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Six sales priorities

Civility
Sales Priorities #1 - Civility

Cebrowski, John W

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CUSTOMER-CONTACT PEOPLE are always looking for ways to rise above the pack, but there is an overdue need to look down on the changed landscape and respond to new opportunities.

Have you noticed the creeping coarseness and casualness in many people? Have you noticed the growing impatience of people? Have you, as a buyer, been frustrated with the lack of a seller's attention to detail? Have you sensed the shallow interest exhibited by many customer-contact people in you? Have you noticed the growing diversity in your workplace and the global marketplace? These gaps represent opportunities to create differentiation.

Six Priorities

Sales priorities are often not in sync with today's societal and business realities. Changing realities demand a change in six sales and marketing priorities.

1. Civility. Civility is all about calm and rational manners, about respecting people, about maturity, about diplomacy, common courtesies, and rules of etiquette. Unfortunately, many customer contact people lack business etiquette.

The practical translation of civility to daily customer-contact practice includes sensitivity to gracious introductions, respectful vocabulary, sincere inquiries, sensitivity to timing, elimination of obnoxious closing techniques, and sincere thank yous. Today, civility can positively differentiate customer-contact people from their competitors. Customers enjoy doing business when treated with consideration. Civility begets customer service.

2. Speed. The luxury of time is just that, a luxury. Patience is almost extinct. The environment demands doing things faster, but speed detached from value is worthless. How can you get faster and out perform the competition without getting sloppy? Speed is not speed if the customer doesn't see relative change. Do your customers see you in motion and view you as proactive? Well timed and thoughtful anticipation is the equivalent of breaking the sound barrier. But be careful, because raw speed can be perceived as recklessness. Keep your processes and people juiced-up because speed feeds on itself, creating an expectation that things will always get faster. In a world seeking immediate gratification, speed can differentiate. Speed begets buyer satisfaction.

3. Quality transactions. Quality Transaction Management (QTM) is the sales and marketing version of TQM. More than sales cycle management, QTM encompasses all areas where people or processes touch

customers and sales partners. QTM is a systems approach to sales improvement-continual management of the entire cross-functional team that facilitates and executes sales.

QTM is process focused, as it constantly searches for improvements and cost reductions. It starts with your initial ad, phone call, or personal contact, and tracks through all transaction steps to delivery, service, and reorder. Careful examination of the "whole" transaction helps eliminate redundancies, streamline processes, and exceed buyer expectations. QTM begets customer retention.

4. Vitalization. Vitalization occurs when customer-contact people consistently bring extras of everything-tangibles and intangibles-to transactions. Thinking more about bringing than taking is the key. Bring infectious energy, passion, and emotion for your products, services, and employer to enliven the relationship. Bring helpful ideas that you have seen employed in other environments. Bring recommendations of other products, services, and techniques. Bring a vision of reality from the outside world to your customers who may be buried in their day- to-day struggles. Bring new ideas on how your customers can lessen their risks and improve their productivity. Bring data that can help reinforce decisions. Bring warnings about changes in the industry or potential issues. Bring candor and forthrightness about day-to- day operating issues.

Be a wellspring of assistance and solutions. Create a can't-do-without-you image. In a world of self-satisfying sellers, vitalization can be a pleasant surprise. Vitalization begets relationships.

5. Customer-friendly technology. Communications and computer tools are only of value to you if your customers value what the tools bring to them. Relevant tools and information equal positive buying decisions. Many customer-contact and marketing people unwittingly view and use these tools as replacements, not adjuncts, to solid sales principles and practices. And some managers use these tools for self-satisfying purposes, fueling internal information feeding frenzies.

Design systems from the customer's perspective. Take an enterprise-out, not market-back, approach to information design and management. Embrace technologies for your customer's benefit or become a dinosaur. In an increasingly noisy electronic world, laser beam-focus on relevant outbound information can differentiate an enterprise. Customer- friendly technology begets incremental orders.

6. Cross-cultural training: Develop customer- contact people who have intercultural communication skills-regardless of where they sell-because homogeneous markets are gone. Cross-cultural sensitivity is needed because of the evolution of distinct cultural markets in the U.S., because international sales are increasingly important. Customer-contact people need to be more adept at dealing with people who have renewed pride in their race, ethnic background, religion, gender, culture, and country. Cultural astuteness adds insights into customers and markets. Cross- cultural training begets new markets.

You can enhance your differentiation and diminish a reliance on price and the impression of personal agenda fixation by practicing these six requisites. EE

Author Affiliation:

John W. Cebrowski is president of SALES BUILDERS, INC., a consulting and executive search firm focusing on international marketing and sales in Fairfax, VA (703) 591- 3232.

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