

Beware! Your True Intentions are Showing

By Jill Konrath

When I opened the email, the first sentence jumped out me: "I've just been to your website and your company is a perfect fit for our services!" Clearly the seller was really excited about his discovery.

On the other hand, I was backpedaling as fast as I could go. I wanted nothing to do with him. If he'd caught me on the phone, my instincts would have immediately erected barricades. If we were meeting in person, objections would be spewing from my mouth.

Why? Because he seemed too excited about selling me. Without even realizing it, his approach screamed "self-serving" and I recoiled from it. My reaction isn't unusual. In fact, it's the norm. You do the same thing. We all hate being sold!

Yet invariably, I see sellers engaging in self-sabotaging behavior that can only lead to failure. For example:

- When their company introduces a new product or service, most sellers rush to convert their hottest prospects. Filled with passion, they unwittingly create insurmountable obstacles that actually derail their sales efforts or delay them indefinitely.
- When good-hearted, intelligent & talented people put on their sales hat, they suddenly morph into blathering idiots. It's as if they think this is what selling is all about – even though they're repulsed by their own actions.
- When well-intentioned sellers are fearful of meeting their quotas or even staying in business, their desperation to land a client or get the order causes them to push themselves on others.

Whether you want to or not, you always communicate your intent. Prospective buyers sense it instantaneously and react accordingly. If they feel you have their best interests in mind, they're attracted to you. Conversely, they're repelled by any behavior that smacks of self-serving intentions.

To be successful selling your prospect or service, focus on making your prospects successful. Use these strategies to re-jigger your thinking.

Change Your Question

Once you've targeted an account to go after, instead of focusing first on "How can I sell this to them?" ask yourself, "How can I improve their business?" When this question is at the forefront of your thinking, you start behaving different. You can't make calls until you've researched their firm, know their company's objectives and understand the

challenges they're facing. You prepare for appointments with their success in mind, not yours.

Change Your Language

When your intention is to help your customer improve their operation, you don't talk about your product or service. Period. It's really quite irrelevant at the onset of your discussion. Even though you're really excited about it, you don't talk about it. Your offering is simply a tool that helps them achieve a very specific business objective. That's what's important. It's all about them!

Change Your Role

Stop putting on your sales hat! Stop thinking of yourself as a seller. You are a business improvement specialist. As a result of your work to improve your customer's operation, they will buy your product or service. Sales is the outcome of what you do, but it is not your purpose.

Many sales managers & business owners will rail at what I say. They want you to "go out there and sell, sell, sell." Marketers will push you to "tell your prospects all about our unique differentiators." Even you will likely feel resistance to making these changes.

But truthfully, the more you need sales, the more important these strategies become. Top sellers know this. When you're in their presence, you never feel like you're being sold. So you open up and tell them more. That's how it works. And before long you're happily doing business with them.

Always remember: your intention is showing. If it's all about you, you're toast. The best way to make a sale is to make a difference.

Jill Konrath, author of *Selling to Big Companies*, is a recognized sales strategist in the highly competitive business-to-business market. A popular speaker at sales meetings, she helps her clients crack into corporate accounts, speed up their sales cycle and generate demand for their offering..

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