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Bolotin Points

Newsletter

Providing Actionable Ideas to Increase Your Profit

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Go to Market Strategy & Execution Revenue Acceleration Due Diligence Partnering & Asset Sales

Everything You Need to Know About the Sales Process, In One Sentence With Two Steps

Too often, we make things more complicated than they really are. One of my former colleagues and mentors warned about this when he cautioned me "Don't get caught up in your own underwear." While the visual on this can be less than appealing, it does illustrate a valuable point: "Don't create problems for yourself by overcomplicating things."

One of the essential elements to happiness and success is the ability to boil down problems, opportunities and situations to their essence. In order to do this, our goal should be to be "simple", which is not to be confused with being "simplistic".

Simple *adj.* Able to be understood, integrated, and applied easily.

Simplistic *adj.* Oversimplifying to the point of being misleading.

The Talmud (the collection of ancient rabbinic writings on Jewish law and tradition) tells the story of an impatient prince who challenged several religious leaders to teach him everything he needed to know about their religion within the time the religious leader was able to stand on one leg. As you might imagine, several failed at the task. Eventually, the young man came before Hillel (a famous leader in Babylon about 2,000 years ago) and presented Hillel with the same challenge. Hillel raised one foot off the ground and said, "Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you. All the rest is commentary. Now, go and study."

In his brilliant three sentence response, Hillel:

- 1) gave the answer;
- 2) explained that supporting explanation was available and the reason for it; and,
- 3) enjoined the prince to continue learning.

My objective in this newsletter is to get as close to Hillel's way of expressing himself as possible; to be simple without being simplistic, and to encourage you to do the same.

Relative to the sales process, my goal in this newsletter is to give you a simple way to understand, integrate and apply the foundation for all of sales. Here's the first rule of sales:



People do things for their reasons, not yours.

While this may offend your feeling of self importance, it should not, and, more to the point, if you are to be successful, it can not. When you're selling something, you are asking someone to part with something of value to them in exchange for your product or service, and by far the most important reason anyone buys from you is that they believe it is in their personal best interest to do so.

This may seem obvious and even a bit too simple to be useful, but I assure you, it is not. Do you always use this rule to guide your actions with prospective customers? If you do, in all your interactions, you must consistently and unwaveringly focus on your prospective customer's needs, not yours. Your needs are simply not relevant to a successful sales outcome.

What's the second rule of sales?



Don't forget Rule #1.

Given this, what's at the core of a successful sales process?

How one answers this question pivots on one's definition of the sales process. Here's two possibilities:



definition

Sales Process *n.* 1. Manipulate prospects into believing that they're buying things it is in their best interest to buy, while, in reality, it is in the salesperson's best interest. 2. Work with prospects to discover what really is in their best interest to buy, show them how the salesperson's product or service best serves their needs, and have them buy it.

Think back to the last time you were the prospect in a meaningful transaction. When this happened, which definition do you think the salesperson trying to sell to you subscribed to? In deciding whether or not to buy, would it have made any difference to you which definition he subscribed to?

Now, transition to when you're the salesperson and consider which of the two definitions you use. Do you think the prospect will view the process any differently than you did when you were the prospect?

Ironically, if you choose definition 2, your job is much easier and less stressful than if you chose definition 1.

As promised, here's how to be a successful salesperson, in one sentence with two steps:

**(1) Find out what people want and are willing and able to pay for;
and,
(2) give it to them.**

At a foundational level (without "the commentary", as Hillel would say), it's that simple.

Consistent with how Hillel explained things, now that we have the essence, let's flesh this out a bit with some commentary. Looking at the two steps above, in order to be a successful salesperson, you'll have to find out what people want. How do you do this?

Answer: Ask.

For some reason that has proven to be a never ending mystery to me, many times, sales people do not ask what their prospects want. More than once, I've been brought in to help to diagnose why a salesperson lost a particular sale. My first question is generally the same: "What did the prospect want?"

You would be amazed at the number of times that this question is responded to by blank looks, then by hastily constructed answers such as "Well, most people in his situation would want [x]" or, "I assume that she wants [y]." When the answer to "What does your prospect want?" is answered by a surprised look and then by a stream of generalities and assumptions, isn't the core problem obvious? At a minimum, the salesperson should know exactly what their prospect wants. If he doesn't know what his prospect wants, how can he give it to them?

Continuing to flesh this out by working backwards, if you've decided that it is a good idea to know what your prospect wants and therefore, you want to find out the answer, what do you do in order to get the prospect to honestly open up and share with you what he or she wants?



example

A good way to understand why some prospects may be reluctant to share what they want with you is to use yourself as an example. When you're the prospect and you're approached by a salesperson you don't know, do you open up immediately and give the salesperson all sorts of information? If you're like most people, at first, you're at least a little bit cautious. The reason is that, before you'll be entirely forthcoming with the salesperson, you'll try to determine if the salesperson defines the sales process as definition 1 or definition 2, above. You're trying to determine if the salesperson is going to use what you say to trick you into buying something that's not in your best interest, or if the salesperson really has your best interest at heart.

Given the understanding we now have from the example above, what's the best way for a salesperson to demonstrate good intentions? By believing in, accepting, and demonstrating by his or her actions and reputation that their job is to help the prospect do what's in the prospect's best interest, not the best interest of the salesperson.

If you're the salesperson, the prospect has to trust you and believe that the purchase they're considering making will provide the best value to them, not you. Therefore, you must first establish your personal credibility and intention in the prospects' mind.

If you do this, then, the prospect will tell you what he or she wants. After this happens, you can give it to them.

But what if the product you're selling really isn't in the best interest of the prospect to buy? At the risk of stating the obvious, here's the answer: If your product is good for someone but not right for that prospect, find another prospect who is right for your product. If your product is not good, don't sell it to anyone; get another product to sell that is good.

Here's a way to know if you're not selling the right product or selling to the wrong people:



how to test this:

If you have to use a lot of "technique" to sell your product, it's probably because what you're selling is not in the best interest of your prospect.

To summarize and give some additional details, here's the chronological, 6-step process of marketing and sales:



1 Find a product that provides value to someone.



2 Thoroughly understand your product and become articulate in explaining its benefits.



3 Identify prospects for whom it would be in their best interest to buy your product and who have the money to buy it.



4 Talk solely with the people you've identified in Step 3, above.



5 Give each individual prospect reason to talk with you and to trust you enough to tell you what they want.



6 Explain the benefits of your product in a compelling way, tailored to the real needs of each prospect.

Don't overlook the obvious, don't overcomplicate, and don't make it more difficult than it is. If you find that you're trying to "put a square peg in a round hole", give up on this stressful, frustrating and unproductive activity and go out and find pegs and holes that match. *Find out what people want and are willing to pay for, and give it to them.* It will be a lot easier and you'll be much more successful.

In the next issue, we'll discuss how to make more money as a manager.

About Chuck Bolotin

Chuck founded, funded, operated and sold two companies. The On Target Consultants Process™ he developed, and the success he has achieved applying it has made him an expert in bringing products to market in virtually any vertical market, many times when the target market is not known in advance.

Chuck is available for talks to your organization as well as personalized consulting assignments.

