

# revealing the need

ENROLL YOUR PROSPECTS THROUGH THE NEEDS/VALUES SELLING MODEL

If you've been reading along over the past year, you might be under the impression that sales is a pretty complicated business – it's not. What *is* complicated is understanding why some people can sell and others think they can't. We've spent the last year learning some key distinctions between great salespeople and those who are just mediocre. Through this journey, we have begun identifying the critical elements of becoming a true sales master.

If you've mastered all of the concepts we've discussed, you're at the top of the 80/20 rule, and from here on out, sales is pretty simple. Sales isn't the "25 steps to killer sales," the "10 perfect closing lines" or the "three things even your worst enemy can't say no to." Sales is simply this: It's discovering a need and creating a solution that has value. That's what great sales professionals do. Let's begin by examining the art of needs analysis.

So how do you discover the need? You start by *not* assuming that you already have the solution. You must identify the need *before* you identify the solution. This may sound to you like an "of course" message, but think about it. How many times have people come to your door to sell you something – a copier, insurance, ad specialties, a server – with "The Solution" before they really know what the problem or objective is. And on the selling side, we've all been guilty of this. "We're the experts," we tell ourselves. "We've seen this situation a thousand times, and we know just what they need."

Here's a scenario: A few years back, a salesperson came into our office to sell us ad specialties. She immediately started placing different doo-dads on the table – stress balls, key chains, coffee mugs. "Everyone likes a coffee mug," she said. Pens, koozies, brightly colored plastic junk that I couldn't even identify. Two minutes into her presentation, I stopped her and asked, "Do you know what we do?" She answered, "No, not really," and kept going. "I have a really great deal

on mouse pads. We could put your logo on them. You guys do something with sales, right? How about fake money with your logo on it?" She started counting out fake hundred-dollar bills. "Of course, they won't cost you this much money..."

The meeting lasted two minutes and 30 seconds, and it did not result in a sale. Why? Because she assumed the need and presented the supposed value without having any idea



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what our needs were and which of her many potentially helpful novelties might be of value to us. She did all of the talking and was trying desperately to "close" a deal with us. When the fishing expedition wasn't getting the reaction she wanted, she went immediately to price. "A great deal on mouse pads," she said. She never asked. She told. She reverted to what she knew (presentation-style selling), because presenting what she knew (and staying within her comfort zone) was a lot easier than being totally present, listening, asking questions, acknowledging what she didn't know and then creating an answer within that context.

Here's an interesting barometer for you to use to know whether you're enrolling or closing, whether you're discovering need or projecting it, and ultimately whether you're creating value or devaluing yourself in your prospect's mind: 2-to-1.

If you are speaking two times as much as

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your prospect, chances are you are trying to close the deal. You're not asking questions, you're not listening (instead, you're waiting to speak), and at the end of that conversation you really have no idea what the prospect's immediate needs are. And you certainly haven't determined the prospect's ends, or long-term, needs. Within that context, how could you possibly create value for the prospect?

Now think of 2-to-1 this way: The prospect is speaking twice as much as you are. You are listening. You are assessing the prospect's communication style – understanding the meaning that his or her body posture and tone of voice add to his or her words. (All concepts we have previously identified in earlier articles are critically important.) You are using your airtime almost exclusively to ask open-ended, broad-based, fact-finding questions. Then, and only then, will you have the opportunity to enroll the prospect in your solution. Then you can truly create something of value, both short-term and long-term, because you have discovered the need. You revealed the need by consciously keeping your ratio of speaking to listening in balance. When your client sees that you understand his or her need and that you truly have a solution that brings value, the sale is a forgone conclusion.

Next month we will continue this exploration by digging deeper into needs analysis – showing you exactly how to find what your prospects really need (and that's not always what they *think* they need). Yet another step in the quest for sales mastery.

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