



## Sell from the Inside Out

by

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“They must understand that we can...”

“They should see that we ....”

“We should tell them that....”

“We must ensure that they understand that....”

**T**he “they” and the “them” in these quotes refer, of course, to prospects and I always shudder when I hear such statements. The epitome for me of such dubious reasoning was when I recently heard the CEO of a start-up organization talking with his sales team. Full of the confidence (and in this case the myopia) that comes from an unassailable belief in his own products, he told his sales people that the prospect “should consider it an honor to do business with us. Tell them that our product is the best on the market. Tell them that these major companies are considering doing business with us. Tell them that we have worked on this technology for over five years. Tell them about our patents.” Will they care? Perhaps some may, but most probably won’t.

**T**his is a clear example of a too often time-honored style of selling - bombarding the prospect with information. We’ll regale them with all the things that we consider wonderful and unique about our products, hoping to raise their enthusiasm to the same fever pitch of our own. We then expect the prospect to do our work for us, hoping that they will be able to sort through the “core dump” of data and quickly extract the information that rings their bells and pushes their buttons. Why not just say “stop me when you hear something you like.”



**N**ow it is not surprising that many employees tend to have a somewhat over-valued opinion about their own company's products and services and this is not necessarily a bad thing. It's obviously commendable to have a strong level of loyalty and belief in your company. However, there's an intrinsically dangerous element in having such an undying faith in your own product often co-joined with, or resulting in, under estimating the competition. We are then faced with the only logical course of sales action – attempting to educate the prospect to such an extent that they will develop the same level of enthusiasm and blind-faith in our offerings. Ultimately this rarely works and can often backfire into a massive waste of time and resources.

**R**ather than practice this “soap-box” selling style of overwhelming our prospects with information what we really need to do is better understand what our prospects are all about. Steven Covey in his book “The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People” describes this with his usual clarity when he declares “*seek first to understand, prior to being understood*”.

**I** call this *selling from the inside out*. Start with listening, not telling. Get *inside* the situation. Discover what matters to the prospect. Define what it is they value. Find out more about who these individuals are. What are their past experiences? What are their preferences, priorities, needs, wants, desires, fears and anxieties? Based on this understanding, we can then deliver the value of our service and solutions for their own unique needs.

*Pull information out rather than push information in –  
Sell from the Inside Out*

From Martyn Lewis' upcoming book “Sales Wise - an anthology of selling stories, follies, and fables”, each with a relevant and timely sales message. To be published later in 2003. If you wish to be notified of publication date please email us at [saleswise@market-partners.com](mailto:saleswise@market-partners.com)