

## The Importance Of Titles

I had an interesting exchange of emails yesterday with a new sales hire at a large commercial printing company. He asked: “What title should I have on my business card? My boss wants it to be ‘sales representative,’ but I that is not how I want to be seen. What do you think about ‘print satisfaction specialist?’”

I wrote back: “I am not sure what that means. What exactly are trying to convey?”

He answered: “I do not want to be seen as someone who is trying to sell something. I want them to know that I am committed to their satisfaction.”

My response: “What is wrong with being seen as someone who is trying to sell something? You have to sell the idea that you are committed to their satisfaction! No one will automatically accept that just because you say it. You have to convince them, and that, by my definition, is selling.”

### False Stigma

It is true that there is a stigma attached to selling, but that mostly relates to the overly-aggressive salesperson who will say or do anything to make a sale. That kind of salesperson is a lot more common in *transactional* selling situations; for example, a commodity product or a one-time sale. The printing sale is much more of a *relationship* sale, and as I have written before, the strongest relationships are based on trust, because it takes a leap of faith to place an order with a printing salesperson and a printing company. We sell a custom-manufactured product, and a lot can go wrong between the order and the delivery.

Here’s the challenge in a nutshell. The first time around, you have to convince them to take that leap of faith. It gets easier after that, as long as everything goes well the first time, and the next time, and then the next time. But please understand that you will not make it easier by disguising the fact that your job is to be a convincer. I would be completely open about that: “I am a sales representative, and what that means to me is I first have to convince you to give me a chance, then I have to do all of the things that will lead to your long-term satisfaction. So let me apologize in advance if I push too hard while I’m trying to convince you, because I think I am doing it with your best interest in mind.”

Think about this. If you do not think your customers are better off because they buy from you — and that your prospects will be better off if they do — you are in the wrong line of work!

### Buyer Titles

Ultimately, I do not think the title of the seller is all that important. I know people who are very successful with titles including junior salesperson, senior sales representative, sales executive, account executive, etc. I could even live with “print satisfaction specialist” — as long as you accept the need to explain exactly what that means.

On the other side of this coin, I think it is very important that you know the exact title of every one of your customers and prospects — and I hope you will remember that my definition of both “customer” and “prospect” refers not to companies, but to the individuals within those companies who buy from you, or could be buying from you.

It is those “could be’s” who make this so important. I think you have two main categories of prospects. First are people who buy printing at companies you have never sold to. Second are *other* people who buy printing at companies you are already selling to. If you are getting business from one buyer, or even multiple buyers, you still want to get business from all of the buyer’s, right?

The process of identifying all of the buyers can often be reduced to a process of elimination. Let us say that your current customer list includes Marketing titles, Purchasing titles, Human Resources titles, business owners and Managing Directors. If you are selling to the Human Resources Manager at a company, should you not also be talking to the Marketing Manager? Or vice versa? And if you do not have even a passing relationship with the business owner or Managing Director, should you not try to build one?

In my experience, most printing salespeople do not work hard enough at *account penetration*. They may work at deepening the relationship they have with individual buyers, adding a “like factor” to the “trust factor” that still has to be at the heart of the relationship. And that “like factor” can be important — especially when you need them to like you enough to give you another chance after something happens that strains the trust.

But the real winners in printing sales do penetrate their accounts, And they often use the people they are selling to as their conduit to the others. But that is a topic for another day!