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TEACHING COUNSELOR SELLING TECHNIQUES

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ABSTRACT

Last year, effort was spent introducing microskills. Due to the interest, this paper was written to describe how this material is taught. To be an effective salesperson, one must internalize certain skills through repetition so that one can immediately react to a prospect's response. To do this, one needs knowledge in the areas of microskills, applied psychology, and sales process.

MICROSKILLS

"A microskill is an identifiable, discrete, behavioral unit which includes verbal and/or bodily gestures that facilitate interpersonal communication." The first one taught to students is called Reversing "...the skill of answering a question with a question." For most people, Reversing is unnatural and sounds obnoxious if not done correctly. To overcome this problem, one would use the microskill of Acknowledging. These are phrases, which warmly and politely respond to a prospect's statement or question, not in an agreeing or disagreeing fashion, but in an understanding and attending manner. For example:

"I can appreciate your question, are there any other points you'd like me to consider?"

Also, by adroitly using acknowledging and reversing in concert, students learn to control the conversation. This is so because it gives them the ability to control the questioning process and "...s/he who controls the question, controls the conversation."

APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

Prospect's Personality: Students learn to categorize a prospect into one of four personality types, Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4. This, in conjunction with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, helps the student understand the connection between personality types and psychological needs. This allows the student to identify and tactfully tailor the sales presentation to each prospect.

Ideal Sales Persona: A salesperson should be aware of, and utilize, four different personas. According to Dr. Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis Theory, at any one time a person is in one of three potential ego states: Parent, Adult, or Child. The first component of the Ideal Sales Persona consists of the nurturing side of the Parent ego state in which a person communicates to others in a warm, understanding, and empathic way. The second component encompasses the actions of the Adult ego state, whereby a person appears unemotional when inputting and outputting information.

The third component of the Ideal Sales Persona is Dominance Adjustment Control which states that a matching at the dominance level must first take place before negotiations can begin. This is done by adjusting (raising or lowering) one's dominance level to that of the prospect's. The Last component is called Tyrodramatic Behavior, which means to "act naive". If the salesperson performs this properly, prospects will not only volunteer more information about their needs, they will also begin to actually sell to themselves as well as to the salesperson. This is a form of Reverse Selling.

THE SALES PROCESS

Once familiar with microskills and armed with psychological knowledge, students are next introduced to the five stages of the sales process:

1. Introduction, 2. Qualification, 3. Presentation,
4. Close, 5. Post-Close

Introduction: The salesperson's responsibility is to introduce himself, assess the prospect's environment and personality, and attempt to get on a first name basis. Thereafter, the Salesperson explains his/her philosophy of business (serve first and win/win relationship), how s/he gets paid (money and referrals), and requests permission to ask questions. Finally, the student is shown how to nullify physical barriers.

Qualification: This is where the real selling is done. Here, the salesperson assesses the prospect's status quo, and discovers, or creates, a need. Also, s/he is taught how to convey information, through questioning, in such a way that the prospect intuitively recognizes this need. Next, the salesperson helps the prospect decide on his/her ideal solution, investment requirements and implementation schedule,

Presentation: The objective is to explain the options, and help the prospect choose from among three or four alternatives. When explaining the options, the salesperson must describe the benefits, advantages, and disadvantages of each alternative solution in an Adult, objective, manner. The salesperson then asks the prospect to choose the alternative which makes most sense to him. If the salesperson did a good job, the prospect should choose his/her ideal solution. The actual choice, resolution of final details, and ultimately the paperwork (the signing of the sales agreement), is executed during the Closing stage.

During the Post-Close, the salesperson must reinforce the prospect's faith with his/her selection to reduce cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance is that uncomfortable feeling one gets after making a decision. The following tactics help in this matter.

- 1) Give the prospect a chance to renege on the sale.
- 2) Get the new customer to give referrals.

CONCLUSION

Role-playing, coaching, and feedback is used to help students integrate microskills and personas into the Sales Process. This consists mostly of giving specific suggestions on how to personify microskills properly.

Sales is a unique business study in that its purpose is to synchronize the mind and mouth to quickly produce persuasive and influencing messages. This requires countless hours of repetitive role-playing of certain microskills, personas and strategies. This author refutes the statement that salesmanship is a natural skill (salesman are born, not made), and argues vehemently that it can be taught. Although proof is beyond the scope of this paper, this author's research has uncovered enough evidence to make the previous statement. This is an exciting development, and a major break through, for the selling field.