

Sales Love Advertising

Muhamed Muneer C P

Sales and Advertising share a love-hate relationship. Muneer unravels the mystery behind this strange relationship.

They would never admit it, of course, but salespeople love advertising. You just have to master the art of getting them to acknowledge it. One must understand what makes salespeople tick in order to bridge the gap between advertising and sales. This article aims to bring out a few insights into this interesting relationship so that marketing people can get their ads approved easier. Master the art of how sales- people act, and you have them eating out of your hands.

Salespeople have enormous mood swings. One day they are on top of the world, the next day they are in a deep funk. Be sensitive to this and you will be more successful in gaining approval for your recommendations. Pick a time when they are basking in the glow of a major new contract and you can hardly miss.

Secondly, sales is a very insecure profession and salespeople feel quite insecure most of the time. The bigger the order and longer the lead time, the greater the number of sales influencers and decision makers involved. As the number of decision makers and influencers increases, the willingness of sales reps to acknowledge the contributions of ancillary programs such as advertising decreases rapidly.

It is possible to measure these contributions, but salespeople almost subconsciously move to minimize or eliminate research funds to do this measuring, because it is a definite threat to their self-esteem. Besides, 'gut feel' is a lot easier.

Sometimes, salespeople will use selling techniques to keep market ing off balance. They know how to overcome objections. They see objections as the next step to a sale. If you think 'no' is the end of the conversation they will lose all respect for you.

If an objection is raised, probe to find out everything you can about the objection before you respond. Use open-ended questions like 'why is that?' or 'can you tell me more?

Too many times, I have frustrated myself trying to overcome objections because I thought I understood what the problems were, but couldn't get the other party to agree with my suggested solutions.

In many cases, I found out later that I never even uncovered the real objections. I was dealing with secondary issues while the sales manager was stuck on much bigger problems that hadn't even been addressed.

Once the sales training and follow up concerns have been identified, you can start working as a collaborative team to develop cost- effective solutions that will address all the marketing needs.

Too many times I have noticed that salespeople are the world's greatest audience for a good sales pitch. Just be sure you have done a thorough job of uncovering the key issues and have done your homework in developing thoughtful recommendation to address these issues.

Recently, I witnessed two account directors of a major global ad agency pass up two opportunities to close in the same meeting. They were presenting creative concepts for a three-part direct mail campaign that required the client's company to provide product samples as part of each mailer.

The client loved the approach and the agency directors had the production of the samples cleared by the client's research group. Even though the agency had several weeks worth of work to do before they could finalize the quantity, one of their account directors was urging the client to delay a decision until they could merge two mailing lists.

After they established that it would be prudent to proceed with production of the copy and the art- work while the printing quantity was determined, a second snag surfaced. The other account director was now concerned that the client's research group would be overwhelmed by the request for samples, and that it would probably be wise to check with the department head when he returned from a three-week vacation.

Four weeks later the project was canceled due to a company- wide budget cutback. It would have been continued had the printing portion been completed.

All said and done, it is most important that marketeers 'walk a mile in their shoes.

Try to get yourself invited on sales trips or to sales meetings. Agree to staff a trade show display along with the sales team. Spend some time sharing up-coming programs with them when they are in town. These activities will give you insights to enhance your credibility and make you more 'creative.' At the same time, this will make you get more acceptance among them.

Muhamed Muneer C P has extensive marketing and management experience. His articles on marketing and management appear in various publications around the world.