Go Back to Basics for Sales Success

by Carolyn Merriman, President

While the holidays have passed and some New Year's resolutions may be fading, those in charge of managing customer relationships should seize the chance to keep at least one resolution alive in the workplace. Resolve to go back to the basics for sales success. Consistent use of good selling skills will keep you at the forefront, set your program apart from the others, and serve you well in working with internal audiences and external customers. Here is a quick review of the basics.

Opening

Whether we open the door by phone, print or in person, the critical first step is to establish trust and credibility with the prospective customer. The same principle also holds true with current customers. We must re-establish our credibility and reaffirm their trust in us, our organization and what we have to offer.

Ask the Right Questions

A good salesperson has a plan for directing the conversation and positioning the desired outcome. The most important piece of the conversation to script are the opening questions—they can make or break the tone of your entire meeting and ultimately impact the outcome.

- ❑ Focus questions on the client, their business and their needs.
- Use questions to first establish a dialogue to share and learn what is most important to them.
- Value the information that they share with you—look for ways to respond that will provide a solution.
- ❑ Demonstrate your sincerity in learning about the client
- ❑ Probe, probe and probe again.
- Work through the layers of information to really understand their emotional and task reasons for the purchase.
- ❑ Use questions to learn their frame of reference.
- Questioning will reveal their ideas for potential solutions.
- Learn the value and priority of finding a solution and the client's sense of time frame, budget, politics and value-added options.
- ❑ Summarize the questions to make sure you have captured their input correctly and to "take their pulse" on moving forward to the next step.

Ways to Demonstrate Trust and Credibility

Research

- ❑ Before you contact them develop a baseline of knowledge

Open the Door to Dialogue

- ❑ Use a strategic question that builds empathy through understanding
- ❑ "Our physicians are interested in assistance with billing services…"
- ❑ "You may be wondering about our recent affiliation with…"

Purpose, Process, Payoff

- ❑ Use the three P's to transition to the meeting agenda
- ❑ "The reason (purpose) we're meeting today is…
- ❑ What I'd like to do is (process)…
- ❑ At the end of this meeting, I should be able to provide you with (payoff)…"

Present the Solution

- ❑ Develop your solution; address both business and personal reasons for buying.
- ❑ Make sure your solution is benefit-oriented; don't "Feature Dump." Anyone can match your products or service features— it's the benefits that set you apart and cannot be easily replicated.

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