

Consultative Selling

Introduction

By understanding your prospect's underlying needs and motivations, you will better understand how your products or services offer a value-added benefit. And the only way to understand the prospect's real needs is to ask...and then...listen. The listening part seems to be the most difficult, as most of us are in the habit of formulating responses while the other person is speaking. So, we are listening only up to the point when we know what we want to say next. Then we sometimes just interrupt the speaker or wait until they finish, only half-listening at that point, and then start to present our formulated response. In consultative selling, you work with your prospect to uncover their needs and provide guidance toward your solution. The prospect will connect the dots and reach the favored solution, and they will feel better having come to that conclusion with your help. In this article, we will explore consultative selling, and how you can make it work in your agency.

What is Consultative Selling?

Consultative selling rises above product features and selling points and focuses on finding the right solution for the prospect's problems. It's the process of rolling up your sleeves and working side-by-side with the prospect on the problem at hand. It is well-known that the sales person who understands the prospect best is always in the best position to make the sale. And the only way to understanding is through questioning. When the prospect's problem is summarized, clarified and fed back to the prospect for additional understanding, the energy level from the prospect is high. They are engaged. They want to solve their problem, and the sales person is playing the role of consultant, helping them to discover potential solutions. That is consultative selling.

WIIFM....No...WIIFY

It's not about What's In It For Me (as the sales person), but really it's about What's In It For You (my prospect). I need to demonstrate to you, as the prospect, that I am listening intently to your problem, focusing only on you and finding a potential solution. In some cases, the solution might not even include my product or service, but most of the time it should...especially, if as a sales person, you have targeted your prospect correctly...but we will get into targeted prospecting later.

The Inside Track

A great benefit of consultative selling is that by learning more about the prospect's interests first, the sales person is able to build up a solution and get inside information that helps differentiate their solution from others without this inside track. The prospect begins to see the sales person as a trusted advisor and not as somebody trying to sell something. They are engaged, because the solution, if developed correctly, addresses a pain point. They are motivated to solve their problem, and by taking

the time to listen and develop solutions, the sales person is actually building trust. And, trust leads to relationships. And, relationships lead to sales.

Why Don't More Salespeople Use Consultative Selling?

Consultative selling is really nothing new. And, in terms of selling techniques, it will never go out of style. Think about it from a prospect's viewpoint...do you want to hear all about the great benefits of a specific product, most of which probably don't matter to you? Or, would you rather offer up the problem you are looking to solve and have the sales person describe how their solution solves that problem? Personally, I would rather have the salesperson show me how their solution will solve my problem. I don't have time for demonstrations, road shows, webinars, and other general audience information dissemination. I have a specific problem looking for a solution...if your solution fits, I want you to show me how it fits, and quickly.

Targeted Prospecting

This brings us right back to the importance of targeted prospecting. If your prospect is a good, targeted prospect, you should be able to quickly demonstrate how your solution solves their problem. And, furthermore, as they articulate their problem to you, it should fall into a standard problem set that you are familiar with, given the targeted prospect's profile. A good prospect management platform can help you target your prospects along multiple dimensions and will enable reporting of progress, follow-up reminders, and much more.

Summary

Consultative selling is really just a matter of helping your targeted prospect to find solutions to their important problems. Of course, listening is an important skill in any kind of selling, but when you are practicing consultative selling, listening is the single most critical skill. Remember that the world is not looking for more products and services, but the world is always looking for solutions to real problems. So, instead of simply throwing all of your product features at a prospect in the hopes that something sticks, why not listen first, and then frame your solution in the context of the prospect's problems. You'll be happy that you took the time to listen first...and so will your prospect.

We hope that you have found our advice practical and useful. We are always interested in your feedback and are here to help you along in your journey. Our number one goal is to help you grow your book of business. We'd love to hear from you, anytime! Please contact Bill Kossack at ClearData at (724) 387-1713 or request more information via email to: bkossack@cleardataint.com. Or visit us at www.myRelEvent.com