

Why Relationships Must Come Before The Sales Pitch



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Take a moment and recall life before social media, smartphones and the always-online mindset that pervades today. The way we inform ourselves now is vastly different compared to just a decade ago.

The days of the seller playing the role of gatekeeper to information are gone. Businesses now keep their product information online, and buyers are free to research, compare prices and read reviews on their own terms.

To be a successful seller, you have to cater your prospecting efforts to the modern, hyper-informed buyer. People don't want to be sold to; they want to be presented with an incredible solution to their problems.

Your differentiator as a seller is how you act. When you proactively build relationships with prospects, it sets the stage for the greater conversation that ultimately leads to the sale.

Stop The Pitch And Start A Conversation

The old-school product pitch is going the way of the CD player. These days there are better ways to organize and listen to music than keeping hundreds of CDs. And today there's a more refined method of communicating with prospective customers that's tuned in to the era we live in.

No one wants to hear your pitch out of the blue. You stand a much better chance of earning a prospect's attention if you start a relevant conversation with them.

When you start conversations with prospective customers, it's important to show restraint in your engagement. Always ask yourself if the message you're delivering is useful to your prospect. Without perceived value, your message is likely to be overlooked.

For example, a basic "just following up" email after a prospect engagement only wastes time. If you're trying to get the attention of a C-level prospect, strike up a conversation that speaks to their pains and problems. In your follow-up emails, try including a link to a useful blog post or whitepaper, and then carry the conversation forward by asking questions that match the role you're targeting.





Be Personal

Mass marketing messages feel spammy and impersonal. The more you tailor communications to the individual prospect, the more it feels like a conversation. Impersonal communication not only turns people off; it doesn't provide you with the information necessary to ask the right questions and truly understand your buyer.

The better you know your prospects, the easier it becomes to naturally weave questions into the conversation that address their pain points.

If you're selling to the C-suite, your questions should reflect the executive's daily concerns about strategy, profit and other high-level concepts. Front-line workers, on the other hand, have very different priorities that are related to specific tasks.

Also, avoid asking questions that encourage one-word answers. The goal of every prospect conversation is to provoke responses that convey as much information as possible. A simple "yes" or "no" isn't nearly as valuable as a detailed explanation of a problem.

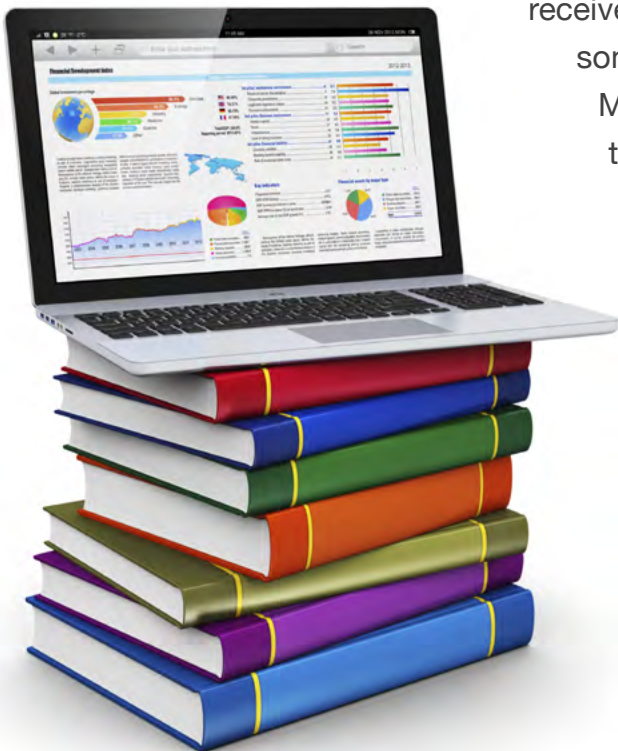
Do Your Homework

With so much information online, you're expected to enter the conversation with a solid knowledge of your prospect's company and their role. The real homework comes from digging deeper to uncover the buyer persona's challenges and struggles and learning the language to use to grab their attention.

LinkedIn discussion groups are an excellent place to start taking notes. Hear how prospects talk amongst themselves, listen to the language they use and get a sense of their pain points. The more you define your target buyer persona, the more specific conversations you'll be able to have with them.

Google Alerts are another great study tool. Try setting up an alert for your prospect's name and their company. This way, whenever one of those names is mentioned online, Google sends you a notification. If they close a big deal, for instance, you'll be prepared to offer your congratulations, which goes a long way toward crafting personalized conversations.

Just be careful that you're getting the alerts frequently. If you receive a bundle of the week's alerts on Friday, and something great happens to your prospect on a Monday, you risk giving the impression that you're not tuned in if you mention the news too long after the fact.



Be Their Biggest Fan Online

Social media provides an unparalleled opportunity for sellers to stay in a prospect's front-of-mind without making a heavy engagement. Find out where your prospects are most active online. Check their LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and Google+ profiles to start. Your prospects see when you've "liked" or shared their content, and this is a great way to innocuously bubble up in their mind.

But only engage your prospects on social media where it's appropriate. LinkedIn is usually the best place to start following prospects online, as it's a professional social network. You don't want to invade your prospects' personal lives, so if one of your targets only appears to use Twitter for personal use, it's probably best not to engage them there. Use common sense and be careful not to come across as overbearing.

Also, before you get ahead of yourself, make sure your own social media profiles are fleshed out and up-to-date with relevant information.

Polish Your Communication Materials

Just like it's important to have a polished social media profile, the other forms of communication you use to engage prospects need to shine as well. First impressions are important, so ensure your materials are free from spelling and grammatical errors.

Next, refine your content so that it drives home important messages concisely and effectively. Wordy PowerPoint presentations won't be remembered. Make your message succinct. Use infographics and other images when appropriate. Ensure that your presentations, whitepapers and other materials are aesthetically pleasing; it's good to embrace bold or bright colors, but don't go overboard. Test your materials internally to see if anyone finds them difficult to read.





Because people respond differently to content, try to develop a diverse array of sales assets so you're able to cater to a prospect's preferences. Some people, for example, don't like PowerPoint presentations. So it's important to have a sales video or other asset available in situations where a slideshow won't work.

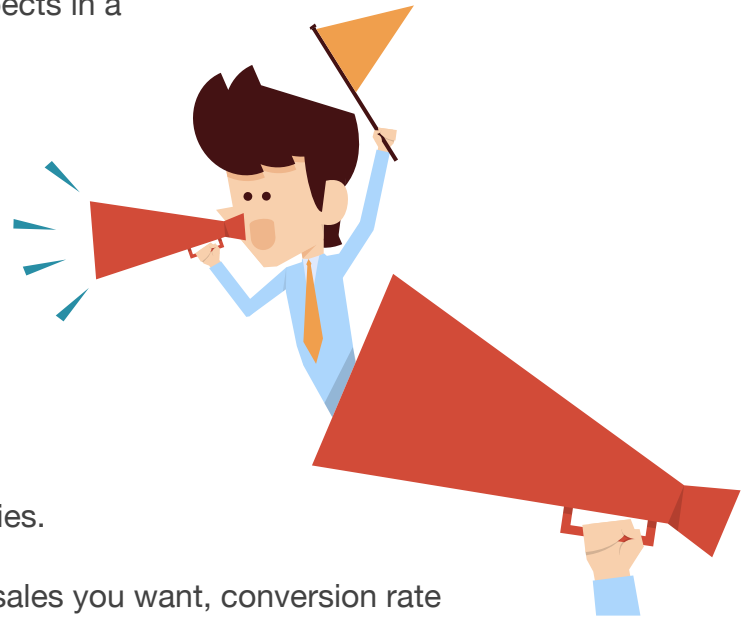
Leverage Technology And Software To Communicate Better

Numerous software applications designed for everything from improving research methods and allowing more differentiated communication to aggregating a better user experience are available for businesses today. Use the power of technology to develop stronger prospect relationships.

The best software helps you leverage your content across multiple platforms. This is especially important to consider when catering to the modern buyer, who's always online, usually pressed for time and often consuming content on a variety of platforms. The user experience is critical when it comes to reading your content and participating in a conversation with you. If someone starts reading one of your blog posts on their laptop and decides to finish reading from their tablet on the train ride home, you should be able to provide that experience seamlessly.

However, it's not wise to buy every piece of software available and expect to see remarkable improvements. Don't overload yourself with tools. Instead, find one or two pieces of technology that make the most sense for your goals as a seller, and then master using them. This ensures you're saving time where needed and have more opportunities to communicate with prospects in a meaningful way.

Never forget that your prospective customers are well-equipped to gather their own information. But it takes more than one person to have a conversation, and this is where the right seller really shines. When you grab your prospects' attention with meaningful content, then engage them in a conversation specific to their pains, it caters to a selling experience more in tune with modern sensibilities.



The Tellwise Nutshell (TTN): To generate the sales you want, conversion rate tracking is essential. If you haven't embraced conversion tracking, you'll be surprised by how effective and productive your content becomes once you start measuring conversion rates and using the data proactively.

Be it through the color of an icon or the copy on a website, conversion tracking gives you an informed perspective of what's moving your buyers through the sales process and what's holding them back.

About Tellwise

Tellwise is a Seattle-area technology company with a focus on sales and marketing solutions for the 21st century and beyond. Founded by a team of Microsoft veterans, Tellwise offers a cloud-based sales collaboration platform that addresses the needs of highly mobile and socially connected workplaces. The Tellwise team of industry experts is committed to helping sales and marketing professionals better engage, connect and collaborate with their customers.

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