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Creating Sales Conversations

By Charlie Cook

Creating Sales Conversations by Charlie Cook

You've got a great product or service that beats the competition by miles. Once you get in front of people or get them on the phone, they're sold. The only problem is you're not getting enough of those initial conversations with prospects started so you can convert them to clients. Instead of having your phone ringing of the hook with requests, you feel like your firm is the best kept secret in your industry.

Sound familiar?

Bob called from Alabama with just this problem. His company manufactures creative, attractive and safe playgrounds. Lately, sales have been flat, at best, and despite having an outstanding product, his company isn't generating as many sales as he'd like. Bob wanted to know how to start more conversations so he can jump start sales.

Want more conversations with prospects so you can sell your products and services?

The first step to starting a conversation with someone is to get his or her attention. In school, you raised your hand and eventually the teacher called on you — of course, that is what the teacher was paid to do. When you're marketing your products or services, you can't just raise your hand and expect prospects to call on you. Running an ad or having a web site that describes your products or services is the equivalent of raising your hand. It may have worked in the classroom, but it doesn't work in the marketplace.

When you focus your marketing on yourself, your firm or your products, it rarely works to get attention or start a conversation. To engage prospects and get them to contact you, you need to focus on their needs and wants.

Bob explained that he had three different markets: day care centers, municipal parks departments and architects and each has different concerns. Parks departments concern is durability and the safety of the materials used, day care centers is the creative design.

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As Bob clearly understands, each target market has their own unique set of interests. These interests should be the focus his marketing effort, not the company name, credentials or product production techniques. Bob could be using these insights to create a marketing message or set of marketing messages to get the attention of prospects.

Through your experience you have a good idea of your prospects' and your clients' concerns and interests. Take a minute to jot down the top three concerns of each of your target markets. Use this information to engage prospects in conversation.

If a stranger walked into your office, what's the first thing you'd do? You'd say something like, "How can I help you?" Not surprisingly, the same technique works wonders when you combine it with your knowledge of prospects' concerns. Instead of touting your credentials or describing your products, lead

with a question to start a conversation.

Bob could ask, "Want to learn more about improving the safety and durability of your playgrounds?" Or a marketing coach might ask, "Want to learn more about attracting a steady stream of clients?" Or the line that suckers me every time as an audiophile is, "Want to learn how to make your stereo sound like a live performance?"

When we're one on one, face-to-face, starting a conversation comes naturally to most of us. Beginning with a handful of questions, you can quickly learn what someone wants and how you can help them. Focus on your prospects' concerns with a question or two and you'll get their attention. Offer them something they want and they'll contact you.

One of the biggest mistakes people make in marketing their business is to over emphasize closing the sale. What you want to do is open the door to new prospects, start a conversation and help them get what they want. Focus on starting more conversations with your marketing and you'll end up closing many more sales.

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Do You Have to Be Aggressive to Make Sales?

By Ari Galper

Do You Have to Be Aggressive to Make Sales? by Ari Galper

A few weeks ago I was onsite at a company that had hired me to train their sales team on how to stop using traditional selling and start using the Unlock The Game™ sales approach.

After one coaching session, one member of the sales team came up to me and said, "Ari, your approach makes complete sense —"

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but I'm afraid I'll lose sales if I stop being aggressive and start being passive!"

Whenever I hear a comment like that, I want to scream, because it means that the person just doesn't yet understand that removing pressure from the sales process doesn't mean being passive!

But...I didn't scream. I took a deep breath and then explained that Unlock The Game™ is the reverse of passive.

Rather, it's an active attempt to create pressure-free conversations with prospects.

However, to do that we must eliminate behaviors and language that prospects can perceive as "aggressive."

We all know what these are -- continual e-mail and voicemail "followups" in which salespeople try to pin down the status of a potential deal -- is one common example.

The problem is that prospects react to aggressive, or perhaps we should say "overaggressive" sales behaviors by withdrawing and evading us.

We could say that Unlock The Game™ actually takes the "middle ground" between passive and aggressive by being authentically unassuming, yet effective – and that this is the most stress-free and effective way to sell.

What do I mean?

I mean that you have to shift away from assuming that every prospect is a fit for your solution.

It's sort of like the legal concept of "being innocent until proven guilty."

We can't afford to make any assumptions about "fit" until our

conversation with the prospect indicates that we've mutually arrived at that conclusion.

The aggressiveness that turns off prospects sets in when you assume, every time you pick up the phone, that you have a solution for them.

Your tone of voice and language gives them that message long before they've even had a chance to agree that they have a problem you might be able to help them solve.

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But if you can manage to find that middle ground of not assuming anything while also communicating in a low-key, unassuming manner, you'll discover a whole new effectiveness you could never have imagined.

Can prospects sense when you're assuming too much?

Sure they can -- because most of us have been conditioned to present or talk about our solution as a way to engage prospects so they'll reveal their problems to us.

But that logic is completely flawed, because when you launch into your solution to someone who doesn't trust you yet, all you do is allow them to pigeonhole you as a stereotyped "salesperson."

So how do you make this concept of being unassuming but effective a reality?

First, learn to start conversations by focusing 100 percent on generating discussions around prospects' problems, rather than pitching your solution the second you hear an opening.

Second, learn to begin those conversations by converting the benefits of your solution into problems that your solution can solve.

Third, after you and your prospects have identified a problem or problems, you can then engage in a discussion about whether fixing those problems is a priority.

It's only at that point that prospects have finally given you implicit permission to share your solution with them.

Jumping in with solutions prematurely will only land you back in the trap of being perceived as "aggressive."

With a Masters Degree in Instructional Design and over a decade of experience creating breakthrough sales strategies for global companies such as UPS and QUALCOMM, Ari Galper discovered the missing link that people who sell have been seeking for years. Visit <http://www.unlockthegame.com> to get his free sales training lessons.



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