

Identifying the ➔ Sticking Point

Transforming Customer Resistance into Customer Engagement



Imagine peoples surprise when they discover that the “new” way of engaging your customers is actually an old way, the only way that engagement has ever been created in a sales relationship: through conversations. Not the type of conversations you are probably used to, though. Rather, the type that seeks to engage your customer and uncover your customer’s core emotional needs.

At the base of every purchase is the longing to have a core emotional need met. When people buy gum, what are they buying? Are they buying sorbitol, maltitol, gum base, etc? Are they buying fresh breath? I would suggest to you that there is an even deeper reason for that purchase - social acceptance. We live in a feelings economy. In today’s market, people don’t buy a Volvo – they buy security; they don’t buy a Harley – they buy freedom. Identifying the core emotional needs that drive your customers provides the opportunity to personalize your sales effort, shorten the sales cycle and maximize your results. Fortunately, you don’t have to be a mind reader to identify your customer’s core emotional needs. There’s an early detection system that telegraphs the customers core emotional needs to you: we call it the “sticking point.”

The sticking point is a place where a customer digs in and resists your approach. The sticking point can be emotional (“This doesn’t feel right”) or cognitive (“This doesn’t make sense). The beauty about the sticking point is that it’s a wonderful indicator of what matters most to your customer. Learning how to identify the sticking point and manage your conversation so that it’s directed to your customers needs could mean the difference between a lost opportunity and a fruitful sales relationship.

Do you Push, Give-in, or Pull?

Sales people have one of three basic orientations when confronted with a customer’s sticking point: push, give in or pull.

- Those that push their reality onto others trigger a defensiveness that causes customers to dig in and shut down. Often this type of salesperson is unaware the customer may be nodding “yes” but inside they are saying “no”.
- Those who live in fear of what will happen if they speak the truth. By giving in, they believe they are gaining the respect of the customer, when they have actually lost it along with their business opportunity.
- Those who pull out their customer’s realities generate the kind of understanding that fosters trust, respect and good will. Customers love working with sales people who listen hard and talk straight.

With research showing that only about 1/3 of the North American sales force having a pull orientation, we are far from optimizing the markets sales potential. By learning how to identify the sticking point and employing it in a “Pull Conversation” context, you too can discover the secret to effective, engaging selling.