The Self-Propelled Wheel and business development

The Canterbury Sales®

The Self-Propelled Wheel and Business Development
By Andy Gole

Business developers create new business relationships. They need strong self-motivation and creativity to overcome the inevitable obstacles and apathy they encounter.

A powerful image of creativity and self-motivation appears in Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*: "Are you a new strength and a new right? A first movement? A self-propelled wheel?"

This metaphor reminds us new business developers must be like perpetual motion organisms. We constantly inject new energy into the sales process.

This Nietzschean quote came to mind when reading a *New York Times* article about the last Harry Potter movie: "The Harry Potter movies built on the fervid public enthusiasm for the books and fed back into it."

Could this apply to our selling process? Should an optimal selling process: (1) Build prospect enthusiasm for our offering, opening the door to richer interactions that (2) build even more enthusiasm, advancing the sales process, and (3) reaffirm the foundational enthusiasm for our offering?

This difficult objective is a major reason we have a standard sales call (SSC).

The SSC is a step-by-step procedure guiding the prospect through a buying decision. Strategically, the SSC must overcome three fatal selling flaws:

1. Assuming prospects enter conversations with serious intent – they won't.
2. Assuming prospects believe what we say – they don't.
3. Assuming prospects can make a decision – often they can't, particularly for the infrequent decision.

Management ignores these flaws at their peril when designing a selling process.

So far we have considered strategy and design, yet not implementation. The SSC should be a dynamic process helping the salesperson become a "self propelled wheel."

Analyzing the implementation and dynamics of the SSC, there are three basic sections:

1. Initiating and fertilizing the serious conversation – this includes strongly presenting a powerful vision for change. This sets up…
2. Fact-finding and opportunity. Once we have opportunity, we need…
3. A program for managing the opportunity.

No matter how well the first sales call goes, we are beset by the reversal curve – prospects typically forget we exist when we leave their presence. As a result, in subsequent sales calls we usually need to return to basics – fertilize the serious conversation, fact finding, etc.

The attendant planning tool – the battle plan – initiates and integrates a series of sales calls to achieve our sales objective.

Many business owners and top managers say their biggest selling problem is initiating new opportunity. The SCC provides the raw material for the battle plan to open new opportunity. Here's an actual case history in lead generation, where there is no relationship or even a contact. The salesperson uses elements of the SSC and a battle plan to initiate the opportunity:

5/16 - Intro email to prospect with a hard hitting message
5/17 - Prospect responds by email, agreeing to talk
5/19 - First discussion with customer, who offered to send product specs
5/25 - Hard-hitting email messages, repeated by snail mail
6/6 - Pictures of innovative product emailed
6/6 - Prospect emails back – sending samples; thanks us for our sense of urgency
6/8 - Salesperson requests additional information via email, with targeted testimonial letter
6/10 – Additional hard hitting information snail mailed
6/13 - No response – salesperson wonders: Bermuda Triangle of lost prospects?
6/13 p.m. - Prospect sends confidentiality agreement; we sign and return immediately
6/17 - Prospect sends us samples, pictures and specs/volumes to quote

How often can we reach out to the prospect? Any time we have a new material difference, we should reach out to the prospect. This business development process requires commitment, energy, research and creativity. A self-propelling wheel.

The SSC and battle plan, properly embraced, is a guide and an inspiration to action. It tells us where we are in the process and implicitly suggests what energy we need to inject into the system. It helps us become a "self propelling wheel."

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