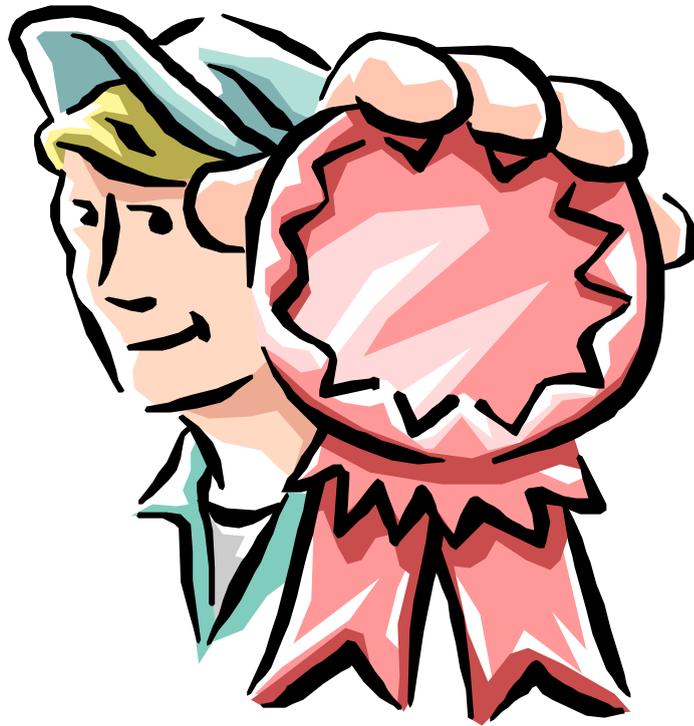


My Competitor Has a Better Product

-by Shamus Brown



QUESTION - "At the moment, my competitor's have a far better product/deal, due to circumstances out of my control. However, customers go to the competitor and then come to me to compare. How do I go about convincing the customer that our service/product is better even though on paper it isn't???"

ANSWER - Thanks for the question Peter. I'm going to answer this to the extent that I can without knowing

what it is that you or your competitor sells.

I believe that this is a common experience for many of us in sales. Customers use us for free for all kinds of freebies - information, demos, test drive's, consulting, etc. Sure, it is good to give away something free to expose people to your offering (the EGOPOWER newsletter is an example of this).

This has gone way too far however, and it's our fault in the sales profession. We have been bludgeoned into thinking that we must do whatever it is that the customer asks of us. That we should jump through hoops like trick dogs, if that gets us just a little bit closer to *possibly* getting a sale.

Freebies should be used as a marketing tool. The purpose of freebies is to generate a lead. And that's where the free giveaways should end. Once you have the lead, and are able to engage the customer in live conversation, the marketing ends and the selling begins.

Successful selling is an exchange of value for value. It has always been this way since people traded grains and cloth for chickens and pigs. Today as sales professionals we are "representing" a company and its products. This is why we are called "sales representatives". We act as the agent, representing our company in the trade, representing our company in the exchange of value for value.



As sales reps, we offer significant value to our prospective customers. Yes our products have value, but I am not talking about that. The value that we offer is our knowledge and our time. We know a lot about our products, about our industry, about future trends in our marketplace, about our competition, and many other things.

We sell our products every day. Our customers (most of them at least) do not buy these products every day. So our knowledge has value. If you don't believe this to be true, then you either need to think about this a little more, or you work in an industry that is about to get disintermediated by e-commerce.

So what should you do?

Respect your value as a salesperson.

Get commitments from your prospects.

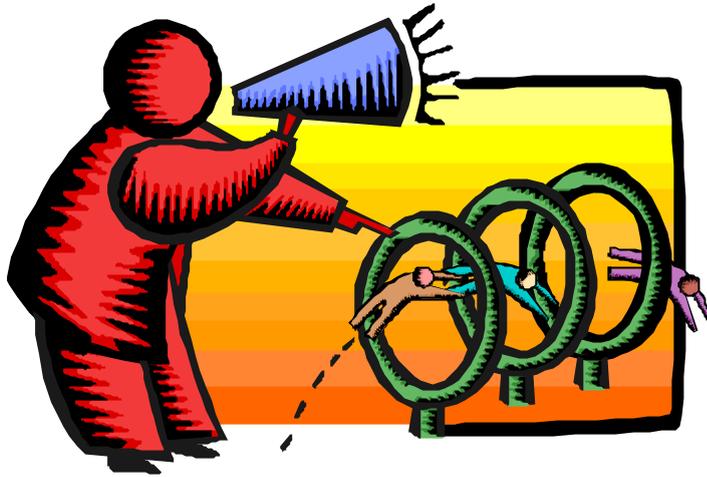
Get a commitment - Qualify them first for pains/wants, budget, and decision capability. Then before presenting details about your product. Get a commitment to make a definitive decision upon completion of your presentation or the proof step of your sales cycle. For this to work, you must have asked really good questions to elicit the important pains/wants that are driving the sale. You must know that they have the money to buy it. And you must be presenting to the decision-maker.

You only have so much time in a day, so use it well. If you chase every deal that comes your way, you are losing real sales that you could have gone out and looked for.



Break any of these rules, and you are simply rolling the dice. (Yeah I know, this works for some people - but you'll never make it really big in sales winging it this way).

Notice that what I outlined above is the reverse order of the way many salespeople have learned to sell. The key thing that I am telling you to do here, is to present AFTER you have qualified the prospect and AFTER you have a commitment to make a decision.



If you have a long sales cycle involving multiple levels of decision-making, you can use this same approach. Instead of getting a commitment for a decision up-front, you can get a commitment to be taken to the appropriate next step. That could be a meeting with a higher-level decision-maker, or it could be earning the right to give

a presentation to a more influential audience. I call this "chaining commitments".

This is the best solution. By getting commitments, you will stop wasting time with the people who aren't serious about you. By asking good questions up-front (a topic for another newsletter), you may uncover something that your competitor missed, giving you a chance to change the rules of the sale set early on by your competitor's getting there first.

If your product isn't better, I don't believe that you can persuade or convince someone that it is. Most people aren't stupid. They will figure out eventually that you are trying to pull one over on them, if they don't figure that out while you are actually trying to do it to them.

Lastly, even with the most competitive products, the number two products usually have some advantages over the number one product. Determine these advantages, and focus your selling efforts on the prospects who want such benefits. Create questions designed to uncover the pains/wants that would cause someone to want such benefits. Follow the process above of questions and commitments first, presentations last, and you'll find yourself making money even when you aren't selling for the number one company.

