

Law Matters Newsletter

March 2010

Vol. 2 No. 3

Collaborative Selling

As discussed in the last Law Matters, selling is often seen as a grubby trade, particularly by those in the professions. Nobody likes a cold caller trying to sell cavity wall insulation that you do not want, particularly during the closing stages of a Rugby international. (Written with feeling.)

On the other hand, if you are interested in a warmer house, lower costs and/or lower carbon emissions you may well be very happy to talk at length to someone who can offer appropriate solutions. This of course emphasises the need to **qualify** sales leads. This example also includes some conflicting wishes – warmth and lower emissions may need retrofitted insulation at considerable cost. Traditional selling would work to shift a particular product, not help a customer to resolve priorities.

Collaborative selling works to establish the buyer's needs, then to provide a solution. The differences are:

| | Old Style Selling | New Style Selling |
|--------------|--|--|
| Beliefs | Buyers too confused or stupid to know what they want. Look how often they say, <i>I don't know....</i> | Buyers know what they need and with sellers help will identify it precisely. |
| | Buyers can be bamboozled if you have enough skill and persistence. | Buyers know manipulation when they see it. They appreciate directness and honesty. |
| Skills | Facts at fingertips about products and services. Fast talking, charm, pretend-interest in the buyer; fake matching to their style. Haggling and negotiating. | Super-keen observation; ability to create rapport. Self-possession, genuine interest in the buyer; flexibility; ability to listen. Facilitative questioning. |
| Attitudes | Thrill of the chase; hunter; every sale another scalp. It's a tough old world, success is scarce; someone has to win, someone has to lose. | Partner; a quest for mutual satisfaction. Success is possible for both sides. Win-win is the best outcome. |
| Satisfaction | Winning; beating other people | Creating a happy buyer through service |
| Success Rate | Low ratio of success to effort, but hey, it's a game where persistence pays off | High ratio of success to effort. Sales cycle shortened. |

Jenny Rogers

How far collaborative selling can be applied to your firm depends partly on how commoditised your services are and on client reaction, particularly at a time when money is tight. However, this approach should facilitate cross selling, as well as lead to happier clients and more recommendations (and hence more qualified leads). If you are competing on price, it may also give a means of discussing how to provide the value the client needs matched with the profit necessary to the firm. What it does is to build a relationship, important for professional services, and it increases the likelihood of meeting a client's true needs.

And the next step? **Close** the sale!

This note is written as a general guide only, and is not applicable to every firm or circumstance. It should not be relied upon as a substitute for specific business, medical or legal advice.

© Iwan Thomas Associates 2010 All Rights Reserved.

Iwan Thomas Associates, Second Floor, 3 Brindleyplace, Birmingham B1 2JB
www.iwanthomasassociates.co.uk
 Tel 0121 698 2318