

## Better Selling: Up or Across?

I was reminded recently of an experience I had in a local printshop 10-12 years ago. I had asked for a quote on 800 self-mailers, to be used to promote a charitable event I was involved with. The young woman behind the counter said: "Let me give you a quote on 1000 and 2000, so you can see how much you'll save if you buy more."

I said: "We have a mailing list of 780. Why would I want to buy more?"

"I guess you wouldn't" she said. "But it can't hurt to ask. And besides, I get a bonus if I can upsell you."

### Cui Bono?

*Cui bono* is a Latin phrase which translates to *who benefits?* It's one of the guiding principles of criminal investigation, because if you want to find out who did the crime, identifying the person who benefits the most is a pretty good place to start! *Cui bono* is also one of the guiding principles of good selling, and the best selling occurs when *both* the buyer and seller benefit.

Upselling can benefit the buyer, no question. But upselling on quantity pre-supposes that a lower unit cost is the best way to bring value. That may be true for a product that is used and replaced on a regular basis, like letterhead, envelopes or business forms. But it's probably not as true for most of what you print today. The real chicken-or-egg question is this: *Which defines greater value, something that costs less or something that works better.* (Obviously something that works better *and* costs less would have a lot going for it, but here's another question: *Why would something that works better have to cost less?*)

Here's still another question: *If your customer is going to buy 10,000 of something over the course of a year, would you rather have that in one big order or some number of smaller orders?* My position is that smaller orders would be better for you, if for no other reason than that they bring you into more frequent contact with your customer.

Ultimately, though, it's what's best for the customer that matters most. And I'm hard pressed to see where upselling to earn a bonus supports that idea.

### Cross Selling

Beyond all of that, most printers simply don't do enough cross-selling, which I define partly as educating your customers about the full breadth of your product line. In other words, making sure that your customers are aware of everything that they could be/should be buying from you.

I'm not talking about a listing of your products on your website, by the way, or on a brochure or a capabilities list. I'm talking about making it your business to actually talk with your customers about things they're not buying from you. And please note that I said *talk with*, not *talk to*. The key to education is engagement. Where would you expect to learn more and learn better, from a lecture, or from an actual conversation with someone who had knowledge to share?

Many salespeople would approach this conversation as tell-and-show: "We have a new large format printer. Let me show you some samples of what it can do."

I'd rather see you use ask-then-show: "Do you have any interest in, or application for large format printing, like posters, banners or any sort of merchandising graphics?" If yes: "We have a new large format printer. Let me show you some samples of what it can do."

If no: "Well, then, I shouldn't bore you with something that we can do but you don't need. But hey, do you have any interest in, or application for (some other product or capability)?"

I wouldn't go beyond two products in any one conversation, but I do want you to eventually cover every product.

Oh yeah, isn't it nice that this strategy adds to the frequency of contact with your customers? .