

Why USPs Can Spell the End of the Sale !

Conventional wisdom has, for a long-time, been that all sales approaches must be based upon USP's i.e. Unique Selling Propositions.

Before we proceed let's just agree on what a USP is.

It is what makes you, your company and your offerings unique ! It shouldn't be very hard to work out your USP because by definition we're all unique. However it is quite hard for a lot of organisations because they consider their uniqueness in the context of their 'opposition'.

It's good that they consider the opposition, because it means that they have considered themselves in the context of their marketplace, thereby showing some empathy for the buyers' situation and perspective.

The problem with USP's actually arises in the context of the buyer's own needs, because if the USP doesn't match the buyer's needs, then there can be no sale.

So what happens in real life ?

The salesperson, under pressure to make budget, has to bend the USPs that the company has been promoting in its marketing collateral and advertising, so that they suit the sales rep's story, which the rep then has to explain to the buyer, is the best solution to the buyer's needs.

Is it any wonder that salespeople have such a bad name in a lot of environments ? Is it any wonder that many governments have created departments to police sales people and their 'tactics', with little specifically enacted to empower those departments ?

Wouldn't it be smarter to have KSP's ? These KSPs (Key Selling Propositions) would be the same as USPs in content, but vastly different in representation. Marketing and advertising could still be representing the KSPs, but in the context of general availability to the marketplace, thereby allowing salespeople flexibility to tailor legitimate solutions to clients needs without bending their employer's rules.

No less exciting would be the effective elimination of 'The Order Prevention Department'. Of course no company has an order prevention department listed in its internal phone directory, not does any company have one in its organisation chart, but trust me (for I am a salesman) they exist in most organisations.

It is the order prevention department that continuously blocks the progress of sales completion through the vendor organisation by applying strict rules born of USP's. Many sales managers actually have very little to do with sales - most of the time is taken up with fighting order prevention departments on the behalf of their salespeople.

The next time you are wondering why your organisation isn't getting the sales it should, when all your salespeople are well trained and supported in the sales process, ask yourself "is it because they're pre-qualifying certain prospects out because they couldn't be bothered fighting their own order prevention department ?"

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