



*Value-added salespeople don't rely on price cuts to make a sale, they establish a compelling need in the customer's mind for their solution.*

# SELLING THE EXPERIENCE

## HOW COMPELLING IS THE NEED FOR YOUR SOLUTION?

Imagine you are on a family road trip. The kids are screaming, the tank is empty and bladders are full. Stress levels are peaking and everyone needs a break . . . and then you see this billboard, "No service for the next 110 miles." Chances are you're stopping. You're going to stop because there is a compelling need.

Is the need for your solution as compelling as "No service for the next 110 miles"?

One of the greatest challenges salespeople face is presenting a compelling need for their solution. If there is no compelling need for your solution, buyers aren't going to buy.

Salespeople also experience this challenge when buyers are unresponsive or won't meet. Buyers are

unresponsive because they don't see the compelling need for your solution. Buyers will tighten their grip on the status quo. The need for your solution has to be more compelling than the buyer's comfort with the status quo.

When there is no compelling need, salespeople use price to establish need. Salespeople cut the price to give the buyer a compelling reason to buy. In the absence of value, salespeople use price to win business. If you win business on price, you will lose business on price. This tactic is a race to the bottom.

Value-added salespeople and the billboard mentioned above have one thing in common; each establishes a compelling need for their solution. They don't rely on price cuts. Here are some tips to help you create a compelling need for your solution.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 114

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### ARTICULATE A COMPELLING VALUE PROPOSITION

The value proposition is what the customer stands to gain (or not lose) when they experience your solution. The two key words are "gain" and "experience." A compelling value proposition highlights the experiential gain of your solution: end-user satisfaction, time savings, profitability, efficient use of resources, etc. A value proposition is beyond product or service features. A value proposition focuses on the downline impact of experiencing your solution.

The pain proposition is what the customer stands to lose when they don't experience your solution. The value proposition focuses on gain and the pain proposition focuses on loss.

FOR BUYERS TO CHANGE, THERE HAS TO BE A NEED. THE NEED FOR YOUR SOLUTION HAS TO BE MORE COMPELLING THAN THE BUYER'S COMFORT WITH THE STATUS QUO.



For example, that "last chance" billboard highlights loss/pain in the form of missed opportunity. As a driver, if you choose not to stop, you won't have the opportunity to stop for another 110 miles. Imagine the additional pain the driver would experience by not stopping. What pain would the buyer experience by not choosing your alternative?

A compelling value proposition includes both pain and gain. Value-added salespeople have a knack for crafting and articulating a compelling value proposition.

### ASK BETTER QUESTIONS

Helping someone make their own discovery is a powerful persuasion tool. People value their own ideas and insight more than other people's ideas. By asking the right questions, you help the buyer develop their own ideas and insights.

This creates a paradox for salespeople. A compelling sales presentation is less about presenting and more about listening and asking the right questions. Here are

some questions that help the customer discover their own ideas and insights.

- What is the ideal solution?
- What are the mission-critical issues for this project?
- Beyond construction material or equipment, what do you need from us?
- If you were going into our industry, what would you offer that no other company is offering?

### FOCUS ON YOUR KEY DIFFERENTIATORS

In our seminars, we teach salespeople to positively compare themselves to the competition. A positive comparison doesn't mean bad-mouthing the competition. A positive comparison highlights the unique aspects of your solution through differentiation.

However, differentiation remains to be a struggle for salespeople. A recent Reilly Sales Training study revealed that only 39 percent of salespeople believe their solution is meaningfully different than the competition. If you don't believe your solution is meaningfully different, then neither will the buyer.

Analyze your total solution and ask yourself, "What makes our solution meaningfully different?" Your total solution consists of three dimensions: product/service, company and the salesperson. In value-added selling, we call this the three dimensions of value.

For buyers to change, there has to be a need. The need for your solution has to be more compelling than the buyer's comfort with the status quo. In general, people don't like change. As one sales leader illustrated with his favorite analogy, "Nobody likes change except a wet baby."

Buyers will embrace change when you ask the right questions, articulate a compelling value proposition, make them aware of their pain and highlight the unique aspects of your solution. **CS**

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