



Art of Selling...

By Art Waskey

HOW EFFECTIVE ARE YOUR "ACTIVE" LISTENING SKILLS?

On a recent sales cold call, the prospective customer began describing issues with his existing supplier. "They continue to make errors on invoices and they price the same product with three different prices, sometimes in the same month." Without hesitation, our rep aggressively began describing our pricing system: I discreetly kicked him under the table, and with pleading eyes tried to get him to stop... and just listen!

How many times have you launched verbally into the solution mode when you really had not actively listened and completely understood the customer's real issue(s)?

In his chapter, **Seeking to Understand**, from his book, *Sales Mastery*, Garry Duncan introduces two concepts for discovering customer's buying motives: ask clarifying questions, and use **active listening**. While clarifying questions are used to identify the meaning behind a prospect's comments, active listening skills promote trust, rapport, understanding, and aid in the clarification of perceived issues and suggested solutions. Let's review the four techniques for **active listening** — 1) **Acknowledge**: "I hear you; I understand; tell me more", 2) **Parrotting**: Repeat back the exact words you heard, 3) **Paraphrasing**: "So, what I hear you saying is ...", and 4) **Feeling Feedback**: "So, how did that make you feel?"

A critical problem of sales people is NOT LISTENING. We were drawn into sales careers because we like people and enjoy personal contact. We like to talk and build new relationships, but consistently may find it hard to listen "actively." Unfortunately, many resulting relationships can be superficial if we don't learn to invest 80 percent of our communication energy into understanding the prospect's concerns.

Mastering active listening skills requires the reception of complete information, enables you to qualify the situation, determine what the problem is, how the problem was created, why it is continuing, and what a successful solution should look like.

Through "active" listening, our rep learned pricing issues were only ONE symptom of a much deeper problem: the competitor's sales person had lost contact with his customer; subsequently the customer had also lost confidence in the rep's integrity.

Admiral Hyman G. Rickover made nuclear power a reality. Rickover's incredible ability to accomplish projects resulted in wide public acclaim and personal honors including presidential citations, honorary doctorate degrees, and congressional gold medals. Theodore Rockwell, author of *The Rickover Effect*, quotes Rickover, "To practice a profession, one must have acquired mastery of an academic discipline as well as a technique for applying this special knowledge to the problems of everyday life. A profession is therefore intellectual in content, (but) practical in application."

Selling is a profession that requires the mastery of academic discipline. "Active" listening is a technique that when properly applied, solves problems in our everyday sales lives. **How effective are your "Active" Listening skills?**

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2007 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 19 - 21, 2007

Hydrogen Expo US
Hydrogen Here and Now
San Antonio, Texas
Web: www.hydrogenexpo.com/

March 19 - 22, 2007

18th Annual NHA Hydrogen Conference
San Antonio, Texas
Web: www.hydrogenexpo.com/

March 18 - 22, 2007

CGA Annual Meeting
St. Petersburg, FL
Web: www.cganet.com

March 27 - 30, 2007

The GAWDA Annual Regulatory Update Seminar
Crisis Management & Regulatory Update
Indianapolis, IN
Web: www.gawda.org

April 16 - 20 2007

HANNOVER MESSE
World Trade Fair for Industrial Technology
Hannover, Germany
Web: www.hannovermesse.de or www.hf-usa.com/hannovermesse

April 30 - May 3, 2007

Offshore Technology Conference 2007
Houston, Texas, USA
Web: www.otcnet.org

May 7 - 10, 2007

AISTech 2007
The Iron & Steel Technology Conference and Exposition
Indianapolis, IN
Web: www.aist.org

May 14 - 18, 2007

AchemAsia 2007
Congress on Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology
Beijing, China
Web: www.achema.de/

May 20 - 22, 2007

GAWDA Spring Management Conference
Pointe South Mountain Resort
Phoenix, Arizona
Web: www.gawda.org

July 16 - 20, 2007

CEC-ICMC 2007
Cryogenic Engineering Conference
Chattanooga, TN.
Web: www.cec-icmc.org

July 16 - 20, 2007

SEMICON West
Moscone Center,
San Francisco, CA
Web: www.semi.org

September 5 - 7, 2007

IG, CHINA 2007
International Exhibition on Industrial Gas Technology
Shanghai Mart Expo
Shanghai, China
Web: www.China-gases.com

September 5 - 7, 2007

Hydrogen and Fuel Cells — New Energy (HY+FC) Asia 2007
China Industrial Gases Industry Association-CIGIA
Shanghai Mart Expo
Shanghai, China
Web: www.hy-fcexpo.com

September 15 - 19, 2007

GAWDA Annual Convention
Westin St. Francis
San Francisco, CA
Web: www.gawda.org

September 19 - 21, 2007

InnoJoin 2007
Marketplace of Innovations
Essen, Germany

October 13 - 17, 2007

IOMA Annual Meeting
Barcelona, Spain

October 16 - 17, 2007

Safety and Reliability of Industrial Gases,
Equipment & Facilities Seminar
CGA Seminar
Tremont Plaza Hotel
Baltimore, MD
Web: www.cganet.com

November 11 - 14, 2007

FABTECH/ AWS Show
Chicago, Illinois
Web: www.aws.org

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