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October 1, 1999 4 min read This story appears in the October 1999 issue of the entrepreneur. Whenever a potential customer asks Kurt Nelson for the cost of his product, he always responds with the same answer: I'm not sure. Why is he doing this? Nelson says he honestly doesn't know the cost until he talks to the customer, and just as importantly, he doesn't want to get into a price war. Price isn't the only thing that drives the customer, though everyone thinks it is, argues Nelson, 47, president of Crystal Group Inc., a Hiawatha, Iowa, computer manufacturer. The real problem is always the value. Think of it this way: Would you eat the cheapest burger simply because it costs about anything, no matter how it tastes? Despite this argument, many entrepreneurs and their sellers continue to focus only on price. In some industries, price tags drive deals because customers often use them as the main measuring stick. Unfortunately, sellers go along with these customers too often. This does not mean that you have to succumb to price war, however. In fact, the most successful entrepreneurs rarely do. In order not to fully focus on price, the company must come up with ways to differentiate itself from the competition. The best way to do this is to make sure your sellers ask potential buyers a lot of questions - and actually listen to the answers. Bill Kelly is a Arcadia, California, business writer and former editor of Sales and Marketing Management Magazine. Finding a solution: Our customers have problems and are looking for a solution, says Nelson. That's what they want to hear from us. For example, when a customer asks Crystal Group for a price quote in a particular computer system, the seller does not start crashing numbers. Instead, the person begins a series of questions about the customer's needs. The same can be done no more than in any company. To learn this information, you can, for example, ask customers things like: What is an app? Is there a problem with the product or service you are currently using? How often do I need to replace a product? How much does it cost your company? What types of things does your current warranty cover? How are you serviced and have you been generally satisfied with the service? By asking these kinds of questions, the company can distinguish itself from its competitors and remove the emphasis from the price. Your customers will start thinking about getting the best quality rather than getting the cheapest product or service. To find out what is most important to each customer, your salesperson must treat each customer individually. In many cases, the deciding factor for one is the minor to the other. This requires sellers to focus on the needs of the perspective in front of them, rather than what the other customer considers most important what's worse that the seller is a seller is of paramount importance. Too often (and usually due to poor sales preparation), sellers spend most of the call spouting from the benefits of their product or service, regardless of whether these benefits mean nothing to the customer. The seller will talk about delivery times, promotions, or other benefits that may not be relevant to the customer; The result is that the seller leaves their prospects feeling like they are dealing with someone who has not bothered to learn about the needs or interests of their company. The approach to the individual approach to each customer works for all types of business, even those who sell goods. A 3-cent fastener, easily accessible to a number of distributors, can, in fact, become a different product depending on the company that sells it. If customer service is better, if a person has excellent technical support, or if their sellers are more knowledgeable and friendly, then buyers will not be completely concerned about the price. Instead, they will see a real difference between the companies because the focus has shifted to value. Figure this out with each customer and you can never sell for a price again. Contact SourceCrystal Group Inc., (800) 378-1636, [curtis.nelson@crystalpc.com](mailto:curtis.nelson@crystalpc.com) Insider Growth Strategy This story appears in the May 2000 issue of the entrepreneur. Sign up for If you asked most sales managers about the most important attributes they look for from a job candidate, you'd probably hear adjectives such as motivated, disciplined, energetic, or hardworking. What is the central theme here? Efforts! Most managers will hire a representative with no experience or industry knowledge as long as this candidate is willing to give 110 percent effort. If we could measure the efforts of a sales representative before he or she was hired, we would have one very popular product on our hands. While no one can predict the future, there are a few practical ideas that dramatically increase your chances of success by measuring the efforts of candidates, creativity and energy before you hire. Presentation. After the first or second interview with the candidate, hand this person one of the brochures of your product. Explain that you want him or her to come back within a few days to sell you the product. Don't give out more information. You want to see how much effort a candidate puts into learning about your company, product, needs and so on. Then, in the next interview, evaluate the following: The amount of research, time and effort to invest in the presentation; How creative a candidate got with his or her approach; and his or her selling skills, from start to finish. If you are interviewing an experienced sales representative, you can ask that candidate to sell you a product that he or she is currently marketing. You You can still use your own product as part of this exercise to measure preparation and effort before the next interview. The key in both situations is communication skills, sales skills and effort. Of course, if a candidate doesn't come back to sell your product, you have an answer.30-day action plan. For the next interview, have the candidate return a detailed plan of what he or she will do to ensure success by the end of the first 30 days after his or her preparation. This will not only assess the effort spent on thinking and writing about activities and goals, but also illuminate his or her thoughts on what it takes to get the job done. Why them? Why us? Your candidates list 10 reasons that make them feel qualified for the job and what they have to offer your company. Then they list a few reasons why they want to work for your company, why, what specific industries, why sales and more. A field trip. After the second or third interview, have a candidate spend half a day in the field with one of your experienced sales reps. Choose one of your best reps and make sure the person goes through a typical day of sales calls (agitation, customer visits and meetings). This is a great chance to expose a candidate to a realistic outlook on the job while simultaneously recognizing your sales representative as a role model. Another advantage: a candidate can open up a representative to the sales, who will be treated as a peer, about issues and issues that may never arise during an official interview. Attracting a senior sales representative to the workflow not only helps the candidate to make a more professional decision, but also helps to reduce turnover. There is nothing worse than investing a lot of time, energy and money on an employee just to see your efforts go in vain a few months later because the person you hired lacks inner motivation. But by using these four methods in the hiring process, you can measure motivation from the beginning. Think about it: When a candidate puts a lot of energy and effort into getting a job, you'll probably see the same attributes demonstrated at work. Get a bunch of discounts on the books you love delivered directly to your inbox. Every week we will have another book and share exclusive offers that you will not find anywhere else. Go to your business. Entrepreneur Insider has your access to the skills, experts and networking you need to get your business off the ground, or take it to the next level. From business to marketing, sales, design, finance and technology, we have 3 percent of experts willing to work for you. Join the future of work and learn more about our expert solutions! Solutions! sales management study guide pdf. sales management n5 study guide pdf. sales management n6 study guide pdf. sales management n5 study guide

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