

Planning the sales  
call is a must



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High performing salespeople can be strategic problem-solvers for their customers. Strategic refers to programs, goals, and problems of great importance to customers. Top salespeople who are effective strategic problem solvers have the skills and knowledge to be able to:

Uncover and understand the customer's strategic needs by gaining an in-depth knowledge of the customer's organisation. Develop solutions that demonstrate a creative approach to addressing the customer's strategic needs in the most efficient and effect manner possible. Arrive at a mutually beneficial agreement.

Properly done by the salesperson, they create a strategic customer relationship or a formal relationship with the customer, the purpose of which is the joint pursuit of mutual goals. Strategic goals for a customer typically include reducing costs and / or increasing productivity, sales and profits.

#### 1. Strategic needs

The salesperson that understands the full range of the customer's needs is in a much better position to provide a product solution that helps the customer progress more efficiently and effectively toward achieving his or her organisation's goal.

#### 2. Creative solutions

The ability of a salesperson to tailor a " custom" solution for each customer is critical. The salesperson needs to use creative problem solving to identify the specific solution that meets each customer's needs. Usually, the solution represents either one of two options:

A customised version or application of a product and / or service that efficiently addresses the customer's specific strategic needs. A mix of goods and services - including competitor's products and services - that offers the best possible solution in light of the customer's strategic need.

The better a salesperson is at creatively marshalling all available resources to address a customer's strategic needs, the stronger the customer relationship becomes. Salespeople need to be creative problem solvers who have the ability to develop and combine non-traditional alternatives to meet the specific needs of the customer.

### 3. Mutually beneficial agreements

To achieve a mutually beneficial agreement, salespeople and customers must work together to develop a common understanding of the issues and challenges at hand. Nowadays, more and more customers, in the interest of developing solutions that will help achieve their strategic goals, are willing to let salespeople cross the threshold of confidentiality.

### 4. The customer relationship model

The customer relationship model shown in below brings together the main elements of consultative selling.

#### Consultative selling - customer relationship model

It shows that customers have strategic needs salespeople must meet through creative solutions. The customer reaches its goal, as does the seller.

This results in the seller being able to sell the customer repeatedly building a long-term relationship.

The pre-approach refers to planning the sales call on a customer or prospect. To be more specific, the pre-approach is the salesperson's way of finding the prospect's basic problem, or need, which the product will solve, and then planning the best way to present the problem and its solution when talking to the prospect.

#### 5. Reasons for planning the sales call

##### oBuilds self-confidence

In giving a speech before a large group of people, most people are nervous. This nervousness can be greatly reduced and self-confidence increased by planning what to say and practicing your talk. This is why planning the sales call is especially important.

##### oDevelops an atmosphere of goodwill

The salesperson that understands a customer's needs and is prepared to discuss how a product will benefit the prospect is appreciated and respected by the buyer. This goodwill gradually aids in building the buyer's confidence and results in a belief that the salesperson can be trusted to fulfil obligations.

##### oReflects professionalism

Good business relationships are built on your knowledge of your company, industry, and customer's needs. These factors are the mark of a professional

salesperson that uses specialised knowledge in an ethical manner to aid customers.

oIncrease sales

A confident salesperson that is well prepared to discuss how products address particular needs always will be more successful than an unprepared salesperson. Planning ensures that a sales presentation is well thought out and appropriately presented. Like other beneficial pre-sales call activities, planning is most effective (and time efficient) when done logically and methodically.

## 6. Elements of sales call planning

Exhibit below depicts the four facets considered in sales call planning.

These facets are 1) determining the sales call objective, 2) developing or reviewing the customer profile 3) developing a customer benefit plan, and 4) developing the individual sales presentation based on the sales call objective, customer profile, customer benefit plan.

## 7. Always have a sales call objective

The sales call objective is the main purpose of a salesperson's contact with a prospect or customer. Sales representatives should have at least one objective for every sales call they make. Otherwise, the sales calls have no focus. Sales call objectives should be set with the intent of getting the customer to commit to some type of action.

oThe pre-call objective

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A sales call must move systematically toward a sale. Taking the time to do this puts the selling process in motion. Before every sales call, assess objective for the call and result to achieve and the recommendation should give when it has opportunity to talk with prospect.

#### oFocus and flexibility

Writing down the pre-call objective increases the focus of salesperson's efforts. Given today's rising costs, this focus is essential. If they are professional sales representatives, they should be moving their customers in the direction of a pre-determined goal. Obviously, if the pre-call objective turns out to be inappropriate as the sales call develops, it is easy to switch tactics. Often, such changes involve a simple redirection.

#### oMaking the goal specific

Salesperson should identify the needs of the prospect and the product or service is best for the prospect. Moreover, salesperson must acknowledge the sales target. The more specific the objective, the better is it.