

Stronger Value Propositions

By Jill Konrath

In order to get customers to consider changing from the status quo, you have to give them a good reason. A really good reason. They need to know about the tangible business results they'll get from using your product or service.

One of the best ways to waken a prospective customer out of their "everything is okay" slumber is to "jolt" them with a statement about the significant difference your offering can make. And the bigger the jolt, the better.

That means you can't just say, "We help you increase sales" or "With our products your service costs go down."

You need to be explicit. Metrics are a must.

- How much did sales go up?
- What kind of savings were realized?
- How much did you lower the cost of goods sold?
- What was the financial impact of the time saving?

And be exact. Customers don't believe rounded numbers any more. Don't say you doubled sales. Say they increased by 114% in 5.33 months. The more specific your number, the higher its credibility.

Some of you are probably panicking by now. No statistics, right?

Well, you're not alone. Sometimes it's difficult to measure one's impact. Sometimes customers hate tracking things. Sometimes what you're doing is so new that no one has numbers. Sometimes your marketing department gives you nothing to work from.

But don't let that stop you! Here are 3 ideas you can use to create stronger value propositions - complete with metrics.

1. Use Industry Statistics

For many sellers, this strategy is the perfect fix for their lack of metrics. Leverage the research that someone else has already done.

I frequently tell prospects that "Research shows that over 75% of executives at companies whose new products failed to achieve their objectives blamed poor value propositions as the root cause."

How about this one if your company helps others be more creative: "A recent survey of 669 executives from global companies found that fewer than 25% of them felt that their innovative performance was where it needed to be for success in hypercompetitive

markets."

Keep your eyes open for relevant metrics. Rest assured, you will have a 99.97% chance of finding statistics that support your sales efforts.

2. Extend Existing Business Statistics

So many companies today are already involved in tracking things within their organization. If their company is involved in Six Sigma or other quality-type initiatives, measurement is an integral part of their operations.

Your job is to uncover the existing metrics. That means you need to ask about what they track and how they measure results. Since this tracking is ongoing, you will be able to see the impact of your product or service on their business.

My friend Rita does executive coaching, team building and helps clients with tough situations where people aren't working together well at all. In her work with a manufacturing company, she was able to see her impact by comparing the before & after metrics that the customer was already tracking. Specifically, she helped them realize the following:

- 31% increase in productivity.
- 12% decrease in scrap/unit.
- 37% drop in labor/unit.

Those statistics really strengthen her value proposition and make it much more enticing to decision makers.

3. Engage New Customers in Measurement

That's right! You can ask your customers to create a benchmark. If you're confident that your product or service will deliver positive business results, get them to measure the success they're getting.

Some customers really like to do this. They want to see if their investment in your offering truly did make a difference. And if it did, believe me, they will be telling everyone in the company about their great decision making!

You want people talking about you like this. So give them an opportunity and ask them to participate in a benchmark. It may take guts on your part since you'll really have to prove your value. But it will be worth it!

Once you get those positive, business-impacting metrics your value proposition will be so much stronger. In fact, it will be just what you need to get your foot in the door of a whole slew of new prospects.

Finally, if you're still having problems getting metrics after all these suggestions, then I

have one last piece of advice for you: *Speak the language of business.*

Forget that your product or service even exists. Just talk about the impact it has on clients. Tell a "before and after story" painting a picture of the difficulties customers experienced before using your product/service and what they achieved as a result.

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