

Explicit Need

- How To Capture A Prospect's Interest And Make The Sale

By Joe Heller, High Performance Sales Coach

An artist stands in front of a blank canvas, slowly mixing the paint for just the right color. Lightly touching the brush to the canvas, his creation starts, and something of beauty begins to slowly appear. Ok Joe, I thought I subscribed to a sales column, not Art 101!

I wanted to capture your attention with this example to illustrate (pun intended) that today with all of the complexity and challenges of selling, a sales professional must have a greater understanding of how to help your prospect succeed in business. Success in sales today is dependant on crafting your value proposition to be business centric. In addition to a professional needing to become a great hunter, as we discussed in the last article, the sales professional today must understand how to create value from your client's eyes.

Salespeople today have been equipped with an overabundance of sales tools, methods and closing models for every conceivable type of sale. So, why are sales professionals failing to capture the attention of qualified buyers or advance a sale? I believe that the majority of professionals in sales do not know how to capture business drivers or build a business case beyond the specific area in which their products are applied. Many do not comprehend the simplicity of uncovering the Explicit Need [note #1] of a prospective client.

Note #1: Explicit Need captures benefits from the prospect's perspective and is the real business reason a decision's made. Explicit Needs are the specific wants or desires specified by the customer.

Again, the professional salesperson of today needs to evolve into someone who not only knows sales techniques, models, probing skills, et al. The modern salesperson also must be a businessperson who knows how to sell, just as an artist is known for having a higher degree of ability and skill than an ordinary painter. Ask yourself, are your salespeople ordinary? Can they differentiate the product from the competition? The modern salesperson must have real business acumen, much more than the salesperson from 20 years ago. For example, not only must the sales professional know how to read a company's annual report, understand cash flow and acronyms such as EBIDTA (Earnings Before Interest Depreciation Taxes and Amortization) and EPS (Earnings Per Share). They must be able to translate that into an understanding of the business drivers needed to build a business case and support the real value of a sales decision.

Why is this important? Even professionals who understand the acronyms don't always understand the business implications associated with them. To generate sales in the "Challenge Economy", you must understand the economic drivers that can not only produce a significant ROI for your prospective client, but also add value to their business proposition. Probing questions must be crafted to reflect the understanding that you have a strong knowledge about their business. Your knowledge enables you to produce a solution that can be validated with specific [hard and soft] differentiators that are focused on the Explicit Needs of your clients to help their business focus on the four fundamental business needs.

These four fundamental business needs include; improving your prospective client's competitive position by lowering cost of operation, enhancing their corporate image, lessening their market vulnerability and increasing their profits through greater efficiencies.

Remember; keep the four fundamental business needs at the forefront of your thinking as you create your irrefutable logic decision tree around the real business value for your prospect.

Did I say this was easy? Supporting Explicit Needs can be arduous if you do not truly understand your prospect's business, the market, and the competition [note #2]. In order to uncover explicit needs, the modern sales professional will need to become a business specialist in order to excel. Today's successful salesperson must develop an ability to uncover the root cause of the customer's problem, not just the symptoms associated with the problem, which is where most professionals stop. This is where the great sales professional prospers; they have an uncanny ability to discover what the real Explicit Needs are for their prospect. This is why a doctor does not just treat a fever; they treat the root cause of the fever, the infection itself.

Note #2: Competition references the competition your prospect faces in competing for new business within their market, industry or niche and how their competition affects their sales cycle, not the competition you confront in advancing the sale.

As the sales professional gains a grasp on business, they will gain the benefit of a new paradigm called business. The difference of business is going from tunnel vision to utilizing your peripheral vision to help you manage what is in front of you.

A recent example is when I recently sat down with one of my coaching clients to help him gain a different approach that would single him out and rise above the rest of the field. In this particular example, my coaching client had been trying to get the attention of a Senior Vice President of a Fortune 500 company for nine months. As we began, we started conducting research and found that the prospect joined the company in May 2000. At that time the company's stock was at \$17, and today it is trading at \$3. We assumed that his options were "underwater" (below the strike price where the option could be executed profitably). Next, we reviewed the company's annual report for anything we could use that would tie my client's service into the company's core business value. We did, and not only were we able to weave that value into his message, but we were able to use a specific quote to shareholders that the CEO used in their annual report.

What happened next might surprise some of you, after nine months of trying he got a call back in 3 days. Why? My client was able to weave a business case that tied directly with the personal motivator needs of the individual (see Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs) to improve the value of the stock. His message was clear and succinct, tying all of the psychological (emotional) elements together with irrefutable logic of how his service could directly impact the company's stock price.

Remember, by developing a business case that drives shareholder value for your prospective client will position your solution ahead of your toughest competition.

One final note; in order to become a successful in selling you must become an avid student of what works in selling. I developed the Revenue Warrior Selling System (TM) to give you a competitive advantage and succeed against your most challenging competition. You can find the Revenue Warrior Selling System (TM) on my site <http://www.JoeHeller.com>. Go there right now and click on the Revenue Warrior Selling System (TM) to learn more. It's a great resource from my personal library for yours.

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