

THINK LIKE YOUR CUSTOMER

A Winning Strategy to Maximize Sales by Understanding How and Why Your Customers Buy

BILL STINNETT

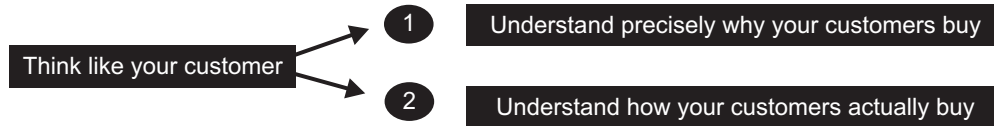
BILL STINNETT is the founder and president of his own consulting firm, Sales Excellence, Inc. He has more than 20 years experience in sales and sales management for firms such as Computer Associates, Pilot Software and J.D. Edwards Company. Mr. Stinnett has developed workshops which have been used by a number of corporate clients including General Electric, Microsoft, Verizon, Hitachi, EDS, Boise Cascade and American Express.

The Web site for this book is at www.salesexcellence.com.

SUMMARIES.COM is a concentrated business information service. Every week, subscribers are e-mailed a concise summary of a different business book. Each summary is about 8 pages long and contains the stripped-down essential ideas from the entire book in a time-saving format. By investing less than one hour per week in these summaries, subscribers gain a working knowledge of the top business titles. Subscriptions are available on a monthly or yearly basis. Further information is available at www.summaries.com.

MAIN IDEA

To sell more of whatever products and services you offer, step into your customer’s shoes and learn to think the way they do. In practical terms, doing so requires that you understand two different areas of customer thinking:



To understand why customers buy, you have to learn to see the world through their eyes. You have to appreciate how they perceive value, what motivates them and the way they think. In particular, you need to know what your prospective customer wants to achieve. When you know that, you have the key to selling them your products and services. If you can succeed in aligning your product or service with the direction they already want to head, it will be perfectly logical for them to buy. This is why the top performers in any field are usually the people who have been there for 15, 20 or even 25 years. Their experience helps them understand why customers buy better than new salespeople.

Once you understand why customers buy, you’re then prepared to focus more intensively on how they actually reach a purchase decision. The benefit of knowing how customers make a decision to buy is that you can then find ways to interact with them in such a way that you’ll enhance the likelihood of them making a positive decision.

In short, to increase your sales performance, change the way you think about selling. Don’t worry so much about the skills of selling – making smooth presentations, developing an elevator pitch that’s ready to go at a moment’s notice, being able to articulate the key points of a comparative analysis between your offering and those of your competitors. Those skills are nice to have but not essential. What is critical, however, is that you learn to think more like the way your customer thinks. Understand what they’re trying to achieve and how they’re going about accomplishing that. Identify the business problems that are keeping your customers from achieving their goals, help them decide which ones are the right ones to solve and then help them realize their desired business results. When you can do that consistently, you’ll find your customers start looking on you as a valuable resource who just happens to be on someone else’s payroll. From a foundation of earned respect such as that, impressive things can be achieved.

“Learning to think like your customer starts with being willing to think differently than you think right now. It involves learning what your customers think about, how they see the world, and the things that influence their behavior. Once you begin to think from the standpoint of how and why your customers buy, you will never sell the same way again.”

– Bill Stinnett

1. Understand precisely why your customers buy Pages 2 - 5

- ▶ 1 Customers think about their problems, not your products
- ▶ 2 Customers want results, not solutions to their problems
- ▶ 3 Customers perceive value from their own perspective only
- ▶ 4 Customers buy to generate more of what they already want
- ▶ 5 Customers buy from strategic partners whenever possible

2. Understand how your customers make a purchase Pages 5 - 8

- ▶ 1 Customers buy for their own reasons – so work with them
- ▶ 2 Customers make small decisions before major decisions
- ▶ 3 Customers need plans on how they will reach their goals
- ▶ 4 Customers always make the key buy decisions at the top
- ▶ 5 Customers act only when the perceived value is high

