

When Your Products Offer the Best Value The Worst Thing Your Salespeople Can Do is Sell Your Products!

Not sell the products? Sounds crazy doesn't it?

But consider this story:

Your product provides a lot of extra value:

- Value that saves your customers money
- Value that helps your customers win and keep their customers...

...but your customers want your price to match the price of the *El-Cheap-O!* commodity brand.

You get a call from your salesperson:

"I need a special price for XYZ Industries. Unless we can match the price they are switching to *El-Cheap-O!*"

You say:

"Did you tell them about the added-value?"

Salesperson:

"Yeah, they agree – they like us better. But they see the added-value as *gravy*. They're under pressure to hold down costs."

You:

"But we *help* them hold down costs..."

Salesperson:

"I know, but I need that price by noon or we're out of the running. What should I do?"

Sound familiar? The salesperson planted the seeds of this problem with the original sale. And the problem has grown unseen ever since – nurtured by misdirected sales effort. The salesperson pursued the wrong goals. He or she had no trouble with the initial sale. The product's obvious superiority made it easy. Then the salesperson serviced the account, adding value and strengthening the relationship. All of this noble, well-intentioned, very useful work kept the salesperson busy and the customer happy while ignoring the most important part of your salesperson's job – *selling a good decision*.

The highest quality product – the one with all the added value, the long-term benefits –

wins easily at first glance. It has it all – it does it all – it looks great and wow does it perform! But that “first – glance” victory often fades later on under the pressure of inevitable price comparisons. Sure, your salesperson can counter the price-objection with rebuttals about indirect savings, long-term value, extra service.... but customers don’t want to argue.

The “El-Cheapo” will save us money immediately – directly – no waiting...that is... uh – unless you can do something for us about this price...

If only that customer had not given in to the initial infatuation with your slick, sexy product. If only the customer had framed his or her buying decision in terms of business goals – done an analysis that took as much as possible into account. If only the customer had followed a more rigorous process to a *High Quality Business Decision*. What does the term “*High Quality Business Decision* mean?” The term has more to do with *process* than with *outcome*: a decision to buy your product does not automatically qualify as an *HQBD*. An *HQBD* does not focus on only one factor, is not “penny-wise and pound-foolish,” does not ignore costs just because those costs hit another department’s budget. An *HQBD* looks at the big picture, focuses on the overall profitability of the enterprise and takes all relevant facts into consideration. When your product truly offers the best value, and your salespeople help their customers make a *HQBD*, the product sale itself happens naturally – and more importantly – the sale reflects a robust decision that will withstand the panic-driven temptations of superficial cost-cutting.

A customer’s purchase decision results from a *process*. Research and experience have both shown that if you focus only on the *output* of a process (like getting the order) you pass up the opportunity to improve or influence the process itself. Ironically, salespeople who represent top quality products fall into this trap at least as often as those who sell lesser quality products. They show the product, explain its benefits, and impress the prospect. But sooner or later the pressure to cut costs reasserts itself and the decision, made superficially, unravels.

But when salespeople become *Decision Experts* – knowledgeable about how decisions get made and *how to improve decision-making processes* – they can help their customers make higher quality decisions that benefit both buyer and seller. **These *High Quality Business Decisions* take premium prices for premium products in stride.** Purchase price becomes just one component of the total cost of ownership, or the total cost of the business activity. The savings in related costs – the costs that your product so elegantly holds down – will usually outweigh the premium you charge for your best-in-class solution. But only through a *High Quality Business Decision* process will those other costs get adequately considered.

So don't let your sales force get away with selling the wrong thing. Re-direct them. Make it their job to sell *High Quality Business Decision-making* – not to sell a product that has such superiority that it practically sells itself.

Let's come back to the pressure to match "*El—Cheapo's*" price. Do you ever give in? If you can truly afford to match the selling prices of your most marginal competitors – the ones who provide no added value – the ones with the products that only look similar but don't really perform – then **maybe you don't need a highly paid sales force**. Fire your salespeople, put a "*we won't be under-sold*" ad in your industry's trade journals and put your price list on your website. The orders will pour in and the salaries and commissions you save will go right to your bottom line. But if your success depends on getting customers to look at the bigger picture and make *High Quality Business Decisions*, get your salespeople to focus on their real assignment.

Telling your salespeople to "sell the added value" won't make it happen. You probably already know that from experience. **FIDO COMMUNICATIONS, Inc** has years of experience training salespeople to become purchase decision experts. Let's talk about it.

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