5440 Corporate Drive, Suite
205 Troy, Michigan 48098
P: 248.328.4100
E: info@advisorlegacy.com

Consultative Sales

Sales Call Structure – Talking to a Seller Prospect

By Todd Doherty,
Vice President of M&A

Your call should be planned around three basic considerations and structure: Do they like you; do they trust you: can you help them achieve their goals.

Part One of the Call (do they like you):

01

You want to start a prospecting call by establishing personal rapport. You should research the prospects website, social media, location, etc. to find talking points. If this information is not readily available, simply talking about the weather, past or upcoming holiday plans, local sports teams or activities are great options. The key is to get the client talking about themselves personally prior to switching into the business discussion. The best outcome is the prospect thinking of you as someone they would enjoy having a beer or glass of wine with.

- The outcome of your sales effort will largely be determined by this stage of the call; people prefer to do business with people they like.

- People rarely get an opportunity to talk about their favorite subject (themselves); it is even more rare that someone demonstrates a sincere interest. Your asking questions creates an immediate positive response.

- The prospect likely comes to the call with a linear approach “I just need to find out what this group offers”. This is your opportunity to take them off that track by asking interesting questions that require thinking on another track. This creates an open-minded approach to the balance of your conversation.

- Be vulnerable when sharing your personal information during this dialog. Admitting vulnerability to a stranger communicates strength and confidence.

Part Two of the Call (do they trust you):

02

You should think of this stage as the “discovery” conversation where you are asking meaningful questions that will allow you to sincerely understand the prospect’s goals and objectives. Fortunately, your deep industry experience and that of our team should make this task relatively easy, with a little basic information on the subject to be discussed.

▶ You will gain trust in this stage of the conversation by demonstrating a sincere interest, being an active listener, and asking more questions about feelings than thoughts. People want to feel better about the situation rather than thinking better (that’s our job).

▶ At some point of this stage, you should ask the prospect to describe the ideal outcome of their goal. This will create a positive association between that outcome and your solution discussed in Part Three.

- It is often a central consideration to understand the timing of the prospect’s goals related to this question.

▶ Feel free to clarify the prospects goals and objectives by describing them back to them (summarized) and asking if you understood it correctly.

▶ It is appropriate in this dialog to describe some prior or current client anecdotes as they relate to the prospect’s goals; especially including the positive outcome.

Part Three of the Call (can you help them achieve their goals):

03

This is where you finally get to start discussing our services that are best aligned with the prospect’s goals. A great segway being “would it help if I describe some of our services that might be of value to you?” This part of the dialog should be focused on value solutions and not the cost. You should know at least three value propositions that support each service being the best option for a given prospect. Telling stories about other clients’ experiences using the service is better than just stating the details. There is a good reason that you will never hear of a wine being described by its volume and alcohol content, people want to know what it is going to taste like.

- Whether the client asks, or you bring up the subject, the cost of the service will need to be discussed. NEVER apologize for the cost, doing so communicates that you don't believe in the value provided. You should discuss costs briefly with confidence, and then move on treating it as if it is a minor consideration.
    - When responding to a request for a discount, your response should simply be "no" with no justification offered.
- Don't try to prematurely close the deal, consultative selling is about building relationships first. It is best to ask the prospect about their preference for next steps and timing "what are thinking in terms of next steps?"; based on that answer (if not "I'm ready to start"), "Is there any other information I can provide to help with your decision-making process?". Always clarify your mutual expectations about next steps.
- Email follow up:
    - In any follow up email communication, always position the service being discussed as already belonging to the prospect (using possessive form) "to get started with your valuation..." "Your coaching engagement...". This is a subtle but powerful distinction in the communication because people don't like to give up what they think of as already theirs.
    - Email communications to a prospect should include positive "bookends", starting and ending with a positive statement. The content between the bookends will be received more positively by way of this simple technique.
    - "It is good to hear from you, specific content here, I look forward to helping you achieve your goals."