



## Art of Selling...

By **Art Waskey**

### **WHEN CUSTOMER NEED IS NOT PRODUCT SPECIFIC**

For our organization, our sales goal is 8/2: a day in the field involves calling on eight accounts, two of which are prospective accounts. Pursuing that goal, a rep and I were pre-briefing for a cold call: How do we establish trust with this prospect? We strategized: we would mirror and match his body language, and figure out his behavioral style to get him to share his story. If you take time to ask questions and actively listen to the customer's responses, it is amazing how much you learn when your customer feels comfortable.

The quiet, friendly manner of this Purchasing Agent was easy to engage; he actually made *US* feel comfortable. Through a series of questions, he described his professional background, two years' job experience, and then out of the clear blue, he told us he was a single parent.

A red flag went up ... he was getting too personal. What should we do?

In his book, *Becoming a Person of Influence*, John Maxwell states, "Everybody needs somebody to come alongside and help. If you understand that, are willing to give to others and help them, and maintain the right motives, their lives and yours can change."

In any successful transaction, the activity will focus on your ability to build trust with your client. This process is called *rapport*. By definition, rapport is a relationship "marked by harmony, conformity, or accord." Before the customer buys, trust and rapport are essential.

Our cold call turned into a 30-minute empathy session. This poor Purchasing Agent had survived a bad marriage and was now raising his 5 and 2 year-old daughters. He needed a sincere, caring, listener; he was emotionally paralyzed. He desperately wanted someone to listen, identify, and care. As luck would have it, the sales rep had experienced similar circumstances earlier in his life. The sales rep was a good comforter; he could relate.

A basic sales principle: listen for the critical need and find a solution. In today's complex society, many problems we solve have nothing to do with specific products or services, the problems are people (relationship) oriented. After all, the customer can buy comparable products and services from other local distributors. The key to success is our ability to build relationships.

Mutual support and helping others *changes lives!* Build trust... and you build relationships that will last a lifetime.

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