

with columnist Robert Ciccone



Don consultant's hat to reap more sales

Adopting the role of a business partner creates greater trust and loyalty

Whom would you rather deal with? A doctor who takes the time to ask you questions, runs some tests, considers the results, draws some conclusions and then recommends a course of action ... or a doctor who recommends intense treatment or a surgical procedure only after a brief dialogue?

The hairdresser who takes the time to find out something about your lifestyle, your work and the way you like to dress, then recommends a style that suits both your face and your lifestyle ... or the hairdresser who just wants to know how much to take off the top and sides today?

The marketing consultant who takes the time to learn about your business, your products, your customers, your competitors ... or the consultant who says social media are the answer to everything?

Well, whom would you choose? I think it's obvious that we would all choose the ones who took the time to examine our situation, diagnose the problem, and then offer an effective solution.

What do all those superstars have in common? They are all consultative in their approach. How they market and sell is based on listening and learning versus talking and telling; it's on building the relationship versus getting the order. They have put themselves on the side of the customer, partnering with them, positioning themselves as a valuable resource.

Now, think about your products or services for a moment. Based on what I've laid out so far, whom do you think your prospects would rather buy them from: a simple vendor peddling products and servic-

es, or a helpful, insightful advisor ... someone who solves problems and acts in their best interests?

You know the answer to that question, too.

So, how do you earn this consultative, strategic, problem-solver position with your prospects and customers? There are four basic steps:

1. Adopt a consultative mindset

See yourself as a consultant and act like one. This is critical. See yourself as a business partner to your customers, behave as a trusted advisor, and hold yourself to these standards.

2. Focus on understanding your customers' situations

Be more concerned about asking the right questions and listening than providing answers. Take the time to thoroughly analyze their circumstances and goals.

3. Become the authority in your field

Invest the time, the money, the effort (whatever it takes) to learn your market sector inside out.

Learn your products and competitors inside out, especially with respect to your customers' return on investment.

4. Never present products or services until you are clear on your customers' problems, goals and needs

Resist the temptation to present every feature and benefit. Present only the ones relevant to each customer's specific situation.

While making the shift to a consultative selling approach is not easy, it could be crucial to the long-term success of your business. Companies that do make the shift have the following attributes:

- Are clearly differentiated – they stand out because of their unmistakable interest in understanding their customers' objectives, feelings, attitudes, needs and prob-

lems. They are viewed as professionals acting in their best interests.

- Close more sales, more easily – moving from order taker to strategic thinker builds bonds of trust, friendship and customer confidence in their recommendations.
- Get higher value sales – as clients' total needs are evaluated and considered, every transaction is an opportunity to increase customer satisfaction and average sale amounts.
- Enjoy significant increases in customer loyalty – they are continually adding value to their products and services by offering customer specific solutions and, because of this, customers are more endeared

to them.

- Get more referrals – they are considered a valuable resource to their clients and, for this reason, are enthusiastically recommended and spoken highly of.

Robert Ciccone is the president and founder of Success Unlimited Sales and Marketing Group (www.susmg.com). He is also the creator of the Marketing for Profit Program, a three-part results program that provides the marketing systems, tools and ongoing support to help participants effectively build, manage and operate a profitable business (www.susmg.com/MarketingForProfit). Robert can be reached at 604-535-2111 or rob@susmg.com.

Small business owners helping small business owners

Helping protect your biggest asset...
Your ability to earn money

Life Insurance and Living Benefits Solutions for:

- Funding Buy-Sell Agreements
- Key Employee Protection
- Succession Planning
- Attracting Employees

M&A Manion & Associates
Financial Services Ltd.

604-463-6060

Toll Free: 1-800-715-7526

Servicing the entire Lower Mainland



manion.ca

facebook.com/manionfinancial

twitter.com/manionfinancial