suited to today's market

Over a number of years, markets suitable and cost effective to direct salespeople have been evolving from primarily consumer to business. Despite this, the selling style of many salespeople has not kept pace.

The style of every salesperson is strongly influenced if not totally controlled by their conscious or subliminal sales strategy. For optimum success, the individual strategy must be compatible with marketplace buying practices.

Sales strategies run a spectrum from total focus-on-the-end-result-sale with peripheral vision on client needs to total focus-on-client-needs with peripheral vision on the end result sale. The former is short while the latter is a long-term strategy.

These divergent ends of the strategy spectrum are evidenced by the tactics of the salesperson and two distinctive selling styles: traditional and consultative.

Because of their focus, short-term strategies lend themselves to traditional and sometimes offensive tactics. They are epitomized by the image of the aggressive, fast-talking individual whose demeanor frequently puts the prospect on the defensive and reduces trust.

Salespeople using this style inundate the prospect with the features and benefits of the product/service they're selling. More often than not these presentations are initiated without a clue as

to the prospect's needs.

Often, they'll superimpose both logical and emotional needs and assume the prospect wants to satisfy them. Needless to say, success after this assumption is made (especially if it is erroneous) frequently calls for the application of high pressure.

In less sophisticated markets of the past where relationships were not as important as they are today, such tactics have been successful. However, when a short-term strategy with its accompanying tactics is employed in today's markets, it often results in the destruction of long-term relationships.

At the other end of the spectrum, salespeople using the consultative style recognize that prospects buy to satisfy needs and not because of pressure applied by a salesperson.

While these salespeople want to make a sale, and will not pass up an opportunity to close now if needs are developed, they are more motivated by a continuing line of sales and referrals.

In practice, the consultative salesperson acts almost as a third party facilitator of the buying action. He or she asks well-designed benefit questions. The prospect's response to such questions identifies both logical and emotional needs if they exist and determine if the prospect really wants to satisfy them.

If adequate needs are disclosed by

the prospect, the consultative salesperson tailors the presentation to such needs. By introducing only those benefits that satisfy both logical and emotional needs disclosed by the prospect, the consultative salesperson creates the only kind of pressure that will motivate the prospect to buy: pressure from within.

As a whole, sophisticated consumer and business markets open to direct salespeople are more responsive to a consultative style.

In summary, the short-term strategy guiding the tactics and creating the style of the traditional salesperson says, "The prospect will buy now."

The long-term strategy guiding the tactics and creating the style of the consultative salesperson says, "The prospect will buy now, at some future date, or will lead the salesperson to someone who will buy now or at some future date."

The strategies, tactics and style of the overwhelming majority of salespeople fall somewhere between the two extremes. Being conscious of one's strategy and how it meshes with changing buying practices is an important step in assuring optimum long-term success in selling.

*Article reprinted from*

***Baltimore Business Journal***

*Inside Sales & Marketing*

*Strategy Issues - V. L. Zirpoli*

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