

WARM FUZZIES

ARE YOU MAKING A SALE...
OR MAKING A CLIENT FOR THE LONG HAUL?

EDITORIAL | FRANK C. BUCARO

Let's face it.

A major challenge to the sales process is that it is often difficult to dedicate, to every potential customer, the time and energy required for developing quality, long-standing relationships.

More often, it's much easier to service the customer, make the sale, or accept their rejection and move on.

Achieving and surpassing your goals determines success, not the 'warm fuzzies' of building a relationship with prospects and clients, right?

Wrong!



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If you continually strive to build a relationship with potential or current clients, you'll find that even the toughest objections may not be the end of the relationship. Today's marketplace presents aggressive quotas and almost impossible deadlines. In that kind of environment, many salespeople focus on numbers of prospective clients rather than focusing on the quality of each relationship. For many sales professionals, thinking long-term on a customer-to-customer basis does not seem to be worth the time. It can often be more difficult to think of what the customer could potentially purchase, who the customer could refer in the future or how long the customer may stay with the company.

The trick is, the sales strategy does not have to be an either/or plan. It is a proactive decision to have this long-term mindset before you speak with any prospective clients. To clarify this sales position, the following questions are imperative:

Are you making a sale or making a customer for life?

Sara, a pharmaceutical sales representative, hoped that her repeated visits to this doctor's office would eventually pay off, just like all the others. When she walked into this office today, she was met with a great amount of resistance. The nurse asked her to leave samples without the doctor's signature, a practice against Sara's company's (and personal) code of ethics. She stood her ground, upheld the code and disappointedly left the doctor's office, thinking she just lost a potentially large account. Eventually she was able to get past this rejection and change her focus to view this office as a long-term customer. Suddenly, this was just one objection that she had to find a way around. She persisted in visiting that office and eventually was asked to leave samples while she witnessed the doctor's signature.

Tip #1: Be proactive; envision successful long-term relationships with every client.

How do you view your client relationships? Do you focus on that one large sale? Do you look at them as a lifelong customer? How do you see this relationship can directly impact how you overcome objections. How you overcome objections directly impacts how successful you become!

Tip #2: Don't begin the sales process with what you think the customer wants.

Eliminate your preconceived ideas about the client's needs, as difficult as it may be. Of course you must do your research and learn about marketplace trends; however, nothing is more important than listening, and I mean listening 'hard'! Really dig in to determine if there is a difference between what the customer wants and what you think they want. This is important; no matter how well you know your business or how long you have been in this position. It is okay to suggest another feature, but if it is of no value to the customer, hear them, and respond accordingly.

Do you really "like" your customers?

Tip #3: Set yourself apart.

Even if you can't compete on price, you can set yourself apart on likeability. If asked, how many of your customers would say that you like them? Do your customers feel that you like them? Do you know their names, their spouse's or kids' names? Do you know how their business is doing? Do you know what they like to do in their free time? Where they like to vacation? How do you show this? List your actions that show this emotion. List actions that could show this. Start today to set yourself apart!