



# Sales Academy

## Part four

How IBS can help in gaining the attention of your customers. By Pro-Train4Results' **Paul Rowland**.

**I**n parts one to three of the 'USP Sales Academy', we have covered the DNA profile of a sales person; how Socrates' theory of 'the law of cause and effect', first uncovered in 350BC, is still relevant in today's environment; the importance of knowing a sales process and the introduction to the ABC sales process 'Attention, Build and Conclude'.

In last month's article we began to cover the components of 'Attention' in the ABC sales process, focusing on why we should plan a call and what should be contained in the plan/agenda when we begin to communicate with our prospect or existing customer. All this being underpinned by the six P's which translated to 'Proper Planning Prevents Pxxx Poor Performance'!

This theoretical planning is fine but what happens if, as stated in the last paragraph, we fail to communicate, fail to relate to our customer, fail in striking the right relationship or, in summary, we fail in building rapport?

I'm sure that the majority of us have heard the expression 'people buy people'. It should come as no surprise then that when splitting the customer decision making criteria into four areas: a) gaining



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trust and credibility, b) identifying the customer's needs, c) linking the customer's needs to your solution, and d) closing the sale, that gaining trust and credibility represents 45% of their decision making criteria. It then becomes a 'no brainer' that building rapport is as important as flour is in bread.

### SO HOW DO WE BUILD RAPPORT?

Make sure we ask the right questions, then link our answers to the customer's response; don't interrupt and add humour into the relationship (making sure however, this is kept in proportion and we strike the right customer/supplier affiliation). Listening is absolutely vital as this will help you control the conversation if we have correctly planned the call/objectives and the information we wish to gather.

An excellent sense check after we have completed a discussion is to audit the time we spent talking versus the time the customer spent talking. The correct split ought to be 80%/20%; where the 80% should relate to the customer's 'air time' Why?

Quite simple really; the more time people become involved in a conversation the more they feel they are being listened to, understood and cared about and enjoy the discussion. With this in mind just take a few seconds to think how we feel when that happens to us. Does this draw us closer or further away from the other person whether in a personal or business relationship?

It goes without saying then that this interaction can either make or break the relationship and it is totally down to us, no one else, to make sure this element of the sales process is accomplished.

Linked closely to rapport and still in the Attention stage of the ABC sales process, is the absolute necessity to obtain the customer's 'Attention' especially when speaking to a prospect for the very first time. Here we have at a maximum, 30 seconds to make sure we generate the right level of interest from the prospect based on what we have said at the opening stage of the conversation for the discussion to continue.

For this to happen we need to make sure we have IBS! No, not Irritable Bowel Syndrome but an 'Initial Benefit Statement'!

Here we should, in a concise and articulate way, verbalise the main features that differentiate ourselves and our company from our competitors and ensure the customer begins to bite at the bait on our hooks.

Let's take a look at an example of an IBS and for the benefit of analysis we will break it down into two sections: 'X is one of the leading suppliers of office equipment in the UK supplying companies for over five years such as Dixons, Virgin, BHS and American Express as either their sole or preferred supplier'.

The key points that should register with the buyer are that your company has solid relationships with names that they recognise and that you are their sole or preferred supplier; enough for the conversation to continue past the first hurdle

(If however you do not deal with those types of companies and as a suggestion, maybe the following could be applicable as a first stage intro: 'X is one of the longest established office products suppliers in Nottinghamshire supplying local companies such as...').

Continue with: 'These customers have told us we have greatly assisted them via our 'state of the art' office planning software, which saved them time when they were deciding to buy and then by installing our equipment. Furthermore, they have benefited from our substantial buying power for these products. Could I ask you...'

You can then ask for an appointment or whatever your objective was in your pre-prepared plan for the call.

The main elements in section two are the words 'state of the art', saving time and substantial buying power. Note, on the last phrase we are not selling on price, something we should never do because if we sell on price people will buy on price. ●

**Next month we start on the 'Build' element of ABC sales process, until then remember 'Attitude conquers everything.' Go out there and make it happen!**

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