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Get Listening!

by
Bob Hazell

"I can only give you ten minutes"

Have you ever run up against that one? If you have you may well have run into difficulty.

Most sales people under time pressure tend to "pitch". The trouble is that those that do so are more likely to turn the buyer "off" than "on". Most people are well able to talk **themselves** into buying from us if we handle it right.

How many of us have ever visited a buyer to find "I haven't got much time"? The answer is to allow the buyer to talk, that way the time pressure comes off. In fact we'll find that they'll say things like "Gosh, is that the time?", but after about an hour we'll have found out loads about their business. So how do we make this happen?

The key to this is to be a good listener, and to tease out more information. The more we find out about the buyer's business, the more effectively we can match the needs. And anyway, if we "pitch" it will be perceived as pressure.

What do customers talk about? THEMSELVES, THEIR issues, THEIR needs, THEIR business! Now, it might seem strange to have to say this, but that is exactly why we must resist the temptation to talk about ourselves straight away. This can come later when we match our offering to EXACTLY what the client NEEDS.

So we start off by asking a few questions. To start off with these can be of a *general* nature to give an overview of the business. We must watch that we don't ask too many of these. The customer gets fed up of answering general questions, and what they can do is expose the fact that we've not done too much research before making the call.

We need to move swiftly to questions that explore the nature of the challenges facing the client. "*What would you say are the most important issues facing your department at the moment?*" Exploring these could be as simple as "*That's very interesting. So what EFFECT does that have on the business?*"

We have now moved to a set of questions that explore the impact on the business or department.

Finally we can ask questions about the *gains* that the customer wants from the change. And somewhere in the middle of all this we've got to find out what the customers buying criteria are, and how the buying process works. But that's for another TOP TIP.

Ever heard the saying "*He/she will make a good salesperson because he/she has got the gift of the gab?*" Nothing is further from the truth.

Remember: - Two ears, and how many mouths?

We've got loads of other top tips like this one.

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