



## **Uncle Neil's Sales Tip – September 2008**

### **"I'm interested" is not a synonym for a sales opportunity**

When you hear the words "I need" and a description of what's "needed" do you immediately start to design and quote or sell? If you do, at the end of the sales process, you often hear "It's too expensive".

Can you really afford to waste time selling with the outcome being "sorry, not enough budget"?

Up front and immediate qualification of things like cost v budget is a must for any sales process. It's the reality check that can get you a sale or let you scale down the expectations of your prospect so they can get a solution at their budgetary level. So is up front qualification of budget availability, how to get cash obligated and available, the evaluation and buying process, how things get bought and who needs to be involved to get to yes.

It's all done in about 1 minute on the very first sales approach call and its results tell you if you have a prospect, have money available to buy and even if you should continue with the selling process because there is a reasonable chance for a sale if you do.

### **Here are some steps for doing this:**

1. First off, do some research and understand the target company, especially how and why your product or solution can help.
2. Next, make a short 30 second commercial based on your findings that can quickly and succinctly say what you do, relate pertinent issues, benefits and problems solved and let you ask if it's something that the prospect needs or would adopt.
3. Next find and define who would be right to hear that commercial at the highest level of responsibility and authority, relate to it and give you a true assessment of need/value on the spot.

4. Then make the phone call to that person and use the 30 second commercial. After the commercial, ask for and qualify the possibility of need or value for what you have explained from the person you are speaking with. Ask it this way "Is this an idea that can benefit you and your company"

5. **If yes**- ask how, why, reason, problems solved, impact, This creates a link between you and the person that you have called for a sales process to begin that, if perused properly, you have the basis of selling value/ROI and not cost and you know it has possibilities to yield a sale based on those criterion. Actually, that's the basis of a solid sale- Perceived value and or ROI, not cost!

6. **If no**, or you get a weak maybe, stop selling, say thanks and move on to the next prospect. Don't waste sales time on this one. Yes it's OK to say "Thanks for your time and your honesty. I can see that our solution isn't applicable to you" and then ask "Do you know of a colleague that could use my solution" and you might get a great prospect to call. Even an introduction.

7. **If yes**, learn the process for moving forward and facilitating the outcome being a funded PO.

Ask "If we do have a worthwhile solution for you, who along with you would need to be involved in evaluating, adopting and purchasing your concept"? That teaches you who to approach beyond your initial contact and does not insult the person you are speaking to.

Even more important, since your idea or solution has already been acknowledged as worthwhile by the prospect. using this question also lets you ask them for help in moving forward. You will get that inside help or as we call them in sales the inside CHAMPION who can sponsor you and your idea/solution up the ladder, a very valuable inside ally in any sales process.

Remember, don't say "who is the decision maker". It's an insulting question because it says to your suspect "you are a peon so tell me who to go to." WRONG!! The "peon" is the gate keeper and can help move you forward or kill a sale because they are usually the resident expert that the decision maker consults for value.

8. Get Budget qualification up front - Get it qualified immediately in this first call. After the 30 second commercial gets receptivity or the caller has finished telling you what they want to buy, in either the proactive or reactive situation, state a rough cost right then to your suspect for the solution and ask if there is a budget for implementing the concept if it's a worthwhile idea. **Yes, I did say bring up budget and possible cost right away and yes it violates every sales rule that you have learned.**

Don't even think of continuing the sales process without knowing the answer to this budget and budget process in call # 1 because the answer you get reveals the time and process needed to get the sale and your prospects perception of "how much" they think your solution should cost. It lets you measure if it's worth your time v the ultimate sales value as well.

**Don't be afraid of this question so early in the process.** It tells you if you can proceed with your idea.

It also lets you ask and understand what the company's usual process for evaluating and ultimately purchasing your idea is. That's a clear roadmap to a financial yes, the key to the PO so get it and work it. That's also true when you get a call from a "potential" customer telling you that they are going to by a specific sized access control, CCTV, Fires system and want you to "bid".

End users rarely have a handle on real costs nor have they correctly obligated enough budget so do not spin your wheels without qualifying need v probable cost and available budget. Incidentally, doing so lets you advise them re their budget inadequacy and it's an opportunity to sell a starter system using the available budget.

**Remember, people do things for their reasons, not yours.** So instead of deciding that you know a prospect needs your service and trying to ram it through, follow the steps above, use the 30 second commercial up front and you will avoid chasing rainbows that do not become sales.

### **Tangible Results for you**

Because you are working with solidly qualified prospects who have or will spend the \$ for your solution, you will up you close rate and reduce the time it takes to get the sale. More income faster from more sales---That's a great equation for us sales types isn't it!

Regards,

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