



Being Customer-Centric in Your Sales Approach

Consultative selling comes down to having a fully customer-centric approach to sales. In my sales system, the customer is at the center of everything we coach on. It means putting your customer's needs, challenges, and aspirations at the heart of everything you do, be that doing your research, prospecting, setting a meeting, or having a sales call. It also means thinking about how you can add value to your prospect first, rather than thinking about how much you can sell to them.



This is often easier said than done. In my experience, both in a sales management role and as an executive observing those in sales roles, salespeople frequently dominate conversations with their prospects and customers and share as much information about their own products or services as possible. It's easy to fall into this trap because as a salesperson you want to be the most knowledgeable person in the room and prove that you know what you're talking about. Frequently, salespeople's onboarding and training center around product or service training, rather than the markets or the companies that they're selling into. This results in a knowledge gap between what they're selling and who they're trying to sell it to.



Focusing on your own product or service as a salesperson is counterproductive, however. To be consultative, you need to have the same level of knowledge about the customers you're selling into as you do about your offering. The key to this is spending as much time as possible in early conversations asking the right questions to fully understand what the customer is trying to accomplish, fix or avoid. I believe that salespeople should get their prospects talking 90% of the time and then – only then – you'll be able to effectively position your company as the solution to their problem.

I would submit that salespeople are unable to sell effectively if they are not consultative to some degree. At the most basic level, you won't be able to determine which of your products or services best meets your customer's needs if you don't do your research and ask the right questions. You'll make the whole selling process more difficult. If your clients don't understand the value you can bring to their business, they're not going to buy from you. You risk losing credibility early in the conversation if clients get the impression that you don't understand their business or don't care about what they're trying to achieve. This credibility is hard to win back.

You make it harder for your prospect to sell your solution internally. Whoever you speak to is going to have to pass your information up the chain of command, likely to 4 or 5 buying influences on the buying committee. If your prospect doesn't understand the value you bring, they won't bother trying to tell it to other stakeholders. On the off chance that they do, they'll convey the value even less effectively than you did, and it will be that much harder to win the sale. You'll prolong the sales cycle, lose the deal altogether, or minimize deal size potential. Finally, you jeopardize your opportunities to retain and upsell clients