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Crucial Questions to Superior Sales

By Jeff Mowatt

When your customers are undecided about which of your products or services they should invest in, consider employing this effective tool that not only establishes clarity, but also helps strengthen your position as a trusted advisor to your client (and not just another salesperson).

The tool which I am referring to is time-tested and commonly known as **SWOT** (*Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats*). When I conduct customer service speeches at sales seminar for groups, I often receive feedback that SWOT is one of the most useful tools people utilize in dealing with current and prospective clients.

This article is intended to help you in understanding how to ask SWOT questions, which will in turn allow you to glean more information about each and every one of your accounts - current and prospective.

First, you should start by taking the time to investigate what exactly it is the client is looking to achieve with their upcoming buy.

You need to explain to them that because each customer's needs vary widely from one program to another, it is vital for you to be equipped with as much background information in order to come up with the most appropriate solution to suit their unique and respective need(s). Then, go on to explain that you'd like to ask them a few questions in order to understand their situation a bit better; these questions will help you determine the SWOT of each client's purchase objective.

S- Strengths

"When you think about other products and/or services that you've used, what was it that you liked about them?"

they had produced - either by you or a competitor - and what it was that they liked so much.

Empowering the customer to elaborate on strengths about current and past purchases helps you to clarify what they deem important; this is a very effective method to help initiate trust from the outset because it demonstrates that you are not threatened by discussing the positive aspects of your competitors' products and services.

From your clients' perspective, this will allow you stand out from other salespeople who opt to put-down and discredit the competition.

W- Weaknesses

"What did you dislike about products and/or services you've sourced in the past?"

Here, you are allowing the customer to clarify what exactly he or she did not find useful, which will probably give you some insight on your competitors' flaws.

It is VITAL to remember that these comments MUST come from the customer rather than from you; any time you point out your competitors' faults, you are exposing yourself to three potentially devastating setbacks:

- 1) the customer disagrees with your negative assessment, in which case they no longer trust your judgment.
- 2) Even if you are right about your competitors' weaknesses, the customer may not appreciate you voicing your opinions so overtly, and at worst, you come across as a taking "cheap-shot."
- 3) The customer feels that the bad decision they made in the past reflects poorly on them and, by you bringing it up, makes your client feel as though you