



Strategies: Why Your Value Proposition Has No Value

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Your marketing and sales team is working hard. They are writing articles, posting blogs, making cold calls, engaging in social media and networking. With all this effort, why isn't the sales pipeline bursting with qualified prospects?

The answer: your sales value proposition doesn't offer value. You look and sound like your competitor so prospects default to the status quo or do nothing. The marketing and sales copy doesn't create an emotional connection with your potential buyer, resulting in little urgency to change or improve. The good and bad news is that you are not alone.

At a recent Business Marketing Association Conference, Jay Gaines, Vice President of Sirius Decisions, shared research showing the number one challenge facing organizations was their ability to communicate value.

Crafting a well-designed sales value proposition is one of the most important tools needed to help your sales team open and close new business. This selling tool is used for converting inbound calls that begin with, *"Can you tell me about your company."* Value propositions are used for effective execution of outbound calls and emails. And they are used with warm referrals when a potential client says, *"Mary told me you did a great job for her company. Can you tell me a little bit about your firm?"*

Here are three must have elements to include in developing great sales value propositions.

#1: Sell to the real buyer. The real buyer is not the economic buyer, the user buyer, the technical buyer or the power buyer. The real buyer is your prospect's brain—the limbic system. This is the emotional center of the brain and designed to move away from pain and towards pleasure. Most value propositions are logical, rational and self-focused. They don't evoke pain or pleasure. *"We are a leading blah-blah firm."* Or, *"Our team of experts bring over 100 years of experience to help you streamline your processes and achieve top and bottom line revenue."*

A strong value proposition is focused on problems you solve for clients, not what you do. Here's a reality check. No one cares about what you do! For example, no one cares that you do sales recruiting. What prospects care about is that you reduce turnover and identify salespeople that achieve quota—regardless of the business environment or competition.

Poorly designed value propositions lead to price conversations rather than value conversations. You look and sound just like your competitor. For example, isn't your competition going to say

they are a leading firm? And isn't your competitor going to brag about their deep bench of expertise? The poor prospect isn't hearing any real differentiators so they often resort to buying on price, not value.

#2: Customize. Buyers are busy and will not waste time with salespeople that cannot demonstrate they understand their prospect's world. Most companies have one or two value propositions---that are generic at best.

In a complex sale, you have multiple buyers. The CEO has a different set of needs than the CFO. And the CFO has different wants than the CMO. The most effective sales organizations design ten to twenty value propositions that are customized by the industry and the buyer.

An outstanding inside sales manager for a large distribution firm developed over 100 value proposition for her team. She designed value propositions by market segment, decision maker and products. Does it work? Yes! Her young, new salesperson recently closed four large hotel properties because he knew how to start a value sales conversation, not a transactional conversation.

#3: Practice. It's one thing to create great value propositions. It's another thing to deliver them in such a way they don't sound rehearsed or canned. Most salespeople stumble and bumble through their value proposition. Don't believe me? Stop reading this article, call one of your salespeople and ask him to deliver his value proposition for a specific buyer in a specific market segment.

Be prepared to hear a lot of *"Let me start over, umm...and we do....."* It's not a great way to look and sound like a trusted advisor.

Top salespeople memorize and rehearse their value propositions. They sound relaxed and genuine which builds trust and credibility. They are able to be in the moment because they aren't thinking about what they should say and do.

Does your value proposition add value? Create emotion and sell to the real buyer, the reptilian brain. Customize your value proposition to each buying influence and engage in perfect practice.

Good Selling!

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