

Rolling Stones and Printing Sales

What my client actually said was “I’m not getting very much in the way of satisfaction from this.” What I heard in the soundtrack section of my brain was *da da, da da daaaaah*. I’m pretty sure Mick Jagger and Keith Richards weren’t thinking about printing sales when they wrote “Satisfaction” back in 1965, but the sentiment is probably familiar to everyone in sales.

So here’s the question, if you’re not getting much in the way of satisfaction from your sales efforts, what should you do?

Approach or Expectations

The answer to that question probably has something to do with your approach to selling, or your expectations for success. So let’s start off with those expectations and understand that you can’t sell to everyone. I wish you could. I wish *I* could! But the fact of the matter is that selling is a numbers game that is stacked against the salesperson from the beginning.

Why? Let’s start with the fact that everyone already has a printer, and some of them are *solids*, which means that they’re simply not going to change the way they do things. (see Customers Up For Grabs, *QP*, February 2010) Let’s also consider that some people’s default position is “Hell No!” when it comes to even talking to a salesperson. Finally, let’s add in the potential for people being legitimately busy when you happen to be calling them or e-mailing them. When you put all of those things together, it’s a recipe for rejection and frustration—and that doesn’t even consider the damage you may be doing to yourself with poor selling strategy!

I’ve found that most salespeople need some attitude adjustment in this regard, so here’s what I suggest. Stop swinging for the fences. Start celebrating anything that moves the ball forward. Yes, I know that I’m mixing my sports metaphors, but I hope the message is clear. Selling is a process. It takes time to build the kind of relationship that benefits both the seller and the buyer, and that’s the only kind of relationship you should be seeking. As I’ve written before, Little Victories Add Up To Big Wins (*QP*, April 2000).

Poor Strategy

I have another client whose strategy had been to make 25 cold calls each day. He was a brand new hire when he started with me, and he’d been working with this strategy for a couple of weeks—at which point he went to his boss and said “I don’t think I’m right for this job. I can’t get anyone to talk to me.”

I put him on a program where he continued to identify 25 suspects every day, but instead of a cold call asking to speak with the person who buys the printing, he started saying “I’d like to send some information about my company to your company. Can you tell me who to send it to, and give me that person’s e-mail address?”

His success rate getting names and e-mail addresses has been pretty high, running better than 80%, and the next step has been to send an introductory e-mail. His success rate getting people on the phone after that e-mail has still been pretty low, running between 4-7%. But remember, he wasn’t getting *anyone* on the phone with his old strategy! Right now we’re working on his voice mail strategy, scripting a couple of (hopefully) compelling messages that will get a few more people to return his calls. Our goal is to get him to the point where he actually gets to talk with 10-12% of his suspects. That may not seem like a high success rate, but it’s a *good* success rate, especially considering the way this game is stacked against a salesperson.

Poor Effort

Here’s one more thing to think about for today. You won’t be successful if you don’t make enough calls to make the numbers game work for you. I think that simple fact defeats more salespeople than anything else, especially selling owners. So remember something else that Jagger and Richards told us back in the 60’s. *You can’t always get what you want, but if you try sometimes, you might find you get what you need.*

A few new customers?