

Be CERTain of your Customer: Know When to Stop Talking: Practicing the Art of Active Listening – Part I

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Salespeople can be some of the worst offenders of speaking when we really should be listening. After all, most of us are hired for our ability to talk a good game. But many of us also don't recognize the importance of saying our piece, asking our questions and then really listening to our customer.

A pretty basic concept, right? But learning to listen effectively is something that we'll spend our lives practicing. Think of it as an art – one that needs your time and attention. As you become more proficient at your art, you'll also find yourself becoming even more successful as a salesperson – and guiding your clients to more profitable solutions. And isn't that what it's all about?

Listen and Learn

Remember way back in grade school when your teacher insisted everyone in class pay attention to what he or she was saying? It was for your benefit – so you could learn something instead of assuming you knew it all! The same holds true now.

If you're not listening, you'll end up making assumptions based on false information. And, in turn, that means:

- You have a tendency to over-sell or offer a premature (or inappropriate) solution SO
- You won't earn your customer's trust and lose credibility AND
- You might ultimately lose the sale OR
- You might sell one time, but you won't get repeat business.

The Benefits of Active Listening

Effective listening isn't simply about sitting back and letting your customer talk. It's about taking an active role in finding out more about your customer, her business and her goals. By practicing active listening, the best salespeople draw out the facts and determine the emotional reasons their customers buy (or don't buy).

You'll see the results in:

- Better communication
- Possibility of long-term customer relationships
- Better control of the selling situation
- Better fit of the product or solution to the customer
- Increased satisfaction with the person
- Increased referrals
- Increased repeat business

Listening Tip: Avoid the “Uh-Huhs”

Instead of using “uh-huh” as your reaction to what your customer is saying, try using phrases that confirm you’re really listening. “That’s interesting, tell me more,” or “what would that kind of space look like?” These responses confirm your attention and put some variety in your listening. Avoid the “uh-huhs” and you’ll show the customer you’re truly interested and engaged.

This goes for physical listening, too. Zap the “uh-huhs” from your body language. Lean forward. Maintaining eye contact (without staring down your customer). Take notes during your meeting.

Tailor Your Listening to Your Customer

Understanding your customer’s personality is critical to everything you do in a sales situation – especially in active listening. Each personality type requires a special kind of listening in order to achieve a positive result, or sale, for you.

- Take note of your customer’s physical style. For example, if your customer does more physical listening or jots down notes during your meeting, try to do the same. It shows that you’re listening and taking heed of what he’s saying – and that you value what he’s saying.
- Watch your customer’s words. If she uses more analytic-oriented words (exactly, total, cost, results) she’ll pay attention when you do the same. If your customer speaks in an emotional way (feel, think, understand), reflect that in your comments.
- Learn to read body language. A person’s physical movements can speak volumes about a situation. Maintain eye contact to show your customer you’re taking in what she’s saying. Use your posture to show you’re interested – lean in rather than sitting back in your chair. And pay attention to how your customer looks when talking about a business problem or need. Noticing when he looks relaxed or uncomfortable can say a lot about how you need to proceed.

Watch for Listening/Buying Signals

Customers know when we’re listening to them and when we’re not. If you show that you’re following what your customer is saying, chances are she’ll engage you in the conversation. These listening/buying signals from your customer may include:

- ❑ Coming around the desk to show you her notes or sitting side-by-side with you to explain a concept or idea
- ❑ Nodding in agreement with a solution you're posing
- ❑ Sharing her thoughts about her needs ("I'm looking for a more efficient way to do that.")
- ❑ Asking more detailed questions about your product or service ("How long would it take to get that set up?" or "Do you price that by the hour or by the project?")

The same kinds of signals work for you as a salesperson, too. Active listening may mean that you engage them in the notes you're writing down to confirm what you're hearing or suggest you tour the customer's facility. It can make the situation – and the resulting close – less "sales-y," because you're doing something together.

Stay 'in the Moment'

More than anything, let it be known that you're interested in what your customer has to say. Demonstrate that you're really listening by actively responding, analyzing or addressing the information your customer has provided you. Remember, this is your prime opportunity to gather the information you need, to avoid assumptions and start working on a solution that suits your customer's needs.

Part 2 in this series will explore tips for more effective questioning which leads to a better understanding of customer needs and increased capability to meet them.

It's Yours for the Asking: Tips for More Effective Questioning - Part II

Author: Carolyn Merriman, president

While listening is crucial to gathering information about your customer and her situation, asking good questions is just as important. Successful salespeople use a balance and blend of both skills to accurately judge their customers' needs and match them with workable solutions.

Setting the Stage: The Value of Asking Effective Questions

It's true: many salespeople have the gift of gab and many are hired for this very reason. But if we're doing all the talking, when or what are we learning about our customer? A strong customer relationship is much more than merely spouting why a customer should buy our wares – it's about continually finding out more about our customer's needs and tailoring a fit based on that information.

Sounds great, doesn't it? But all of us have missed the boat on one sales call or another. Have you ever said after a client meeting, "Geez, I should have asked her that!" Have you wished you could have connected to your customer better? Maybe, six months down the road, you've realized you're missing a key piece of client information that you should have asked before presenting your proposal. Those realizations can suck the selling strategy out of just about anyone.

It's worth learning a big lesson right now: effective questioning is valuable in everything we do and in every decision we make. It gives us the power to help our customer make good decisions, as well. Effective questioning must happen all the time – every time we engage with our customer.

But it's more than lip service. In order to build trust with our customers, we need to understand who they are, what their business is and how they do business. That's where effective questioning comes in.

What's in It for You?

Besides learning a lot about your client and his business that you didn't know before, effective questioning can deliver a wealth of benefits:

- You gather richer information that's better geared to a tailored solution for:
- You and your customer: you improve communication and form a partnership.
- You as a salesperson: you shorten the selling cycle by gaining better information up front, making you better prepared to pose a solution that makes sense.

- You position yourself as a trusted, informed resource.
- You become knowledgeable and enhance your ability to customize your “stuff” for your customer. You’re no longer simply pitching a widget.
- You have more information for future sales calls, allowing you to build a relationship with your customer.
- You stand out from the competition as a person who takes the time to listen and learn about your customer – versus merely “telling and selling.”
- You show your customer you care. Don’t ever avoid asking a question because you think you’ll appear uninformed. In fact, asking questions is a sign you’re committed to tailoring the solution to your customer’s needs.

The 411 on Information Gathering

Now that we’re moving into information mode, how do we really know the scoop we’re getting is what we need? After all, as business people we’re very complex – and our businesses are pretty complex too. Often, though, what’s shared up front between salespeople and customers is usually on the surface.

It’s our job to become skilled in asking questions to unpeel the layers of a subject, to target future opportunities – to go deeper and wider with our questions. Don’t be satisfied with only basic information. Nurture your innate human curiosity to get the answer that can enhance your connection to your customer and her business.

Know, too, that information gathering is an ongoing process that requires frequent revisiting – because we work in a changing, evolving universe. Don’t rest on your laurels and make assumptions based on past information (which can kill a sale!). Use your questioning skills to stay current on what’s happening in your customer’s world.

Prepping Your Questions

As with any sales skill, it’s worth practicing what you want to say before you actually talk to your customer.

- Prioritize what you need to know and when you need to know it.
- If you only get 20 minutes with this person, what five or six questions would you ask her?
- Think of the broader, big picture questions – not just the minutiae. These are the kinds of questions that let you piggyback more questions on top of them, giving you a more accurate sense of your customer’s challenges.
- Physically prepare your questions. Script them, plan them, phrase them. If you know what you’re going to ask ahead of time, you can better concentrate on the answers (and give yourself time to ask more questions based on those answers!).

Know Thy Buyer’s Rules, Motives and Politics

It’s a cardinal rule of questioning. Get a sense of what drives your customer to

do her job, to make decisions, and to forward your ideas on to others:

- Key in on your client's personality style and tailor your questions to fit her style. Some people are more numbers-oriented, while others will be more personal in telling you their needs (maybe it's a promotion or some kind of recognition).
- Understand where your client fits in the business's hierarchy. Who's the real buyer? Are decisions made by committee or by the Big Boss?
- Know your customer's motivation to buy. Is it based on budget? Or on an emotional reason?
- Find out as much about your client's business and needs up front; prepare questions based on your existing knowledge and research – do what it takes to learn about the company. That means homework.
- Pen the all-important who, what, when, where, why and how questions to expand the base of your current information – they work!

Try these sample questions to get a grasp of your customer's make-up:

- “Do you have a budget in mind for this project?”
- “What's your role in the buying process?”
- “Why do you want to buy/find a new solution?”
- “Is there anyone else we should be working with so implementation/purchase will go smoothly?”
- “Do you need assistance in presenting this internally?”
- “What is your time frame?”

Tailor Your Questions to Your Customer's Style

Not only do you need to feel at ease when you're asking questions, your customer needs to feel that way, too. Evaluate your customer's style and custom-fit your questions accordingly.

By asking questions early on, you also can field objections early on, and get a good idea of how and why your customer buys. Otherwise, you won't get what you want and your customer won't be comfortable sharing the information you need.

Consider the following when taking the pulse of your customer:

- Does your customer stall? There's probably somebody else involved in (or may be afraid to “risk” the purchase decision himself).
- Does your customer show indifference to your service? Plant seeds of doubt about the value she's currently getting or the needs not being met – and don't give the competition any air time.
- Does your customer appear skeptical or say he needs more proof? Give him the ammo he needs to pitch the idea to his internal higher-ups. Use data, references, demos or pilots.

- Does your customer appear to misunderstand what you're saying? Nip it in the bud by confirming the terminology you're both using and by saying 'Tell me more about the type of call center services you're using' or 'What does your current clinic look like?'

Listen for clues that show you how to ask questions to get the answers you need.

- If you have a customer who is unwilling to respond freely, use closed-ended, short-response questions to confirm factual information. "How many injuries have you had in the past six months?"
- Employ open-ended, "feeling"-type questions for your expressive customers. "How do you feel about the way your call center is handling customer concerns?"

Be Natural – Not Rehearsed

In a face-to-face meeting, referring to written questions can come off as too canned or make you seem like you're crossing off items from a checklist. It's ok to bring some notes with key words or phrases to prompt your questions, but steer clear of relying on your notes too much.

Learn to be a good questioner and the pay-off will last you a lifetime. Above all, remember that effective questions need to:

- Get your answers
- Be phrased in an effective manner
- Be appropriate in sequence
- Identify a need (before you can put a solution on the table, you have to address the need first)
- Convert opportunities to the customer's need; use questions to see "if I fix this, are you willing to buy my new product?"
- Tie your questions to your customer's personality style and attitudes

In Part 3, we'll address some hands-on ways for putting your newly-honed questioning techniques to the test. Learn the types of questions to ask to get good answers, view sample scripts of questioning situations, and learn a strategy to put it all together.

(Part 1 explains how to listen and respond to your buyer's unique challenges, as well as identify and sell solutions that work. To read Part 1: Know When to Stop Talking: Practicing the Art of Active Listening [click here](#).)

Be CERTain of Your Customer's Needs: A Hands-On Questioning Strategy - Part III

Author: Carolyn Merriman, president

The Heart of the Matter

A staple of CHG's customer sales training seminars, the CERT model is a needs analysis tool to help salespeople manage the on-going dialogue and customer buy-in through dialogue. By using CERT, the salesperson uses a step-by-step process to gain a deeper understanding of the impact a customer's motives and conditions make on his purchasing decision.

Think of it as getting to the heart of the matter – stripping away the outer layers to find the most valuable customer information which, in turn, leads you to the right solution for your customer.

What Makes CERT Special?

The CERT model is an effective tool for salespeople to use in every face-to-face meeting or phone sales call, no matter if it's your first call or your third follow-up.

It's an important strategy in creating a win-win relationship with your customer.

With CERT skills, you can maintain a partnership that's relationship- and dialogue-based – rather than a push-push, buy-now relationship. Rather, CERT helps you confirm information by asking questions that serve as a natural progression to your close.

Accordingly, these questions help you and your customer see the big picture and the purchasing details (the how, when and why of the buying cycle). The CERT model also provides the perfect opportunity to take the pulse of your customer and see if she's receptive to your product or service, which ultimately translates to the purchasing decision.

8 Reasons to Try the CERT Strategy

CERT is a step-by-step progression of analyzing your customer's needs and then (and only then!) formulating a solution that fits what he needs:

1. It helps you develop the best phraseology for your questioning.
2. It helps you keep an eye on the big picture.
3. It gives you a total picture of the opportunity, short and long-term.
4. It gives you clues to identify your customer's personality.
5. It gives you a perspective on your customer's history and future. Where is

the company now and where does the customer want it to be?

6. It helps you focus on your buyer's role and his motives.
7. To make it work, you need to practice it, write it down, practice it and verbalize it. Soon, it will become second nature—and a key part of each customer visit.
8. Using effective questioning techniques up front saves time! Don't waste time—have an idea of what you want to ask before you enter your customer's office or call her on the phone.

CERT: A Tutorial

Now, we'll show you the four steps of the CERT process. Keep in mind that each one works in sync with the others, to create a way to gather and analyze information about your customer and his organization. Along the way, you'll find yourself building a relationship with your customer that benefits both of you.

C is for Confirmation

The first part of your process involves assessing the current customer situation and gathering and substantiating information. Use this step to:

- Gather history or background
- Assess what information you currently have
- Determine what other information is needed
- Confirm opportunities as needs
- Assure that data is accurate
- Reveal discrepancies

Know the three times in the sales call when "C" questions should be used:

1. During discovery of customer needs and opportunities and the credibility-building phase.
2. Immediately before presenting any new product or service data to the practice.
3. When building the foundation for the close.

Try it on for Size:

Consider what questions you would use to confirm and understand more about the customer's interest in your services:

- "What is your practice/ company's number-one concern?"
- "I understand that your company is no longer participating in ABC's managed care program. Is that correct?"
- "Who did you use for workers' compensation in the past?"
- "Your CFO provided this data for our calculations. Is this correct?"

CERT Tip #1

If you have a customer who's unwilling to respond freely, use closed-ended, short-response questions.

E is for Expansion

This phase assesses where the customer would like to be. Her responses give you details about her desired solution and expectations, including the desired or required results. This step is a valuable tool for evaluating and positioning the customer's:

- Desired advantage or gain
- True needs
- Desired value or satisfaction
- Desired situation and status (for example, an easy-to-administrator program)
- Perception of you, the salesperson, in the measured outcome (will the bar stay the same, or will it move to a new level?)

When should you use "E" questions?

1. When determining which product offerings are of most interest to your customer. It gives him a chance to sort through his options.
2. When learning what the key issues are, then prioritizing value and opportunity vs. need.
3. Before introducing benefits that match your customer's needs.

Try it on for Size:

- "As an expert from the personnel office perspective, what attributes are required to make scheduling of physical exams work for you?"
- "As the lead physician, what type of communication [from whom?] would you like after your patient is referred?"
- "If money weren't an issue, what kind of program would you build?"

Other "E" questions include:

- Thinking/feeling questions: "How do you feel about the new requirements for well-care management?"
- Yes/No, fact-finding questions
- Options questions (either/or scenarios)

CERT Tip #2

Draft who, what, when, where, why and how questions to expand the best of what you currently know

R is for Research

The third step of the CERT model focuses on your customer's buying motives, roles, politics and dollars. Here, you can gain information on how the buying decision is made and by whom. These questions also serve to broaden the customer's mental picture of what buying from you can do for him.

A caveat: Keep in mind that you need to ask "R" questions every time. Don't make assumptions – you may get sandbagged later. Situations change. Staffs change. Priorities change. Stay in the loop.

"R" questions allow you to ask:

- "Who else is involved?"
- "May I help to present to your board of directors?"
- "Would the committee like me to answer questions?"
- "When is your budget year?"
- "How often are healthcare decisions made, and by whom?"

"R" questions are effective tools in:

1. Determining the customer's values and attitudes.
2. Understanding the scope of the decision-making process in the organization.
3. Getting a feeling for the company's hierarchy and processes.

Try it on for Size:

- "Are you personally responsible for having a drug screening program in place in time to submit for the budget in January?"
- "Is there anyone else in your organization that I need to present the proposal to?"
- "Can you describe for me your budget proposal process for this service, so that I can best meet your needs?"

CERT Tip #3

- Results define what the customer buys (task motive/consideration).
- Values and attitudes define why the customer buys (personal motive/consideration).

T is for Fit to a “T” Agreement

The last part of the CERT model culminates in confirming the information you’ve mined thus far – and proposing an action plan. You identify the customer’s desired outcome. You propose the next steps in addressing her needs and/or presenting a solution. And, ideally, both parties agree that the benefit you’ve introduced fits the needs and wants – and that there’s a mutual desire to move forward.

Step #1

“T” is actually two steps that get you to your goal. The first step is to recap what you’ve learned and confirm that it’s correct according to your customer. Present a synopsis of everything to date. Remember, that if anything isn’t quite right, now’s the time to back up and get the correct answers before moving forward.

Upon confirmation that your current information is correct, your next step is to put it in a context that’s relevant to the customer and make your proposal. This is your opportunity to suggest the next actions – maybe it’s a tour, writing a proposal or having your rep meet with the organization’s clinician. See how our scripting examples use a call to action.

Try it on for Size: Script #1

“To confirm the data you gave us, a single lost work day is worth \$1,000 to your company. Is this correct?” or

“Based on the needs you identified, our premier work-well program provides you with a single source provider, in-depth case management, quarterly reports and a guaranteed refund if we don’t satisfactorily deliver on the program. Does this sound like a match for your organization’s goals?”

Step #2

Though your customer doesn’t yet have a product in their hand, you need to recognize the signs that she is engaged and ready for a solution. Consider this your opportunity to put out a trial balloon and see if she is, indeed, serious about moving forward.

Try it on for Size: Script #2

“To begin realizing the cost savings of our program, we’d like to schedule a meeting with our occupational health group and your team. Can we set that up now?” or

“Then I’d like to propose that I detail the proposed program on paper and have it ready for you by Tuesday. Can I schedule a time to bring it to you then?”

“T” questions allow you to:

- Take a pulse of the customer.
- Uncover any aspects that might block the process.
- Gain permission to move forward with the next steps.

CERT Tip #4

The questioning process requires that we develop our approach to fit the flow of conversation. Remember your questions need to:

- Get you answers.
- Be phrased in an effective manner.
- Be appropriate in sequence.
- Identify the customer’s needs and opportunities.

A Final Thought

CERT represents a critical stage of the selling cycle. As a salesperson, you need to retain control of information gathering, but still encourage a dialogue with your customer. Resist the urge to “tell, not sell.” Trust the CERT strategy to help you build a relationship and establish trust and credibility with your customer.

Read how you can put the CERT strategy to work in Part 4 of our series in the Winter issue of the Tracker. Customize your own questions from our scripted model and learn about specific questioning techniques to help you get more and better information from your customer.

We Invite Your Questions

Do you have a selling cycle question or scenario you need help with? Contact us and we’ll send you back some sample scripting using the CERT model. Read Part 4 of this series, which gives you practical advice for practicing active listening and effective questioning techniques.

(Part 1 explains how to listen and respond to your buyer’s unique challenges, as well as identify and sell solutions that work. To read Part 1: Know When to Stop Talking: Practicing the Art of Active Listening [click here](#).

Part 2 this series of articles explains how to listen and respond to your buyer’s unique challenges, as well as identify and sell solutions that work.)

Put Your Words to Work: A Selling Scripting Model – Part IV

Author: Carolyn Merriman, president

In previous 3 parts to this series, we've given you tips to become a better listener, to ask better questions and to implement a strategy that ties everything together. (The links to these parts are found at the end of this article.) In this section, we show it all in the context of a sample sales call, featuring scripted scenarios you can tailor for your use. Keep in mind that this is only a portion of the big picture you'll encounter as a salesperson. But learning to get to the heart of what your customer needs through listening and questioning is a crucial step in presenting an effective solution. Our sample scripts are intended to give you a way to jump-start your own sales skills. It's your job to customize them to reflect your own style, based on your own customer and scenario.

The Situation

Let's say there's a new distribution plant opening in the industrial park in town. The hospital has several clients in this industrial park and wants to establish a relationship with the new prospect and ultimately gain its business.

The salesperson, Susan, has talked with the plant manager. He has indicated that the vice president of operations is the person in charge of healthcare and employee issues. Other staff members support human resources, safety and finance decisions. Susan wants to conduct an information – gathering appointment with the VP and seek approval for meetings with the rest of his team.

Start at the Top

Sell from the top down.

Start with the highest person in the company and let her tell you that you should talk with her next-in-command.

It's a lot easier than approaching a person who doesn't have the knowledge or authority to make a decision.

The Script – Using the CERT Model

The CERT model, created by Corporate Health Group, is a four-step, needs analysis tool to help you manage your ongoing dialogue with your customer. Through CERT, you can get a better understanding of the who, what, where, when, why and how behind your customer's purchasing decision

Step 1: C = Confirmation Questions

First, confirm a sales opportunity by gathering history or background information from your customer. Now's the time to get new data and assure that the data you may already have is correct and current. If not, get the facts before moving on.

"It's my understanding from talking with your plant manager that your new operation will be opening in January 2001. Is this correct? Can you share with me some of the company's objectives in opening another distribution plant?" (Here, you're looking for what the customer might say about increase in revenues, being able to handle customer demand, seeking global market contracts, seeing another plant being phased out due to its age, etc.)

"Based on your objectives, it appears you will be adding employees and shifts to accommodate these issues. How many employees are you moving over to this location and how many will be new hires? Who will manage this process for you? Are you aware of any compliance issues that will need to be managed for this batch of new hires? If so, I'd like your permission to work with your contact on these issues and see how we might be of service."

Step 2: E = Expansion Questions

Assess where your customer would like to be. Aim to get responses that give you details about her expectations, as well as desired or required results.

What are your customer's desired solution and results?

"You indicated that you wanted to have a healthcare provider that works with you proactively rather than just taking care of your injuries. Can you describe what that looks like? What kind of services would you like and how frequently would you want us to work for you onsite here at the new plant? If so, for what group of employees? – and is there space here for that kind of program?"

Ask the customer to elaborate on existing information.

"I understand you have implemented some new group health programs and we are a provider on the panel. The plant appears to have embraced a prevention and wellness philosophy. Would you talk about that a little? How would you like to see this philosophy translated into other programs and services?"

Make sure you understand the customer's priorities.

"We've had a great discussion today and you've presented a lot of ideas for us to respond to. If we had to recap and prioritize, what would you say are the top three needs – and what outcomes or measurements are most important for you to see demonstrated in these programs?"

Step 3: R = Research Questions

Now it's time to focus on your customer's buying motives, roles, politics and dollars. In this step, you can gain information on how the buying decision is

made and by whom. You'll also help the customer get a clear picture of what buying from you can do for him.

Explore your customer's buying motives. What is he hoping to accomplish by implementing this program? How will he measure its success? Help your customer see the “What's In It For Me?” Benefits. Why is success important to her personally? Is she positioning herself for a promotion? Is she looking for the approval and respect of her colleagues?

Make sure the appropriate team is involved in the process.

"Earlier in our conversation, you indicated there's a team of people involved in this decision. Is this still the case? If so, who is on the team and how does the team work? What's the team's responsibility in the decision – are they voting on or choosing the solution, or are they helping to research a solution?"

"When I first visited the plant, I met with your vice president of operations. Since then, I've been working with you on the healthcare proposal. Do we need to present the proposal to him? And, if so, do we need to do this for approval or just as a courtesy? How can I help you with this process?"

Ask about timetables and budget.

"When do you start your budget process? The reason I ask is so that for next year's cycle, I might be able to prepare internal information that you could use."

"What is your budget year/cycle?"

"Last time we met, you indicated that you and your boss were working on the budget for programs like this. Can you help me out with a rough outline of your budget? Would it be helpful if I presented some sample program budgets to be used early on in your budgeting process? How would it be most helpful to break it out – for group, work health, injuries versus intervention/prevention?"

Find out more about how the buying decision is made, and by whom.

"We've been working together for a couple of sessions on your healthcare priorities. Should we be putting together a presentation for others in order to seek consensus or approval?"

"Once the decision is made, what's the best way to begin implementation for your program? Should we tentatively plan on working with your staff – or is there a team we would be working with to begin plant orientation sessions?"

Step 4: T = Fit to a "T" Agreement Questions

Now, you recap the information you've gained during the call and propose an action plan. Don't rush it – recap what you've learned and confirm that it's correct. This is your time to reiterate information as well as re-confirm it. It's also the time to recognize the signs that your customer is engaged and ready

for a solution.

There are several ways to build your close – asking for agreement about what you've learned or taking it to the next step. Remember, there's no right or wrong here. You've got to make your close work with your own instincts, style and your customer's comfort zone.

"Based on the information you provided to me, it would appear that these three issues are most critical to the success of meeting your plant's objectives. You've indicated that it's ok for me to meet with your staff for more detailed information on your healthcare programs. I'll set up those meetings before I leave today. I'd like to then take all the information I gather and work with our team at the hospital to build a proposal on how we might best work with your organization."

"Other clients who have similar issues as you do have implemented our programs and successfully achieved an average minimum of ten percent in cost savings. We'd like the opportunity to do the same for you. With that proposal, I'd like to come back in two weeks to present it to you and discuss the options we think can best be implemented for your plant. Can we go ahead and set up the presentation meeting? If so, is there anyone else who should be at that meeting – maybe your staff that I'm meeting with next?"

Close your sales call with a thank you for the business and a confirmation of the next steps you'll take. Maybe it's a follow-up phone call, a written proposal or a meeting between your staff and your client's staff.

"Thank you for taking time to meet with me today. It was really beneficial for me to better understand your goals. I'll work with your staff next and am looking forward to our meeting on Thursday, the 440nd. I'll call your secretary the day before to confirm the meeting and the participants, so we'll have presentation copies for everyone. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you think of anything else that would be helpful – your secretary has my number, as well. Thanks again!"

Spread the Word – and Energize Your Team!

Now that you've got some tools to use on your next sales call, consider sharing your newfound information with your sales colleagues. Whether done one-on-one or in a group setting, sales training is more important than ever.

Training is only effective, though, if it's tailored to your organization's target customer, products and services, as

well as its staff skill and competency level. Working with a team of trainers can help you introduce scripting, sales techniques and personality style management – all critical factors in the selling process.

Above all, remember the value in sharing these techniques with everyone on your staff – not only Sales. There's incredible value in recognizing the importance of effective customer interaction. Salespeople may bring the customer in the door, but it takes everyone's effort to keep and grow the customer relationship.

(Part 1 explains how to listen and respond to your buyer's unique challenges, as well as identify and sell solutions that work. To read Part 1: Know When to Stop Talking: Practicing the Art of Active Listening click [here](#).

Part 2 this series of articles explains how to listen and respond to your buyer's unique challenges, as well as identify and sell solutions that work.

Part 3 addresses some hands-on ways for putting your newly-honed questioning techniques to the test. Learn the types of questions to ask to get good answers, view sample scripts of questioning situations, and learn a strategy to put it all together.)



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