



MY PERCEPTION IS YOUR REALITY!

Prospects buy products based on the perceived value they will derive from those products. However, what one prospect values is not the same as another. They both may buy the same product, but they can buy it for completely different reasons.

For example, why do people buy cotton swabs? Whatever answer came to your mind is the correct answer, but it is only the correct answer for you. Fashion models may see these products as cosmetic applicators, whereas parents may see them as ear cleaners for their children. A computer technician could see cotton swabs as keyboard cleaners, whereas a car repair shop could see them as touch up paint applicators.

More importantly, not only do people use cotton swabs differently, but they would also look for different features when choosing among the different brands. For example, the computer technician might consider a strong shaft important so it won't bend when pushing it in between the keyboard keys. A parent, on the other hand, might consider this same feature dangerous when cleaning a baby's ears, and as a result, may choose the swab with the fluffiest tip. The car repair shop and the fashion model however, may not want a fluffy tip which could leave lint in the finished product.

The point is no two people are the same and no two people will perceive the value of your product the same. Because customers use your products differently, and because they have different self interests, they place a different value on the same item.

In order to make a sale, you must differentiate yourself from the status quo or the prospect will not act. You must also differentiate yourself from the competition or you will lose the sale to the lowest bidder. No matter what you are selling, if the prospect does not perceive value in your solution, he will not buy it, no matter what the price.

The only way to know what your prospect perceives is of value is to ask them in the fact find stage of the sales process. Your questions should be preplanned and scripted. They should probe areas of potential problems your product can best fix. They should not just inquire about what the customer thinks he wants, they should also create product "must haves" that only you can satisfy.

As business to business sales professionals, we must accept the fact that our customer's perception of our product's value is the reality in which we operate. We simply cannot use the same sales approach with every prospect and expect to be successful. Bottom line is that if the customer does not see a problem, there is no problem!

Aim Higher!

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Susan A. Enns is managing partner of B2B Sales Connections, the specialized job board, free resume listing service and online sales training website for business to business sales professionals. She has a proven track record of success, with over 22 years of direct sales, management and executive level business to business experience. Her accomplishments include being the top sales rep in Canada, managing the top sales branch, and achieving outstanding sales growth in a national channel sales organization. She has written the downloadable e-courses "Action Plan For Sales Success" and "Action Plan For Sales Management Success", as well as many automated sales tools, and as the B2B Sales Coach, she writes and edits the company's newsletter, AIM HIGHER. Currently Susan serves on the Leadership Executive of the



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