



■ ARE YOU A PAID OR UNPAID CONSULTANT?

When a prospect or a suspect (unqualified prospect) asks you for free information, do you provide it? If your answer is “yes” you may be an unpaid consultant. If a potential customer asks you to help him or her figure out the solution to their problem and you joyfully and immediately respond with the answer – you may be an unpaid consultant. When you are asked for your prices and you don’t have a thorough understanding of not only what, but why they want that specific product or service - you could be an unpaid consultant. If you are giving away proprietary company information for free, without a commitment – you are an unpaid consultant.

Unless you are in the restaurant business, you should not be giving away your product or service prior to getting a commitment to purchase from your customer. This is the wrong place and the wrong time to present your proprietary information. This is how salespeople create “head trash” (thoughts and emotions that create fear and prevent us from operating as intellectually as we normally would) and degrade the marketplace.

When you provide your product specifications, prices, unique characteristics, etc. before you get a commitment from your prospect, you are seriously jeopardizing the chance to successfully land that sale. Prospects will use the free consulting you give them against you. They will take this free consulting to create specifications for your competitors to bid on. If you give them your pricing structure they will of course try to make money the major issue (which it never is by the way – but that’s a whole different column). When you give them your unique ideas and/or product characteristics, what is to stop them from sharing those with their current provider to see if they can perform or provide the same ideas and characteristics? In all those cases they will have no particular reason to buy from you.

The professional salesperson will close the sale, or at least get commitment, before providing consulting of any substance. You accomplish this through effective bonding, rapport and building trust with your prospect. They need to feel confident that you truly understand not only their intellectual needs, but also their emotional involvement in those intellectual needs. Once you are there, the prospect will have the trust and confidence that you are the one to solve their pressing issues. You do this by asking all the right questions, listening intently and questioning some more. Remember that professional selling is 70% listening and 30% talking.

It is important to have a selling system that will allow you, rather than your prospect, to stay in control of the selling situation. Your selling system should require that your prospect qualifies to get a proposal/presentation from you. In order to qualify they must have “pain” (problems they have that you can solve), the appropriate “budget” needed to solve those problems, and you must know everything there is to know about their decision-making process. When you implement a strong selling system you will no longer be a free consultant and your business will grow as it never has before.

■ www.trainingresourcegroup.com

To find out more about how you can develop and implement a selling system for your company call Chuck Polin or Evan Polin at The Training Resource Group (215) 320-4650

