## A little exercise for young theologians

As a field sales manager, it's your job to get as much value as possible from each of your regions. But how do you do that? What are the sales training topics you need to focus on? You could invest more money in the team by hiring more sellers. A quick fix, but one that can't run on a real scale. But perhaps a better, long-term investment to gain value is by maximizing the efficiency of your guys working in the field through effective sales skills training. The techniques learned through an effective sales skills training program will continue with field sales representatives forever, such as: How to keep yourself in delivering a presentation Recognize what stage a customer is in the buying cycle and how to approach them Learning how to effectively manage your time down the road Identifying a high probability upsell opportunity They can be consistently applied by your team every time they meet with a customer; quarter after quarter, year after year, not just as a one-time solution that could help you achieve your short-term goals. But before you put down thousands of dollars for an outside consultant, give some of these in-house pointers a try: Sales skills training for field sales teams Asking the right questions Let's face it, you've probably walked past one of your team members on a call to a customer while on your way to the coffee pot. And, as you stream away, stirring in your creamer, hear what's being said. As the conversation progresses your face starts to shudder and contort on every little mistake they make until eventually, its turning and dancing around so much that you've bitten down and left a bloody imprint on your lower lip. Are these really the questions my team brings up to potential customers?! Unfortunately, the answer is often yes. Due to a lack of sales training skills many field representatives have not learned how to guide a customer to a purchase decision through a carefully designed set of guidelines. Instead, wires are crossed, they jump back and forth over points confusing the customer lacking the ability to close the deal. The good news is that there is an effective system that you use to train your sales team to untangle those wires and sell them as efficiently and effectively as possible: SPIN Selling Based on the immensely popular book and extensive research by Neil Rackham, that system is known as SPIN. In short, Rackham and his team analyzed 35,000 calls over 12 years and came to a conclusion: During a successful sales cycle, it's the buyer who does most of the talking. So they suggest that we get talking... A lot. The way they suggest doing this is by transitioning through four unique types, or phases, of questions with the buyer: SITUATION PROBLEM IMPLICATION NEED-PAYOFF Situation questions are aimed at learning more about (funny (funny (funny (funny the current situation of the buyer. Your representatives are on a fact-finding mission; all the background data they can get from, what current resources they have, etc. Remember, however, a lot of background information is available directly online or in the CRM. You don't want any of your field team to come into a meeting and open up with some very basic questions, because they will come across as unprepared or worse, disinterested. Make sure they understand the importance of a little homework and preparation. One way to get around this would be to start with a question like: Just to make sure we're on track, I understand that...*insert research* correctly? Some other situational questions might be: So what exactly is your current process for dealing with... What system are you currently using? When did you switch to this new system? Problem questions are used to investigate areas of dissatisfaction with their current process, product or system. Your representatives should be as subtle as possible at this stage, guiding the prospect toward pointing out the culprit. Some sample questions: Are you finding that your team is leaving the system due to (x) action? How hard do you find doing (x) action? What is the reliability of your current system? Implication questions highlight the consequences of not acting on the problems discovered in Phase 2. Through this guided process, the prospect of coming to this conclusion themselves must feel that they themselves have come to this conclusion, and discover that attending (x) problem is more urgent than previously thought. Some sample questions: What are the hard costs of your team not fixing the system? If the systems fail, what are the (x) material costs and (y) time to get it up and running again? What are the negative implications of pushing (x) system on your team? Need-Payoff ask guide prospects to identify the need for (x) solution due to (y) problem. If done correctly, you may even find prospects who mark your product/service without the explicit help of the representative. Some sample questions: If your team adopted (x) system, would this help to increase user acceptance correctly? Tell me why increasing user adoption would be good for your business? What other benefits do you think (x) system would have? Image credit: FunnelEnvy Now, you can't expect your team to roll directly into this new process, so block some time in your calendar for some role play, just like you would for a standard sales visit. In this way, your representatives can practice the transition from each stage, refine the questions that make sense for your specific solution, and nail down a solid repertoire they can believe in. remember, these are just guidelines. Being in field sales means that your team is likely to ask more P.I.N questions if the situational information should be readily available after of an SDR. However, this depends entirely on your specific sales process. Keep in mind that the whole idea of SPIN is to rework your UVP into a series of questions that, in return, guide the prospect toward the value of your product/service solution. Selling Skills Training: Cross Selling and Upselling One of the most underutilized sales training ideas and weapons in a field vendor's arsenal is the product upsell. Too often you will find that once an initial contract is signed, that's it. Your team can check the odd in if there is a problem with an order, or a faulty piece of equipment, just to make sure things run smoothly, but that's it. The problem is they leave a lot of potential money on the table. To get as much value from a customer as possible, you need to teach your field representatives how to analyze the data from the CRM or ERP. For example, let's imagine you selling hair products to salons within an area of 100 miles. You could set up a filter in your mobile CRM to show which salons buy shampoo within a certain area, but not conditioner. Now there's no way that these particular salons aren't going to be selling conditioner, so logic suggests they're sourcing it out of a competitor, right? Armed with this knowledge, the next time your rep visits (x) salon they can either suggest a product expert guides them from the supplier, to show how effective the two can be when used in unison, or if they have sufficient knowledge, enter the product demo themselves in an attempt to pry away that business. So now instead of making their fortnightly visit to the salon, satisfied with selling their standard quota of shampoo, the field rep uses real-time data from his mobile CRM to target a high probability upsell opportunity. Now let's apply some rough numbers: PRODUCT VALUE AMOUNT SOLD TOTAL Shampoo ($7.50) $7.50 50 $375.00 Conditioner ($7) $7.00 0$0.00 Straighteners ($100) $100.0 7 $700.00 Brushes ($3) $3.00 20 $60.00 Hair loss oil ($15) $15.00 0$0.00 $1,135.00 fortnightly visit to this special salon delivers $1,135.00 PRODUCT VALUE AMOUNT OF TOTAL Shampoo SOLD ($7.50) $7.50 50 $375.00 Conditioner ($7) $7.00 50 $350.00 Straighten ($10 0) $100.00 7 $700.00 Brushes ($3) $3.00 20 $60.00 Hair Loss Oil ($15) $15.00 50 $750.00 $2,235.00 However, After careful analysis of real-time CRM data, this particular field rep was able to target this salon as a potential upsell account. By convincing them of the value of the combined use of products (conditioner + oil) and offering a small discount to complete the deal, they were able to sell $1,100.00. Now imagine that this particular rep's territory includes 20 salons, with 8 of those salons marked as potential targets for upsell. Even if the representative is only successful with 50% of those accounts, look at the Profit: 8/2 = 4 x $1,100.00 = $4,400.00 Training your field representatives to accurately analyze the data or better, having a personal sales assistant tool that can do that automatically for you will help you get the maximum value out of your areas. Selling Skills Training: Face-to-face with clients Did you know that experts suggest that it takes (literally) just a blink of an eye when meeting someone to decide if we're going to like that person or not. That's an extremely short time frame! And with the amount of time field reps spend face-to-face with customers, the importance of creating a good first impression cannot be overstated. This includes the way you look - you have to go for pants and jacket vs matching suit and tie, how you smell- Hugo Boss vs Calvin Klein Obsession and perhaps most importantly, the way you interact. Remember the old saying No one ever bought anything from someone they didn't like? So training your field reps in the finer details of presentation and interaction with customers is vital if you hope to maximize their sales opportunities. Body language When you go through role-playing games with your team, ask yourself some of the following questions: How does your team contribute to the presentation? Did they sledge against the sign? Do they slide while walking? Do they involve the customer in providing direct eye contact? What message does their body give to you? Would you buy anything from this person? If you're not convinced with their performance, then it's time to get coaching. An easy place to start is with a smile. It portrays genuine interest, empathy and concern with a customer's problems, as well as bringing a cheerful, positive environment to the room. However, too much of the good can be harmful. Entering a meeting laughing and giggling for yourself is going to make you seem less credible and customers will struggle to take you seriously. Another important area to focus on is attitude. Stomach in it. Shoulders back. Head up. Owning a strong, dominant attitude makes you come across as confident, credible and more trustworthy. Certainly the vibes a customer is looking for before making a purchase decision. Again, work with your role-playing team to smooth out these little details so that when they come for a customer, you trust in their performance. Presentations Another staple of the field vendor's diet is the sales/product demonstration. It's the moment that often makes or breaks sales, so it's vital your field team know how to deliver on the night (don't just take their word for it). Make sure your boys always arrive early. This gives them ample time to introduce themselves to whoever they meet, interested parties, etc.) and thank them for their time. If giving a product demonstration they are going to need extra for assembly, or if it is a power point, to find enough space of where the presentation should be delivered. They should also ask themselves: Do they have a backup plan if there is no internet? Can their laptop suddenly die on them? What are they going to do if there is no power outlet for the laptop? Your team are not going to necessarily be able to solve all this if they arrive 5 minutes before... so make sure they wear an offline version for whatever material it is they need. Another thing to consider is the delivery pace of presentation. Now it's almost always too fast as our brains seem to be running a few mph. faster when under the floodlights. It's also worth training them to get the audience to do something. Let them invest in the presentation, raise their hands or something. To make them laugh, it certainly helps your representatives come across as more engaging. To round it off, let's focus on how to close the deal by giving them a reason to buy on that day. Your representatives can offer a financial discount, but it's often more powerful if they can personally get invested in the deal. For example, they might say, If you sign in today, I'll come down personally and make sure the system is installed correctly. OR If you sign up today, I will personally lead a day of free training for you once the new system is installed. You pick up on all these things through a series of live role-playing games. Get them to act as they normally would in front of a customer if this benefits everyone; They sell more, you hit your goals - win, win, win! Going the extra mile It's about building long term relationships, so if some equipment breaks down, (I'm looking at you medical device guys) instead of placing an order at HQ and getting the item sent over in a couple of days, it's worth investing that time in delivering it directly to the hospital. Ask for the doctor in question. At the end of the day, that's what they pay for – someone they can have a face-to-face, human interaction with; someone they can deal with any problems. It may seem to have a reactive mentality, but coaching this mentality to your team can be a really good game long term – your competitor is never too far around the corner and going the extra mile really keeps the wolves at bay. Sales Skills Training: Time management May not quite be what you expected when Googling skills training sales, but don't be so quick to underestimate the impact effective time management can have on sales. With your field guys having to cover a lot of ground in a short time it is clear that they need to do this in the most efficient way Driving from one side of their territory, to the other, then driving back again before returning to the office is not really the way to go about it. Train them to their meetings according to where they will be. There are tools that are purpose-built to optimize your team's time on the road, which plan their daily itinerary, alert them to sudden changes due to traffic and even the option to automatically alert who they meet of their possible delay. Small details like this can go along way in building a positive, long-term relationship with customers. Finally, preparation is the key. Before the visit, train them to do their research. Think about it. If a prospect is interested in your product/service it's fair to say that some initial discussions have been had, right? So when your representative enters the conversation and is clearly not familiar with who the prospect has spoken to, what their specific pain points are and the specific solutions that are offered to resolve it, they will look extremely unprofessional. To learn more about how to increase sales team efficiency and get maximum value out of your areas with minimal financial spending, see the benefits of a mobile CRM Improve your sales team's performance