



Business Munch

www.salespartners.co.nz

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Developing great sales professionals who can compete and win

Food for thought from Sales Partners

Keeping in touch!

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Happy 2007!

Hi and welcome to the first Business Munch of the year. We will aim to stimulate your thoughts on how you sell. To Munch on this month:

Starter: Do you know your customer?
Main Course: Product knowledge can hurt you
Dessert: Events in 2007

If you know anybody who would be interested in reading the Munch, then please forward this on to them.

Starter

Do you know your customer

I took a phone call last week from a telesales person of a supplier to my business. After a short greeting, he began to explain a 'special offer'. For a few tens of dollars more than I currently pay, I could have something I have no need for. Apparently this 'great' offer had been promoted on their website, but they were now phoning to see if I was interested. Maybe their website promotion didn't work?

What a great example of a wasted phone call and a missed opportunity to start the year!

The reason why? The seller was focussed on how he could sell something to me, rather than how he could help improve my business. This is bad enough when cold calling, but I consider it a crime to do this when calling an existing client.

It was a **wasted call** because I had no need for the offer - it wasn't 'great' for me, and his credibility was shot when he started the telesales pitch. A moments research on their records would give them key information about my business. A couple of simple questions would soon establish whether I had the issue that their product offer would resolve. If it was relevant the deal on offer might have been of interest. As it wasn't they could end the call, credibility intact.

It was a **Missed Opportunity** – This (not so) new offer is one of many services offered by the company. A few questions about how I was fairing in the common areas where their clients experience problems would have been a far more valuable conversation for them and me. They had my attention on the phone, but didn't think to ask.

So keep in touch with your clients in 2007, but don't sound like a salesman. Be a business professional and prepare to have a conversation based on what you know about their business, and how you can help their business.

Need a speaker for
your next sales
meeting?

Call us to discuss
how we can provide
some food for
thought for your
sales team....

We're on the Web!
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Main Course

Product knowledge can hurt you

I think the problem of the self serving 'sales patter' stems from sales inductions in particular, and sales training for new recruits still being focused on product features and benefits, rather than the problems and issues that clients have.

I learned this lesson myself the hard way many years ago selling scientific instruments in England. During the first couple of weeks of my employment I was sent to the laboratory to learn the product. I soon knew the product range inside out and couldn't wait to impress an unsuspecting customer with how much I knew. A full demonstration took about half an hour. It took me a while to figure out that success of a sales call was inversely related to how far I got through the demonstration! Understanding the problem the client was trying to solve, and demonstrating the relevant features of the analyzer was a much more successful strategy.

In the book, Business Think, a story is told of a furniture store that found its salespeople became less effective after 18-24 months on the job. Researchers found that it took about 6 months to gain good product knowledge. For new sales people with little or no product knowledge, they were keen to have conversations with clients, and asked lots of questions. For the experienced sales people, they spent their time trying to impress clients with their fountain of product knowledge. In the end management attributed the problem to too much product knowledge. They solved the problem by rotating salespeople every 18 months to a new department to keep curiosity alive.

I don't think the problem was too much product knowledge. You can't have too much product knowledge, but you can misuse your knowledge. No-one wants a meeting with a walking/talking brochure. Brochures are for reading. On a first meeting, the feature and benefit information is usually best left in the brochure for the client to read in his own time.

Product knowledge should be used to enhance the conversation about your clients business by:

- Building the perception of value in the mind of the client
- Asking insightful questions
- Answering questions with an informed opinion
- To further the conversation in the interests of both you and the client

Product Knowledge – aim to express no to impress

Dessert

Events 2007

These are the courses I will be facilitating for the NZIM in 2007 in Wellington.

Click on the link to the NZIM website for more information and to register for courses.

Date	Event	Location
1 February 2007	Strategic Prospecting	NZIM, Wellington
8-9 February 2007	Account Management Skills	NZIM, Wellington
15-16 February 2007	Consultative Sales Skills	NZIM, Wellington
8-9 March 2007	Key Account Management	NZIM, Wellington
11-12 July 2007	Account Management Skills	NZIM, Wellington
26-27 July 2007	Key Account Management	NZIM, Wellington
27-28 August 2007	Consultative Sales Skills	NZIM, Wellington

A Parting Thought to bring in the new year:

*You don't have to be great to get started,
But you have to get started to be great.*

Les Brown

Have Fun!

.....**Paul**

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