

YOU CAN ALWAYS SELL MORE ...

“You Can Always Sell More...When You Can Find ‘The Win’ In Any Loss”

Do you see selling as an event or as a process? Less trained or experienced sales reps tend to see selling as just a series of stand-alone events. They work hard at every selling opportunity but when that sale is complete, whether it was won or lost, they see that sales effort as now being complete and are ready to move onto their next selling opportunity. Event focused sales reps don't tend to grow their selling skills but instead stay plateaued at their current skill and awareness levels.

But the most advanced and aware selling professionals realize selling is an ongoing process. They understand that, with the proper awareness, your last several efforts or actions can have a positive impact on your future efforts or actions. No sales professional enjoys losing a sale, especially a large dollar one. But how and what you do when learning of a sale loss can have a profound impact on your future selling success. What do you do after losing a big sale? What do you learn and how do you act?

“Event focused” sales reps work to assign blame or fault when they learn of a lost sale. When asked by their manager why they lost a sale most “event focused” reps will go into great detail sharing why there was something wrong with either the customer or their intelligence and that it wasn't their fault for losing the sale. Why'd you lose that sale? Ever hear a sales rep giving their manager the answer...“Well John, my buyer, is an idiot. He never really even looked at all his options. In fact...I'm sure my competitor just bought the business by giving away a lower price.”

“Even focused” rep's egos are more concerned about identifying how someone or something else had to be responsible for this loss so their ego and self esteem are protected. The problem with this “event focused” view of selling though is any loss is immediately erased and rejected with nothing of value being gained or identified.

If you're working hard as a sales professional the reality of your selling life is you'll always have more losses than you will wins. Selling is very similar to baseball. Even the best baseball players still strike out three times out of every four at bats.

The best “process focused” sales professionals are more future focused than their “event focused” peers. They realize a significant contributor to their long term success is based on finding value and learning opportunities from every selling effort they attempt...even if they lose the sale. What did you learn from your last big loss? What can you gain from this losing experience that can help you identify what you need to change or adjust, what you need to better identify or how you can better predict the actions of your competitors?

How to become a more future process focused sales professional

Want to become more process and future focused in your selling efforts? Then consider applying these following five efforts so you can sell more in the future...

1st - Don't Take It Personally - Manage Your Ego

Your first effort is to make sure you remove your ego from your territory. All sales people have a strong ego, it's one of our primary defensive tools that protects us from all the negatives and

rejection we receive on a daily basis. But a strong ego can also blind you from valuable insight into how you're doing your job.

You just can't take this stuff personally. The goal is not to focus on you, the person, in these loss evaluations but to instead focus on evaluating what actions or issues either helped contribute to your losing or your competitor winning. "Event focused" sales reps can't remove themselves and their ego from this evaluation so they become stagnated or blocked by their concern that they might find out their loss was caused by something wrong with them as a person. "Maybe I wasn't smart enough or good enough to beat that competitor" is an answer that blocks any future learning.

We're not talking about our first born here. The easiest way to keep your ego out of this is to search and focus your evaluation on causes and actions, not personal blame. The goal is to identify real causes, gaps or exposures in your last selling effort so you can continue to get better in your next selling effort.

2nd - Realize You Can Always Learn Something That Can Help You Get Better In The Future

Once you and your ego are comfortable with debriefing your losses your second effort is to now realize you can always learn something that can help you get better in the future. Now is the time to focus on collecting information and increasing your awareness. But to learn anything from a recent loss will require you utilizing all of your persuasive powers.

A number of customers might be suspicious of you immediately asking for feedback as to why you lost and what you could have done better. A lot of higher pressured sales reps in the more manipulative days of selling used to ask for feedback from any decision maker telling them they had lost the sale. But their goal of asking wasn't to learn for the future but to still attempt to save their sale from being lost. Instead of accepting the answers from the decision maker they would respond to their prospect's comments by trying to counter the complaint and to sell around concerns shared.

To get the best information from a decision maker after you've lost the sale consider saying something like... "We're disappointed we didn't win your business...we worked hard to try to prove to you we could do the best job for you and your company. Is this decision final?"

When they say yes then you next say "When your decision is final and can't be changed, with your permission I'd like to ask you a few questions about what we could have done better or what you wished we were doing that was more like my competitor that you chose. I want to wait though until there's no way to change your decision so you can see the questions I'm asking are all meant to help me become more competitive in the future and not just a last minute attempt to get you to change your decision. My goal now is to try and learn what I and my company can do to make us more competitive when we try to earn your business again in the future."

3rd - Learn To Separate Symptoms From Problems and Excuses From Real Reasons When Evaluating A Sales Loss

Now that you're starting to get some comments or feedback from your decision maker then your third effort is to now sort through all the information you receive. You need to make sure you're focusing on the real problems and reasons that caused you to lose the sale and not just the symptoms and excuses that are easiest to give when asked by a sales rep who lost the business.

One idea is to never accept the answer "You lost because your prices were higher than your competitors." Price is never the reason to lose business...there are always more reasons. If your customer tells you that you lost because your price was too high what they're really telling you is

you didn't prove enough value differential to justify your higher prices. It wasn't your price that lost you the business....it was your lack of communicating and proving you could offer them a greater total value.

4th - Get Help From Your Manager

This is a great time to get your manager involved in these discussions as your fourth effort to learn more from your decision maker after the loss of a sale. The reality is you'll likely be too close to the situation to really sort out what your decision maker is trying to tell you. Taking your manager on these loss debriefing conversations can help you gain greater insight into what really happened. Not only will your manager tend to ask different questions and hear different answers from your decision maker than you will, you might also find your manager's presence can actually improve the responses and information you learn from your decision maker.

It's important that you and your manager discuss this article before asking them to help in evaluating any loss. You need to make sure they understand your goal and focus is on future learning compared to only focusing on history fault finding. You'll not be able to continue separating your self and your ego from your actions if your manager (or others in your company) keep making comments like "Well that was a dumb mistake to make" or "That situation sure wasn't handled effectively was it?"

5th - Apply What You Learn

Learning from your competitive losses has to be a process and not just a few events initiated by your manager. This needs to be an ongoing process you implement every time you lose a sale. Every decision maker will not be open or interested in helping you get better. But by asking any and every account loss these types of questions, eventually you'll begin to identify changes you can make to improve your closing percentages.

And when you begin to learn what you could have done in the past or what you now need to do in the future...your fifth effort is to now actually accept and apply what you've learned. What can you change? What can you adjust with your selling approach or presentation? Could you be asking more questions or do a better job researching their business? Could you get "higher, wider or deeper" within their political culture so you can learn more and present a more customer focused solution?

One of the best personal attitudes to have in selling is to realize you'll likely lose more than you'll win during your career as a sales professional...and that you can always benefit or learn from a loss if you apply the proper persuasive evaluative questioning...and that you can always find something to adjust or apply to help make you stronger and more competitive in your future. The bottom line here is you can always learn and discover something that can benefit your future selling efforts.

We know you're good....now...are you good enough to find "the win" in your losses so you can continue to get even better in the future?

Jim Pancero