

Think Like A Buyer

One of the best sales training sessions I ever held was the day I handed out advertisements from a local newspaper to my sales team. It was the early 1990s and the battle to win your mobile phone contract was so fierce that most of the regional stores hadn't had time – or didn't recognise the need – for sales training.

“Go on,” I said, “make an enquiry and become an ‘inbound lead’ for a change.”

One by one, my sales team reconvened, each with a look of shock and amazement. *“Oh my God,” one started, “they just rabbited on about this phone, that phone, and how great their prices were. Nothing about me or my requirements. I couldn't get a word in!”*

The exercise was a huge success. Firstly, my team experienced selling at its worst. Secondly, they walked tall on the streets that week, delighted with the knowledge of their professionalism.

It is not always this bad but certainly useful to consider the buyer's position and, if possible, experience their environment.

Some useful tips:

- Make an enquiry to a competitor. But be careful! Be prepared and ready in case you connect with a professional. If you are uneasy with this, choose a different sector with a similar sales setup.
- Consider letting your team work in procurement for a day, especially when they have a number of suppliers coming in to pitch.
- Get your executives to ask clients for feedback on how they did. Have a standard questionnaire that prompts honest answers and suggestions regarding their overall buying experience. Done professionally, your clients will appreciate your efforts to develop skills within customer contact.
- Think like a buyer. Request that your sales force spend time considering their personal purchasing experiences. When buying a car, what did they like? Who rubbed them up the wrong way and why? What did they buy and when, and was it because of the sales executive? Give your team a couple of weeks to keep notes and then hold a session on this.
- Study body language. Your clients will tell you a lot about a pending sale right at the start through their body language. Use this initial communication to navigate the *Directional Selling* path. Run a sales meeting session on body language – it is not all hocus pocus!