SUMMARY

Topic: Optimize Opportunities and Sales with Relationship Selling Skills
Date: April 24 and 25, 2008

Participants:

There were representatives from the following companies on these calls:

AAA Southern New England
Cartus
Custom Disability Solutions
Grow Inc.
Kreg Tool Company
PHH Mortgage
Quantate
RTI Insurance Services
ServiceMaster
Stored Value Solutions
Time Warner
Unum
Wyndham Oceanside Pier Resort

Introduction:

Technology abounds that helps organizations improve data management and automate systems. But, transforming an organization into a strategic sales and profit producer takes more than new technology. Organizations that understand the value of the personal touch and relationship selling can successfully convert to a blended service/sales culture, which will:

- Generate increased revenue and profitability
- Drive lifetime customer value as they provide more products/services to each customer
- Strengthen customer relationships and loyalty, which leads to increased referrals

Yet, only 63% of contact centers provide training to help their associates sell with the relationship in mind, according to Dimension Data.

Purpose of this call is to:

- Understand the difference between relationship selling and transactional selling
- Learn key skills of relationship selling, including customer-focused listening and questioning strategies
- Discover how to engage associates so that they are less resistant to “selling”
- Hear experts share their insights and results of the personal touch

T. Larkin's Slides (with notes):

Building an Effective Sales Culture – selling happens within a culture

- Shared service vision and values – don't underestimate the power of a shared vision; are sales people aligned with the vision of the company is; more key than people give credit to. Performance conversations, sales coaching ought to include references to the vision and the role of the sales person in the organization.

- Sales management that model the sales process – walk the talk

- Sales measures that help:
  - Build and sustain customer relationships
  - Drive key activities that support the success of the sales efforts

- Developmental training and coaching – how are you coaching and supporting your sales associates; development makes certain assumptions that everyone is working on something; no one is perfect; not about right or wrong, good or bad sales call; what am I working on, what am I working on and how am I developing.

- Constant systemic improvement and reinforcement – constantly tweaking the systems and making adjustments based on feedback from customers and sales people; with relationship selling you want a high collaborative feel with both internal and external customers

---

Optimize Opportunities and Sales with Relationship Selling Skills

> *"Salespeople must be able to communicate knowledge in ways that provide value to customers.*
>
> *They must communicate effectively with both internal customers and external customers, and they must be committed to long-term relationships where their own profits grow as their customers' do."*
>
> *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*

Relationship Selling Transactional and Relational Approach

Transactional	**Relational**
• Product oriented	• Mutual interest oriented; attend to the customer and the customer uniqueness (this will change the way they listen)
• Transaction characteristics	• Interaction characteristics – humor, smiles, question asking, paraphrasing, repeating key phrases, bridging to other topics; deeper, wider, more personal topics.
• Short-term and finite o May or may not evolve based on perceived product value	• Long-term and infinite o Evolves to your network of business relationships based on perceived mutual value
• Limits value of sales person	• Increases value of sales person

Study by Wellesley Hills Group published in *Rain Today* regarding the top three problems encountered during hiring consulting and professional services – essentially the top three reasons people say got in the way of the sale:

1) Rep did not listen
2) Rep did not understand my needs
3) Rep did not respond to my request and correspondence in a timely fashion.

All high relationship issues.

Jeanette Solak, Sales Senior/Sales Training Consultant, Unum, Portland, ME
Spoke on the theme of developmental coaching and training.

Unum focus on how they build relationships with customers and sales team

- In building the relationships, what they look at when they train their service associates in the field is to be able to creatively identify ways they can reach out and develop a deeper and more related experience for their customers by providing the employer and employees with benefits that best suit their needs
- lot of listening skills required
- as all relationships differ, unique conversations for each customer
- listen to what the customers are saying, paraphrase, repeat back critical pieces of information so they are clear on what the customer is saying
- building each client's own value story through asking questions and listening

They work in collaboration with business partners throughout the company in developing features and tools, gathering information and report distribution that will help their customer.

The relationship they have with sales rep is key. Service and sales work together to address the needs of the customer. They look at the customer from a very holistic approach.

Teaching them the value story is paramount – how the product works, who are their resources. If they build on their product base, their skill knowledge, the associate feels better equipped. The company does this through training, skill practices, providing feedback, encouraging questions, and leveraging knowledge in the office.

Coaching to relationship selling skills:
In training, they include a segment on presentation skills, bringing in the product training the associate is doing at that point, the associate does some study on their own, and then articulates in their own words what the value of the product is, what is attractive to the customer.

Jeff Lundh, Senior Sales Representative of DuPont, Phoenix, AZ
Spoke on the theme of sales measures that help build relationships

Metrics they use for measuring the development of customer relationships:

- monitor volume of inbound and outbound calls,
- variable margins,
- dollar volumes of growth per account and per territory
- Also look at items that show relationship is moving forward – action calls.
    - Things like did we generate interest in a quote from customer, or generate interest in looking for a sample, help them with a technical service problem they had.

Trust is key for relationship selling – no trust, no sale. Easy to show them your personality and who you are in face-to-face. All else being relatively equal, they will buy from someone they like or someone who makes things easy for them.

Over phone, you lose some of the non-verbal skills which can have effect of increasing the time it takes to build a good relationship, but still trust is key to that relationship.

Jeff provided an example of a client who was not happy a past experience. Jeff shared with the client how he would probably have felt the same way and apologized for the company's bad customer service. He also challenged the customer to give him a shot as he truly was interested in his business and was willing to work in his best interest. Client went from small tests – would he receive phone call in a timely manner? Then increased to requests for samples, quotes, and now when a job comes in, client calls Jeff first. They have done more business with this customer in the first four months of this year than they did the entire previous year.

Keys for success in relationship selling is:

- Looking out for the customer's best long-term interest and letting them know that is what you are doing and
- Doing what you say you will when you say you will and if it doesn't happen, call them first so they don't find out another way.

May take longer to develop the relationship with a customer over the phone, but it is a relationship that will make and keep you successful.

Sometimes what is in the best interest of the customer may mean you sell less product in an interaction. Valuing customer relationship so much that you recognize your product may not be the best solution for their immediate situation. Customer knows you are working in their best interest, not just trying to make the current sale. Long-term they know this will be a bigger advantage for them. The trust built here keeps a long-term relationship.

Questions from the group:

1) Discuss reading the client, customer or staff member (Tom took this to mean "reading" meant body language and how to respond to what we see).

Responding to what we see – the things we attend to are: appearance, posture, gesture, facial expression, eye contact, distance.

When one feels excluded, put down, or that someone is concealing something, you want to ask a question, engage the person at that moment. Give them a response based on what you are observing.

Take all six queues together, not one in isolation.

2) I would love to hear how this relates to increasing persistency that is retaining current customers. Tom interpreted this to mean: How do you be persistent and not be a pest?

You do want to stay in touch without beating them over the head with too many touches and actually creating a barrier. Obtain permission first – go ahead and ask the customer if you can get back in touch and propose a time frame. You will get a reading on how comfortable they feel with you, how much they trust you.

Additionally, contact them for more than just finding out if they want your services – make it high relational, better to contact them by sending them some value and keeping your name in front of them. You send an article, a book, an invitation to a seminar they might find of interest because in previous conversations you learned what was of interest to them.