Sales Tip 1

Dealing with the Competition

Setting a ManTrap

These are black holes created for the competitive salesperson to fall into. The idea is to take something that the competition believes to be strength and turn it into a weakness.

If you become skillful enough to master this technique you will have the satisfaction of watching the competition selling against itself. *The technique is possible because the prospect is being influenced by his or her perception of the feature / benefit. This perception can be influenced by the salesperson.* There are usually several ways to present a feature. The competition will naturally position the associated benefit to something that they believe to be an advantage for them. The skillful salesperson can consider this same feature and position the associated benefit to their advantage.

I experienced a very successful example of the ManTrap used in the IT industry. Here a perceived technical advantage was flipped over by a ManTrap with a commercial perception of the same feature. (THE FOLLOWING IS NOT A TECHNICAL ARGUMENT)

In the mid90s when Microsoft's Windows product was starting its domination of the IT world two accounting software giants stalked the great American nation, Great Plains and Platinum. Great Plains was extremely proud of the fact that its software used the latest Microsoft technology (32bit) at both levels, the processing server and the user desktop. On the other hand Platinum was a little behind the game technically, its software used new technology (32bit) on the Server but old technology (16bit) on the user desktop.

Every Great Plains presentation would have the inevitable boast that it was the ONLY software to use this new (32bit technology) throughout. The benefit perceived by the Great Plains guys was that the prospect would want to buy the latest technology and not want solutions that were old-hat.

The Platinum guys thought about this and looked at the same thing from a different perception. Yes, Great Plains had a technology advantage but could it be positioned as a weakness? Obviously the answer was yes otherwise there would not be a story. The crux of the counter argument stems from the fact that the new 32bit technology required the organisation to buy new desktops in order to be able to run the 32bit software.

What this meant to the buyer if they bought the Great Plains solution was an additional spend of 1,000 dollars for new desktops for each user of the software! Twenty workstations meant another 20,000 dollars to spend.

Once the prospect understood this argument the Great Plains guy was selling against himself. When the prospect heard "fully 32bit" they didn't think "great, new technology" what they actually thought was, "there's another 20,000 dollars I've got to spend"!!

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