

Sales Thinking

By Jill Konrath

Want to take your sales to a whole new level this year? Then I have one word of advice - THINK!

We've entered a new sales paradigm where it's nearly impossible to differentiate your products or services. Plus it's never been tougher to set up meetings with overburdened decision makers. If they want to learn about your offering, they go online to check it out. Combine these market dynamics with a weak economy and selling gets even more challenging.

So what can you do? First realize that most standard sales techniques don't work anymore - period! Making more calls doesn't help either if you're not doing the right things. To be successful this year, put on your thinking cap and reassess your approach to the market.

THINK about Value Propositions What business value do customers get from using your product or service? That's what's important today! Can you specifically detail the quantifiable business results customers realize when they work with you and your firm? Can you cite specific examples of clients who have achieved these tangible outcomes?

Think about what it takes to get the attention of decision makers. Call yourself right now and leave a message - the same one you normally leave. Then listen to it. If you were a customer, would you be interested in meeting? Most people are appalled at how bad they sound.

Think about it! Your product or service isn't important anymore - only what it does for customers. Clearly articulating your value proposition is a must in today's market.

THINK about Customer Meetings Good sales calls are the result of extensive preparation. Sellers who "wing-it" seldom get invited back. To be really effective in your upcoming meeting, spend significant time researching your customer.

Do you have a solid understanding of their business? Do you know their critical business issues and key initiatives? Do you have a strong sense of how you can help? Have you prepared questions to ask during the meeting? What is the logical next step?

If you were the customer in your meeting, would you be interested in working with the seller? Think about it. When the meeting is over, think about how you can do things even better the next time.

THINK about Creating Value In the new sales paradigm, you are the primary differentiator - not your product or service. That's right! Your customer's experience working with you is a major factor in their selection process.

Think about ways you can create value for customers with every interaction. What ideas can you share about improving their business? How can you help solve messy problems? What insights can you share into best practices in their industry?

To create value, think about developing your own personal knowledge base. It's only by sharing your expertise, that you become invaluable and indispensable to your customers.

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Have I given you something to THINK about? The world of sales has changed and the old ways don't work anymore. Stop doing things that no longer are effective and start doing what works. Are you up for the challenge? THINK about it!

Jill Konrath, author of *Selling to Big Companies*, helps sellers get their foot in the door of large corporations, create demand and win profitable contracts. Get a free Sales Call Planning Guide (\$19.95 value) when you sign up for the *Selling to Big Companies* e-newsletter. Just send an email with "subscribe" in the subject line to [jill@sellingtobigcompanies.com](mailto:jill@sellingtobigcompanies.com) . For more info, visit <http://www.SellingtoBigCompanies.com> .