



Sales Training Assessment Review

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CLOSING

Obtaining confirmation of an order from the prospect

Before a benefit is established, there is no basis on which to close a sale. Once a benefit or more has been established, the salesperson may attempt a “trial close”. This obviously represents an early sale based on the salesperson's identification of a buying signal. If this “trial close” fails then there is the opportunity to discover why a prospect is unwilling to proceed and is addressed by “Handling objections”, this often leads to the establishment of further agreed benefits. Summarising the agreed benefits and asking for the order is the process of Closing. There are many types of Closing techniques from the assumed close (so when would you like it delivered) to the blank order close where the prospect is asked to sign an order form. What is being reviewed here is not the style but the recognition that the close has been initiated.

You have a higher than average score. This indicates that you are skilled in asking for the order and also the early identification of outstanding objections leading to the use of closing techniques. Therefore if a sale is possible, it should be achieved.

Cross relationship scores: Even when there is a high score in closing, please check the score for Qualifying the Buyer, it will not lead to sales as your sales technique is being applied to the wrong person. When this is matched by a low score in Negotiating skills may not necessarily prevent a sale taking place but it is probable that the terms of the sale may be badly affected.

CONSULTATIVE SELLING

This is the skills of a salesperson to demonstrate market or technical knowledge, the ability to plan, prioritise and address complex issues with analytical and problem solving skills.

Over time salespeople are being expected more and more to demonstrate their ability to provide consultative selling skills. This is largely due to many markets both for products and services becoming more complex in our high technology world. The skills of consultative selling relate to demonstrating market or technical knowledge and guiding the prospect to make the decision to buy the best possible choice either from a long complex list of products or a complex range of service alternatives. The ability to plan, prioritise and address complex issues with analytical and problem solving skills is important here. It certainly means more attention to detail, greater patience in developing the sale and hence relies on the prospect's belief that the salesperson is capable of devising a solution that is specifically aligned to his needs and requirements.

You have an average score. With an average score, you can provide a solid platform upon which to develop a consultative sales career. To develop this score and technique further, you will need to develop the depth and breadth of your technical understanding. This should embrace not only the product or service that you sell but your market sector as a whole. Gather experience of the range of applications in which you sell and develop an understanding of the key business issues which are related to them.



DETERMINATION

This is one of the most important personal attributes is the ability to face, overcome and remove all types of barrier to the sale.

Determination is probably the single most important aspect of the individual aptitude part of the sales process. Determination can be translated in a number of ways in the sales process from opening a sale assertively, handling objections with a trial close or simply picking up the phone or arranging the next sales call after a 'No'. Determination also relates to competitiveness and often leads to a desire to produce the highest level of sales in a team sales environment. Particularly in the areas of telesales this can indicate a strong level of personal resilience demonstrated in the face of defined challenges in this environment. In very competitive environments determination to 'carry on' often leads to longer term sales success. Note that determination should be used in its positive sense and not be an excuse for steamrolling a prospect into a sale.

You have an average score. Even an average score may not be sufficient in a competitive sales environment. There may be an occasional capitulation to a client's demands during negotiation or even not the strongest of desires to make the next sales call if a 'no' is received. There will also be a measure of sensitivity towards account customers in the recognition of not wanting to upset a customer.

BUILDING RAPPORT

Warmth, friendliness and mutual respect help to build rapport with a client. This is particularly important for long sales cycles and Account development.

Building rapport is essential not only to the building of new client relationships but also the development of strong on-going relationships. Warmth, friendliness and mutual respect help to build rapport and the prospect's conscious reaction to this can have significant impact on a sale. Research indicates that first impressions are critical and indicate that within only a few seconds a subconscious assessment of a salesperson is made by a prospect. Personal presentation, mannerisms, bearing and vocabulary all contribute to this initial assessment. Subsequently factors such as depth of knowledge, accuracy, values and honesty all build upon that initial assessment to form a rapport factor which can often decide if there is a sale or not.

You have an average score. This may be barely sufficient to build a satisfactory relationship with the prospect. If the sales cycle is long or an account management role is involved, this score is inadequate. Coaching in interpersonal and communication skills is recommended here.

Cross relationship scores. If the score is low or average in Effective Listening also, the above recommendation of coaching is doubly important.



EFFECTIVE LISTENING

This is a key observational and analytical skill to determine what a prospect both says and means.

Listening and understanding is essential to effective selling. It is insufficient to focus only on what is said but also on how it is said. Remember 'Telling is not selling'. For listening to be really effective, the context and visual indicators that accompany each communication are critically important. So too, changes in the speed of response, the pitch of the voice, the facial expressions and the amount of detail in the response give important clues as to how to progress the sale.

You have a higher than average score. A high score here indicates that you will enhance the value of all other selling activities particularly probing, handling objections and closing. Confirming this feedback will also allow a salesperson to build trust quickly and clarify the client's needs accurately. All this should indicate a smoother sales process as well as a successful one.

ETHICS

This is the skills of honesty, integrity and trust building.

The maintenance of high ethical standards is extremely important to many organisations. For a prospect it can be an essential piece of the sales jigsaw, often it can be essential that the salesperson is perceived to be honest and trustworthy. Account retention and development is threatened by a failure to follow proper ethical trading standards and associated legal requirements. There are many practical examples of ethics in practice such as retaining confidential information, keeping promises and maintaining consistent standards, all of which can affect the acquisition and retention of clients.

You have an average score. This may result in occasionally dissatisfied clients who can feel they have been misinformed regarding the characteristics of a product or service. This may be down to inconsistent or unreliable behaviour. In other instances the desire to cut corners in order to make sales will lower the score in ethics.

EVIDENTIAL SUPPORT

Evidential support or Proving is the process of providing evidence that a product or service will meet the salesperson's performance claims.

This is the process of providing the information or proof to satisfy a prospect's objections. Effective evidential support relies on being equipped with a range of information to support what is being discussed. It should be noted that different evidence enjoys different levels of acceptability to a prospect. Examples of evidential support range from letters from satisfied customers, technical reports or independent reviews. Further examples of evidential support where products are being sold are Sales Demonstrations; there is also the opportunity for the prospect to try out the product or service.



You have a higher than average score. A high score will undoubtedly assist in the handling of objections and also trial closes. Also you will achieve a consistent and increasingly high level of trust from prospects, this will be really important in complex and technical sales situations.

HANDLING OBJECTIONS

The process of addressing objections raised by the prospect and eliminating any barriers to closing a sale

This is the process of addressing objections raised by the prospect. These may be either during the sales presentation or when the salesperson asks for an order (a trail Close). When an objection is raised it can often be a buying signal as the prospect needs further information in order to make a decision. In either case both understanding the objection (ask if you don't understand the objection) and answering it by good use of your knowledge gained by Probing and experience, there is a good possibility of turning this question into a sale. It may often help to ask if this is the only objection they have or are there others?

You have a higher than average score. This indicates that not only does the salesperson provide sufficient information to fully satisfy the prospect's objections but that they are also drawing out all of the prospect's objections. Further if the prospect recognises that their objections are properly handled then the likelihood of a purchase is significantly higher.

NEGOTIATING

This is the skill to determine the terms under which a sale is made and this is often the key to profitable sales.

These are essentials skills related to the sales cycle and are not so much related to whether a sale is made or not but the terms under which a sale is agreed. It is important before beginning the sales process to establish the boundaries of what you may negotiate with a prospect (discussion with manager, company guidelines or knowing profit margins), this could be in pricing, delivery or addition of supplementary products or services. Strong negotiation skills will have a major long term impact on margins and profits.

You have a higher than average score. Your high score indicates that you will likely return profitable sales whatever the state of your particular market. Usually this will also be accompanied by flexibility in devising packaged solutions as well as high levels of focus and self-confidence.

Cross related scores: If your score is high in Determination, the qualities detailed above are likely to be even more pronounced.

OPENING THE SALE

Opening the sale is the process of creating a positive atmosphere with the prospect to explore the benefits of doing business in the early stages of the sales cycle.



The purpose of opening the sale is to fashion in the best possible way a positive atmosphere in which to explore the benefits of doing business. The prospect should be provided with a sound reason for committing some of his time to discussing what is being offered for sale. This can be a statement or introduction based on research, the knowledge of previous successful sales in similar environments or upon an informed guess. First impressions are very important: bearing, dress, grooming and mannerisms all play an important contributing role in developing the interest, involvement and co-operation of the prospect.

You have a higher than average score. This score indicates that the prospect will probably feel justified in co-operating fully with the salesperson in the probing process. This therefore provides maximum opportunities to establish the potential benefits to be derived from you as a supplier and a willingness to explore opportunities of your product range further.

PROBING

Probing is the questioning process to discover the prospect's needs.

Probing is the process whereby the prospect is encouraged to reveal his or her needs. Without determining what a prospect's needs are, there is no opportunity for the salesperson to establish benefits of the product or service that they are selling. Benefits can relate to solving a problem (poor existing service, keeping up with competitors or the market, evolving requirements), saving time or saving money. To establish which of these and their importance, probing techniques involve the use of open ended questions (who? Why? What? Where? When? How?), this encourages the prospect to speak freely and provide the necessary information. Closed questions should not be used except in the cases where confirmation of understanding is required (see Effective Listening).

You have an average score. This will probably result in the effective identification of some of the prospect's reasons for purchasing a product or service. In this case the salesperson is in a better position when discussing volumes, delivery times and prices. However a better score would have been indicated as there might still be some questions still not asked and even if one benefit has been established further benefits would add to the likelihood of a sale.

Cross relationship scores: Check here that your scores for Effective listening and Building Rapport are at least average. It seems obvious to listen well to the answers you are given but if not a sales relationship can quickly turn bad. In the case of Probing, answers to questions may be curtailed or clipped.

QUALIFYING

Qualifying or **Qualifying the Buyer** is the identification of the prospect to have a need, the authority and the means to purchase the product or service.

A salesperson should recognise that every buyer needs to have three essential qualities. In a perfect situation, the buyer will have the means to pay, the authority to approve the payment and acknowledges



the need for the product or service being offered for sale. Failure to qualify the buyer has serious implications for the effective use of time spent with a prospect. Time is wasted if a sales conversation is being attempted with the wrong individual.

You have a higher than average score. This score means that the salesperson's time is not being wasted in achieving approval for a purchase. A salesperson who qualifies the buyer well not only will achieve sales but will also tend to achieve them in a significantly shorter period of time. These salespeople often tend to make their sales forecasts more accurate.

SALES DEMONSTRATION

The ability to prepare and provide a practical performance demonstration

Sales Demonstration skills apply particularly when selling a product. In many cases your product can be an excellent salesperson. However this should not be relied upon. While a good demonstration may allay any remaining doubts about your product or service in the mind of your prospect, a bad demonstration also has the opposite effect. A good degree of planning is required before a demonstration, and depending on your product, there may be issues of health and safety (cables), reliability of product and suitability of the environment in which the demonstration is performed. Practice also makes perfect and through technical familiarity, the demonstration should follow a comprehensive and logical sequence.

You have a higher than average score. This would indicate that you are well prepared for devising and delivering a sales demonstration. You may also have thought through how to tailor the demonstration to the needs and interest of your audience. Two words of caution however, firstly you may have a high level of self confidence in your ability here but do not be tempted to take short cuts or economise on the preparation, secondly it may not be unusual that after 99 successful demonstration, your product may go wrong on the 100th. Are you still prepared for that?

Cross relationship scores: Even if there is a good score in Sales demonstration, it may only show that a salesperson knows how to demonstrate their product. A low score in Qualifying the Buyer may indicate that the salesperson is talking to the wrong audience. With a low score in Opening the sale the salesperson may be conducting a presentation for the presentation's sake rather than getting involvement from the prospect. A low score in Effective Listening may indicate that the salesperson is failing to notice a word or gesture of approval from their audience, which in turn may identify a need as yet undiscovered.

SALES PRESENTATION

The ability to address an audience in a confident, informative and knowledgeable manner as part of the sales process

Sales Presentations provide excellent opportunities to provide information, discover needs as well as influence a sale to groups of individuals. A salesperson needs to be well prepared in terms of planning the



pitch, knowing who is in the audience (even better if there is an opportunity to invite them) and practicing the presentation with a clear beginning middle and end. Speaking skills are obviously important (one of the best books on this subject is How to give the Ultimate Sales Presentation) and preparation is key. The salesperson should be well groomed; use positive spoken and body language as well as preparing for any difficult questions that might arise. A top sales presentation is not just about good delivery but it is often an important step in the sales process, it is not about just sitting down at the end to hopeful applause but making sure the conclusion of the presentation leads to the next stage of the sale.

You have a higher than average score. This indicates that you are often well prepared for a sales presentation and that you have the confidence to carry it out successfully. Be warned that presentations can vary significantly and particularly with a larger audience there is more potential for control of the event to be usurped by many questions, interests and opinions of your audience. Also no matter how well you have done in the past, there is no reason not to practice well for each sales presentation given.

Cross relationship scores: Even if there is a good score in Sales presentation, it may only show that a salesperson knows how to present. A low score in Qualifying the Buyer may indicate that the salesperson is talking to the wrong audience. A low score in Opening the sale the salesperson may be conducting a presentation for the presentation's sake rather than getting involvement from the prospect.

TIME MANAGEMENT

This is the skill of managing a finite resource in which the salesperson stills needs to be at their most effective.

Time management is an often neglected part of the sales process. The ability to understand and implement effective management of a salesperson's time helps to contribute to an effective long term sales strategy. It is clear that the processes of the sales cycle described above each have their part to play in the sales process and should receive adequate attention, so it is not in the interests of either party to skip steps just to save time. On the other hand effective management of these processes will make the sales process more efficient and effective.

You have an average score. This may indicate a failure to prioritise, inadequate control of the sales cycle and unnecessarily long meetings. Lack of ability to focus on priorities may even restrict call rates; there is also the danger that busy prospects will resent the slow pace of a sales dialogue that patently could be completed more quickly.

Cross relationship scores. If this score is combined with a high score in Consultative Sales Capability then there is every likelihood that the inherent potential to burn time during a consultative sales exercise is running out of control and a more pragmatic approach is essential.