

Sent: Tuesday, April 08, 2003 11:15 AM
Subject: BIZ BANK: CUSTOMER-CENTRIC SELLING

Dear Aquathin Dealer OnLine;

You may recall from previous NewsBulletins...and for those of you that have attended Aquathin U., our form of presentation squarely places the Customer's needs and concerns under our microscope. It is far easier to demonstrate a solution than to jabber about technology (but your Patented Aquathin Process, proprietary designs and detailed quotations are your insurance policy for your solution). You will enjoy the corroboration of the Spin article below. Its nice to read that Aquathin again is ahead of the curve in our "Science of Selling" as we are in our "Science of Water".

Warmest regards to all...as well, your comments are always welcome and very much appreciated.

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"Alfie"
Alfred J. Lipshultz, President

P.S. "Splash NewsBulletins", "Forum Q & A", "Allergic Reaction", Biz Bank, Tech Bank and Quote Bank... ARE ALL FREE services to all Authorized Aquathin Dealers and their clients to keep you abreast of technology updates and industry news.

The Buyer's Side of the Table

Let's assume that you've already had the best sales training that money can buy. You're incorporating the tools and techniques from the training program into your sales calls, and you're even getting some valuable coaching on how to make the most of your new selling skills. Is there anything else you can do to maximize your effectiveness in the field?

According to the *SPIN Selling Fieldbook*, there are three practical methods for achieving superior post-training results. We'll talk about one of them today. It's called "getting on the buyer's side of the table."

This means more than paying lip service to "**customer-centric selling**" – it means changing your thinking in two important respects. First, it requires a shift from persuading to understanding. Second, it requires a shift from a product focus to a buyer focus.

To shift from persuading to understanding is to redefine the traditional role of the salesperson. By changing your perspective, you reframe the seller-customer interaction. If you see the purpose of a sales call as understanding customer needs, you'll talk less and listen more. You'll ask more questions. Persuasion works, but understanding works better.

In one real-life example from the *Fieldbook*, the sales force of a large telecom was told to conduct a survey of customer issues, and they were specifically told not to use the survey calls for selling. Following the survey, sales actually went up substantially, because the focus on customer issues uncovered needs and opportunities that the salespeople had been unaware of.

The shift from a product focus to a buyer focus is another critical change in perspective. It's an adjustment that may become easier to make when you consider that superior product knowledge has never correlated with success anyway. Of course you need to know your products. But given the choice, buyers would prefer to deal with a seller who thoroughly understands their needs rather than one who only understands his or her own company's offerings.

Huthwaite's research has shown that having a buyer focus can also accelerate a new salesperson's ramp-up to productivity. A study done at a leading IT company showed that the fastest learners were those with a genuine interest in the business or residential issues of their customers.

Getting on the buyer's side of the table makes good business sense for both the buyer and the seller.

Ask The SPIN Doctor

Q: I feel overwhelmed with all the information my customer tells me, and I want to make sure I turn their implied needs to explicit needs. What is the best way to get an explicit need?

A: The good news is that your customer is talking to you. But you need a framework for the conversation that will allow you to advance the sale. The SPIN model provides just such a framework. Prepare for the meeting by determining an objective - an outcome that you want to achieve from this particular sales call - and plan some SPIN questions that will help you direct the discussion. Use SPIN questions to understand the customer's issues, and then use SPIN questions to develop customer needs. "Build the pain" and the explicit need will follow.