



'The Critical Hour concept stands the test of time as one of the most successful sales approaches today.'
Drazen Jaksic, CEO - Combined Insurance

HIGH PERFORMANCE SALES STRATEGIES

POWERFUL WAYS TO WIN NEW BUSINESS

RUSSELL WARD

Praise for *High Performance Sales Strategies*

// There are two mission-critical roles in business that often universities and most further education institutes do not cover in their faculties: the CEO and sales. Without these two vital roles performing, failure is never far away.

I have had the benefit of being 'sold' to by Russell whilst serving on the board of IPC Media. I bought and bought willingly, and he ensured his organisation at the time delivered all they said they would – and more.

Two things stood out for us. First he defined a problem we had not realised we had, by using our language and defining what success would look and feel like. Secondly and vitally, he was so easy to do business with for all levels of the organisation. A novel mixture of expertise, passion and process that remained with the business to this day.

The huge lesson learned for all of us was that when it comes to sales 'one size fits no one'. No one naturally wants to be sold to, but everyone wants to feel that they are buying the right product or service that solves their dilemma, or delivers their desired opportunity.

Russell has authored a book that is not so much to be read but experienced. You will want to share this with your sales force immediately.

Unmissable!

RENÉ CARAYOL, BUSINESS GURU

- Find out when their financial year starts.
- Understand the industry that your prospect works in, including latest news.
- Understand their competitors.
- Understand what competition you might be up against (including internal to the prospect, e.g. are they trying to do something themselves using their people?).
- Find out if there any past history between your company and the prospect.
- Tailor your presentation to the prospect with this information.
- Go on LinkedIn and check out the profile of the people you are seeing so you can see what their interests are and how their skills are orientated.

Doing the right preparation is not only good practice and will make you look professional and keen for their business, but it can give you an advantage since you can pretty much guarantee that your competitors are unlikely to do their research. You may also find out information that the prospect was not even aware of if you dig deep enough.

All of the above points will give you a platform not only to build rapport, but also to get a real insight into the prospect as a business, which you can leverage later on in your presentation.

3 Personal presentation

I have been in a presentation where the sales person stank so much of body odour that the prospect was visibly flinching at

times. How likely do you think that sales person was to closing that piece of business?

They say that people make their mind up about a person in the first ten seconds of meeting them – taking in information about the way they look, smell, body language, expressions, the way they dress, etc.

The rule of business is to dress for success, smell nice and have a smile on your face. Sometimes that may require being smart, other times it may be appropriate to dress down for some prospects like a media company.

You're unlikely to be put off by a smart person – you quite likely to be put off by someone who looks and smells rough. Overdoing the fragrance can be equally as repellent as bad body odour. I remember in my very early days as a young sales guy, my sales manager said to me, as I stood there before him proudly sporting my half bottle of Paco Rabanne, 'Young man, remember: big smell, no sell'. I toned it down after that!

High performance tip

Take the time to make sure you look and smell nice and are well turned out.

4 Agenda setting

Again this is a common area of weakness in new business people.

There is a famous phrase that says, 'If you don't know where you're going then how will you get there? You wouldn't get in a car and just drive to a new destination without looking at a map

and planning your journey.' This is predominantly used in goal setting but is also true of a meeting. Setting an agenda is a great way of creating clarity on what both you and the prospect would like to achieve in the meeting. Many times I have seen meetings get halfway through or further and the prospect says, 'What is the point or where are we trying to get to from this meeting?'

The objective of this meeting is to review the current status of the ABC Sales Academy programme, to discuss any critical areas and/or areas of concern and to agree next stages as required

Agenda for the Steering Group status meeting

- Review of status meeting on 4 June (minutes) – SE
- Status report on all channels (Steering Group Red, Amber, Green) – SE
- ABC missing deadlines and the impact on Silent Edge –SE
- Review of Accreditation and Evaluation programmes – ABC/SE
- Workbooks and training material – SE
- Out of scope report, including update on invoicing – SE
- Training & Development update – ABC
- AOB
- Next steps/action

Attendees:

Jo Bloggs, Jack Bloggs, Russell Ward, Mr Very Important Director, Mrs Major Decision Maker

Date: 16 July 2013

Time: 10.00–12.30pm

Location (of meeting): Large Palace, Buckingham Palace Road, London WC2

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High performance tips

- Send the agenda to the prospect prior to the meeting so they are clear on exactly why you are coming to see them and what you're looking to come away with. It also gives them time to establish their objectives and make them clear to you.
- You will get a lot more from the meeting if you do this and it often brings to the surface who else might need to be involved from the prospect or supplier side, to answer all points on the agenda.
- Use an agenda to manage expectations. If you offer an agenda to the client they might respond with something you weren't expecting. This can help qualify the meeting as there is no point in having one if what they expect on the agenda is something that you can't

deliver, or vice versa – they have no need for what you have to offer.

- Sometimes an agenda will flush out the fact that the meeting should happen in a few months rather than now, so time expectations are also managed properly.
- Once in the meeting, use the agenda to recap the objective, ask if anything has changed and agree the length of the meeting.

5 Rapport

Most sales people have strong rapport as it is one of the more natural aspects related to sales. However, there is a big difference between rapport done badly, with no attentiveness, and well used rapport.

There is a plethora of books and digital downloads purporting to be able to help build rapport and interpret body language. But isn't this easy anyway? Body language is simple, right? Don't crossed arms mean closed off? Be careful not to fall into the trap of superficial psychology. You may find yourself in a pit of quick sand and sink faster than you thought possible.

Pitfalls

- **No conversation.** It is remarkable the number of sales people I have met that say very little when they meet the prospect for the first time and are obviously uptight and nervous or anxious. This will put the prospect

on edge and they will immediately have a lack of confidence in you. You want them to be relaxed so they focus on what you're saying, their issues and the proposition you are going to make.

- **Straight into your offering.** Many sales people sit down and go straight into discussing their product or service with no other conversation. This is not a way to build rapport as the prospect will just feel spoken *at* and therefore quite distant from you as a person.
- **No interest.** It is human nature that if you show no interest in someone and what they do or are about, they will show little interest in you.

Getting the basics right is very important as first impressions can be hard (although not impossible) to change and you don't want to make your Critical Hour harder than it needs to be. Getting people to feel relaxed is important, so showing some inner confidence in yourself is essential.

It is important to make the prospect to feel at ease and for you to react to their mood. If they are in a hurry or short of time, then speed up and be succinct. If they are laid back and slow, then pace yourself accordingly.