

Stop being a salesman and start being a ‘solvesman’

Here’s an observation -- and something I know you all know already:

People love to buy, but hate to be sold.

So how do you, with your tools and skills, convince them to buy from you instead of anyone else?

Try becoming a solvesman -- someone who can offer superior solutions to their needs.

I saw the effects of this in a recent pitch

We were asked to reply to an RFP (Request for Proposal) earlier this month. There were some criteria requested, which were -- in addition to coming up with some free ideas -- presenting answers to “Why we should we award you with our account?”, “Can you demonstrate a sensitivity to the marketplace?”, and “What kind of experience do you have working on other accounts like this?”

Know what? Since we agreed to reply, and go out on a limb with “spec” ideas, I absolutely ignored any questions about our ability or credentials and didn’t talk at all about my company and “why us?” I just presented great work, what might happen if they followed our thinking, and what it would cost if they wanted that work.

I presented only attractive solutions that they could use and didn’t “sell” at all -- and, you know what? I’ll bet you we’ll get their business.

Because the solutions addressed their needs and demonstrated our willingness to think about better ways to solve their problems, it addressed and overshadowed any questions about impressive credentials or special systems..

You need to make it all about them

A couple of years ago, a client of ours asked me to review their canned PowerPoint presentation. They were pitching a major client and were nervous with their show

because they'd struck out with it in a couple of previous meetings. They blamed their second place showing on a shift in the marketplace, increased competition, and buyers who were savvier now than they used to be.

Okay. So I sat back and had them present their show. It was quite well rehearsed and slick. First they talked about their history, and then some of the clients they'd worked with -- an impressive roster indeed. Then they presented their unique process, and then their wonderful team, and then their business arrangements. Finally, their show closed with a bevy of impressive endorsement quotes from former clients. The PowerPoint was a litany of credentials designed to "sell" the prospect on their expertise -- as if that was all she cared about.

Of course they were striking out -- and, unless they changed their way of thinking, they were destined to fail again!

Nothing at all in the presentation talked to the specific situation, the needs of the client, or what specific rewards the prospect could enjoy as a result of doing business with the firm. Or why she even needed to consider the product they were pitching. It was a presentation only designed to impress the prospective client (or maybe themselves) about them.

My response was that, since this was an important VP who wouldn't give you any of her valuable time unless she thought you were worth seeing in the first place, maybe you could stop trying to sell her so damn hard and talk to more of the things she might care about.

What's in it for her?

Typically, like most companies and brands, the firm's "pitch" focused only on how they think they differ from their competitors, what unique process they have that the other guy doesn't, and how successful they'd been in the past. It was myopic, self-centered and, to tell you the truth, rather boring. Blah, blah, blah... we're this and we're that and we're just so terrific. It was like that old actor's joke: *"Well, I guess I've talked enough about me. Now it's your turn. So, what do you think of me?"*

Whereas, if only they'd view things from the prospect's point of view, they might approach the sales call quite differently, don't you think?

I suggested putting themselves in her shoes

"Instead of just making the presentation about you guys," I offered, "why not talk to the opportunity she has to take advantage of what you have to offer? Show her the size of the market. How other competitors have already learned how to tap that market. What rewards she might derive if she did too."

.....

“Then offer her a couple of free nuggets of your wisdom -- custom-tailored solutions that you took the liberty of developing just for her. Excite her about how her life will change if she does business with you.

“Don’t you think that’s a bit more attractive of a presentation than one that’s only about you?”

Of course, they won her business -- and went on to win more clients too. Because now they finally *get it* and have started offering solutions, instead of typical (and lazy) sales pitches.

.....

####

Allan Gorman is owner of Brandspa, llc - a Montclair, NJ based branding and creative consultancy Download a copy of Allan’s informative and helpful report: “*Ten Marketing Secrets for Building a Sexier Brand*” from <http://www.brandspa-llc.com> or send an e-mail to agorman@brandspa-llc.com

©2005 AGCD. All rights reserved.