

Value Creation - The New Sales Paradigm

By Jill Konrath

I could tell something was terribly wrong the moment she walked into my office. Karen, an extraordinarily bright and talented young woman, usually exuded vitality and confidence.

But that day she dragged herself in and slouched into the chair, all the while shaking her head back and forth as if in disbelief.

"I might as well be selling wastebaskets," she said, totally discouraged. "No matter how much I try, customers just don't see any difference between our system and the others. All they want to know is how much it costs."

In today's marketplace, this scenario is repeating itself over and over again. Karen wasn't selling cheap products; she was selling systems that cost thousands and thousands of dollars. And even when companies really do have product or service superiority, customers believe it's a short-lived situation and expect the playing field to be leveled again soon.

So how can you achieve and maintain competitive differentiation when everything in the marketplace is working against this?

That's truly the \$64,000 question that everyone who sells should be asking themselves every single day.

We've entered into a new sales paradigm - and most salespeople have no idea that the rules of the game have changed. In this new sales paradigm, sellers must create business value with each and every customer interaction.

That's right - value creation is what it's all about! It's the only way sellers can differentiate themselves in today's economy. So how do you go about doing that?

First of all, I want you to think about a prospect you'd love to have as a customer or an existing client with whom you'd like to do more business.

Write their name down: _____.

Now imagine you've been granted a meeting with an all-powerful, all-knowing genie who is willing to answer any one question you might have related to achieving this goal. What would you ask this genie? Perhaps you're thinking:

- How can I get their business?
- What do I need to do to convince them we're best?
- How can I get the main decision maker to support my proposal?

- What can we do to get them to buy now?

If you're like most sellers, these are the kinds of questions that pop into your mind. They're all focused on strategies and techniques you can use to tip the scale in your favor.

While those questions are still important to ask during the sales process, in the new sales paradigm they are *not* the *Defining Questions*.

To be successful selling your product or service in the new sales paradigm, here's what you need to be constantly asking yourself:

- How can I help my customer be more successful?
- How can I provide value to my customer?
- How can my company contribute to making my customer successful?

This singular change in focus immediately affects your thinking. It's not about your product or service anymore. It's not about any particular sales strategy or technique.

In today's market, it's all about you providing value to your customers. So turn your brain loose on this question. New options and ideas that you never considered before will begin to emerge. These new alternatives can have a dramatic impact on your relationships with existing and prospective customers.

To be a *Value Creator*, you must change your focus today. Now. Immediately. It's the first step - the foundational step - to being successful in the new sales paradigm.

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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. For more info, visit <http://www.SellingtoBigCompanies.com>.