



Conversations

"I just found out that the brain is like a computer. If that's true, then there really aren't any stupid people. Just people running DOS." (Dave Barry)

Welcome to the latest edition of my monthly newsletter entitled 'Conversations', aimed at providing thought-provoking articles and ideas for use in your own sales and management activities.

I'm still amazed when I work with sales people and discover that they **continue to make the same basic mistakes** in their selling activities. No matter how hard they try to eliminate bad behaviours, they still repeat them. And it's not that they're stupid - they simply don't know any better, because **they've never had been shown how to do it properly** (or more to the point, they've never had an explanation as to why successful sales people do things a certain way).

Let's take a look at some of the more common sales mistakes and what sales people should be considering doing...

The basic mistakes sales people make...

- **Not having clear measurable objectives for meetings.** I recently asked someone why we were visiting a customer and they said: "To get an update on a particular project." Why couldn't this have been done over the phone? At the very least I would expect someone to tell me that they were "trying to establish the buying criteria and decision process for a specific project, with a view to identifying a potential way forward." The most effective meeting outcomes arise from having clear objectives from the start.
- **Lacking sufficient knowledge about their customers.** Sales people often have very little idea about their customer's business -beyond the opportunity they're chasing. More importantly, they seem to have little or no insight about the person they're meeting -their personal wants, needs, motivators etc. The key is firstly to understand the person, then the business and finally, the opportunity.
- **Asking closed questions.** "Have you got round to ordering the (xyz) yet?" -is a question that I have heard so many times in meetings. Information gathering questions -of the closed variety, will simply not generate two-way communication or provide context to the customer's answer. Open questions encourage dialogue and help build rapport -and asked in the right way, can help influence a customer's thinking around their decision-making.
- **Failing to take notes -and using them to summarise the conversation.** Taking notes is professional, as it allows you to guide the conversation and identify next steps through regularly summarising your understanding of needs. It also shows that you've been listening and enables you to present ideas and solutions based upon the customer's own responses -which is a very effective technique.
- **Discounting -without getting anything in return.** Sales people are under pressure to get sales -and the boss will be pleased that I got the order in the face of stiff competition -right? Well not necessarily! Negotiating -as opposed to discounting, means looking for concessions from the customer in return for movement on price -otherwise it may be the right time to walk away from the deal.

Are your sales team hitting their numbers -or do they need an injection of fresh skills and ideas? If you need help, simply email training@absolutelysales.co.uk or if it can't wait, then give me a call on **07870 504849!**