



Part 3: Tipsheet #16

Exploring the eight steps of the Sales Process.

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Mission Series

A series of tipsheets for people in mission-oriented organizations focused on improving their 'sales processes' to increase revenue and improve relationships.

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Organizing Sales Prospects: The Sales Process

Introduction

Social Enterprises and NGO's want to adopt a business-like approach to revenue generation. Mission-oriented organizations can benefit from effective sales processes just as profit driven companies. This tipsheet presents the eight steps of the sales process.

The sales process can be divided into eight distinct steps: prospecting, pre-approach, identifying and cross-questioning, need assessment, presentation, meeting objections, gaining commitment, and follow-up. Each step involves certain activities and a specific set of skills to be mastered.

1. Prospecting

The first step is prospecting, which involves identifying and qualifying leads. There are a number of possible methods of generating leads. The most frequent source of leads is existing customers. In order to qualify a prospect - to decide if the prospect is a good one - it must be determined whether the prospect has a need for the product, can afford to buy the product, and is receptive to being called on by the salesperson.

2. Pre-approach

The second step is pre-approach planning. This includes all of the information-gathering activities salespeople perform to learn about their prospective clients. Then, based on this research, salespeople plan their presentations. As part of their plan, they must decide on the objective for the call as well as on how they are going to approach the buyer and what kind of questions to ask.

3. *Identifying and Cross Questioning*

The third step is the approach, during which salespeople meet the buyer, introduce themselves, engage in momentary small talk, and, most important, gain the buyer's agreement to move forward into the need assessment part of the presentation.

4. *Need Assessment*

During the fourth step, identified as "need assessment," the salesperson must discover, clarify, and understand the buyer's needs. The salesperson uses a variety of questions to encourage buyers to reveal their needs.

5. *Presentation*

The presentation of the product or service and its features and benefits is the next step. The general goal for salespeople is to convince their customers that their company's products and services will satisfy the customers' needs better than those of a competitor. Today many salespeople use computers to help them make effective presentations.

6. *Meeting Objections*

The sixth step is handling the buyer's objections. Buyers often question the price or value of the product, or they may not believe that the product will improve their operations. The salesperson must be able to overcome these objections as well as others. Sometimes salespersons will find it necessary to adapt their presentations in order to move the presentation forward.

7. *Gaining Commitment*

At the seventh step, the salesperson must ask the buyer to commit to some action that will move the buyer closer to the sale. Often it takes multiple calls before the buyer is ready to commit to the sale.

8. *Follow-Up*

The final step of the personal selling process is follow-up, which takes place after the purchase. Given that selling today is consistent with relationship marketing concepts, follow-up is arguably the most important step. To effectively build relationships, the salesperson must ensure customer satisfaction by following through with value-added service after the sale.



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