



Show your Stuff – by Asking Questions?

From “Sales Wise – a journey through Sales and Selling” by Martyn Lewis

Sometimes we’re just too anxious to demonstrate our expertise. Consider these two different sales calls to a vice president of manufacturing.

Jack, our first sales professional, walks in the door, and after a few minutes of small talk the real conversation starts. A couple of minutes in, the prospect mentions the challenges that he has been experiencing in quality control with a new assembly process. Jack sees an immediate opportunity to demonstrate his expertise and, springing up to the whiteboard, he starts to sketch out various practical and philosophical approaches to the whole matter of quality control. Being a true expert, he does not lack for subject matter. Soon, forty-five minutes have gone by and he is running out of time with the allotted one hour. And, as often happens, the end of the meeting is a little rushed as the prospect needs to prepare for another meeting. However, a few more pleasantries are exchanged and they thank each other for their time.

Jack considers this an excellent call, as he was really able to demonstrate his knowledge in the area and was even able to show how his own company’s offerings differ from everyone else’s.

Marion, our second sales professional, possesses some knowledge in the area of manufacturing but quite frankly probably can’t hold a candle to Jack regarding subject matter. She calls on this same prospect, but the conversation flows quite differently. After the usual small talk, she starts to ask questions. After each question she listens with an obvious and sincere interest and also takes a few notes. Questions build upon each other. The prospect doesn’t at all feel that he is being interrogated and enjoys the opportunity to share his vision, challenges, and opportunities with an interested party. In fact a number of questions provoke a response of “great question” or “I hadn’t thought of that.” Some ten minutes prior to the end of the call, Marion wraps up by summarizing what she has learned. With time to spare, she closes the call by asking for a follow-up meeting to share ideas of how her company may be able to bring value to the prospect’s organization in the areas that have been discussed. She gets his approval to do so and takes one last minute to schedule the next meeting.



Now, let's reflect on what has happened here.

In the first call, Jack did most of the talking. It is a fact that most people would rather talk than listen, so he enjoyed the call and he knows that he really got to strut his stuff. However, from the prospect's perspective, he likely wasn't expecting a sermon or a lecture even if it was passionately and enthusiastically delivered. It's a good bet that he was already aware of the philosophies espoused by Jack and might even have been a little bored. There is a good probability that he'll write off Jack as maybe too arrogant, a bit of a bore, and perhaps even a potential cause for concern in that he did not agree with some of Jack's points. What's more, Jack did not uncover or learn much about the prospect. Good call? You be the judge.

In the second call we see that Marion gained credibility by asking good questions. She let the prospect talk, demonstrated a sincere interest by doing the hard work, and showed the professionalism of good listening. It is likely that after the meeting the prospect formed a very favorable opinion of her. Ironically, he would also likely consider that Marion knew more about his business than Jack did. After all, that is what the conversation with Marion was about: *his* business.

Unfortunately, I have been on far too many calls like the first – especially when I was with an enthusiastic and passionate expert. It is really quite amazing that afterwards, the reps think they just had a great call, but the prospect is likely all too glad that the meeting was only an hour.

**Demonstrate expertise and discover what is really
happening in your prospect's world
by asking great questions and listening**



**“Sales Wise – a Journey through Sales and Selling”
by Martyn Lewis**

is now available from Amazon.com.

**With entertaining true stories, Sales Wise introduces its readers to
new ways of thinking about sales – and shows you how to sell
your products, services, and ideas more effectively.**