

TeamBuilders International

Are you truly customer-focused in your selling activities? Answer True or False to the following questions to evaluate whether or not you are taking advantage of all of your opportunities to be customer-focused.

True	False	During each sales call, my customer talks more than 50% of the time.
True	False	I connect in person or by phone at least once a quarter with every customer.
True	False	I sometimes ask questions where I'm afraid of what I might hear.
True	False	I have relationships and dialog at the highest executive level with my strategic accounts.
True	False	My value proposition is based on the challenges and goals identified by my client.
True	False	I make sure that each sale produces a win for both my customer and myself.
True	False	I stay connected with my customer through the fulfillment process.

If you answered False to more than three of these questions, you may need to rethink your position and identify areas in your selling activities that need improvement. Consider the following customer-focused selling techniques to help you win new business and increase the business you already have.

Get Inside Your Customer's Head

The most important aspect of being customer-focused is having the ability to understand the challenges faced by your clients. Most purchasing decisions are made because customers have something they are looking to fix, accomplish or avoid, so it is important that you understand your client's business issues and solution image before offering a solution.

Once this concept is established, identify the magnitude of the discrepancy between where your client thinks he is and where he wants to be. Someone with a large gap may desire and require a lot of attention and is more likely to want to be sold. If your client does not see an essential discrepancy between his current reality and needed results, then the desire to act may be lower in your client's priority list. At Miller Heiman, we often say, "if there isn't a gap, there isn't an opportunity."

What's In It For Me?

In all sales relationships, it is important that both the salesperson and the customer gain favorable outcomes from the interaction. We call this a win-win relationship. The objective of a win-win relationship is for all parties to walk away satisfied.

One thing to point out is that a win is personal, not organizational. For instance, a win may be that your customer gets promoted in his organization as a result of solving an issue by using your product. A win cannot simply be an increase in sales force productivity, for

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example; that's an organizational result. When you look at an organizational result, you must ask yourself what that result means to each individual customer. Once you have identified this, you have identified the personal win.

Understanding how your customer will win will help you develop a pertinent and meaningful solution. Find your customer's win by asking questions. Customers will usually be happy that you are making an effort to meet their individual needs.

In a win-win relationship, don't neglect to identify the win for yourself. If you are losing in a relationship, it not only makes you miserable, it affects your ability to build a healthy relationship with your client. As a sales professional, it is often easy to identify your own win. It could be in the commission check you get at the end of the month or simply in knowing that you've established yourself as a trusted business advisor to your client and can expect an ongoing commitment for more business.