

AGRICULTURE BUSINESS PLANNING

Chapter 7

Selling and Data Record

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Lecture Overview

- Leveraging Customer Insights

Introduction to this chapter:

This Chapter 7 will discuss about the importance of understanding customer types. This understanding will create creativity bringing the insight to resolve the issues faced by the customer.

Understanding Customer Types

In most sales market, customers and prospects are broken down into segments. These segments could range from very broad ones like customers, non-customers, and annual revenue, to more narrow categories such as existing customers using a certain type of product¹.

For instance, at the agriculture business, the farmers are grouped according to their commodity's type namely crops, horticulture, or plantation crop. The profiles will vary ranging from the farmers land size, education level, annual revenue and many more. If the business is to distribute the fertilizer, then, it is important to introduce the product according to their needs adjusted to their commodities, land size, and applied technique.

The Buying Process

Another common buying situation involves aligning the sales process with the buying process. You must remember that buying is not mutually exclusive to the selling. Novices tend to sell in a vacuum and do not adequately consider outside factors.

As an example, a sales person makes an appointment to present the product without knowing if the buyer is ready to evaluate options. Failure to recognize buying

situations can lead to a loss of the buyer's interest. Buyers may feel they are being sold as opposed to buying when the seller's action don't fit their goals. A common mistake made in sales relates to noticing situations, but not making the adjustments.

Different buyers in various situations will have varying degrees of interest in your sales offering. Interest level is driven largely by the buyer's appetite for change. Examples, may include the perception of your product value and the degree of loyalty to you, your company, or another vendor. Thus, **situation selling** relates to adapting your sales strategy to match the buyers' interest level and value perception of your product.

Tabel 1 compares several customer buying situation, buyer's value-need perception, and how a sales person might adapt. This tool is designed to draw your attention to the buyer's perspective and to help you prepare your adaptive strategy. Sales scenarios will vary, but the basic principle – to align your selling process with the buyer's- remains. Both buyers and sellers move through different stages of the buying and sales process.

The sales process can become out of sync if not closely monitored. For example in Table 2 consider what would happen if the seller is at the **close** phase and the buyer is in the **recognition-ofneeds** phase. Just because a sales step is executed does not mean the sale is ready to advance. The green light to move forward must always align with the buyer's readiness.

Heightened awareness and expertise can bbe expedited by recognizing these conditions in your work. Using the situation-primed insight tool in Table 3 as a guide, list the most common situations and insights you face in your sales market. You may also want to look for other areas where you may need improvements.

Table 1 Buyer Situation and Seller Adaptive Response¹

No	Typical Situation	Anticipated Obstacles or Opportunities	Situational Response by Salesperson
1	Objection or hesitation	-Buyer may need help overcoming an obstacle -Buyer may have underlying concerns -Buyer may not feel comfortable in selling engagement	-Refrain from “selling” and listen intently -Set aside counterresponse and self interest -Seek the root cause objection and reasoning -Adjust sales approach
2	Advanced product or service needs	-Seller may need to qualify other people departments -Profile high potential opportunities and target -Seller accesses high level contacts	-Identify contacts for advanced products -Prospect to targeted lists -Start at higher level or transition to higher level early
3	Contact level	-Low level contacts will be more accessible, but you could get stuck at lower-level contact	-start a higher level -Transition to higher level early in sales process -adjust sales message to level of audience
4	Group individual dynamics	-seller recognizes buyer’s communication style	-Notice style and preferences

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Seller adapts to buyer preferences -Seller recognizes group dynamics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use connecting to build rapport -Adapt to style and preferences
5	Customer appetite for change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Seller recognizes current product situation: customer, nonuser, competitor -Seller gauges buyer's interest level, timing, authority to act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjust sales approach to current disposition (high interest, low interest, compelling need to act, etc.)
6	Industry business conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Seller recognizes industry situation (learn through research) -Seller learns buyer's company financial performance (learn through research) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Prioritize contact plan (best opportunities first) -Adapt sales approach based on current conditions: for example, if high growth reinvest in solution for sustained growth; for financial weakness, offer solution to reduce costs or enhance revenue.
7	Internal silos or politics at play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fragmented communication across departments -Bureaucratic procedures -Infighting and envious relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Proactively explore intercommunication effectiveness, and adjust accordingly

8	Sales process applicability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Seller recognizes the value of the sale -Seller recognizes low or simple=transactional process -Seller matches selling situations with correct sales method 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Predetermine the sales process based on product value or complexity -High quality for both sales processes -Adjust to buyer's buying process
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Table 2 Comparison of The Sales Process to the Buying Process¹

Stages of the Selling Process	Stages of the Buying Process
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction or approach 2. Discovery or need development 3. Presentation 4. Close 5. Follow up 6. Recycle (Repeat #1) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identification of potential problems 2. Recognition of needs 3. Evaluation of options 4. Negotiation of price or terms 5. Implementation of product or service 6. Recycle (repeat #1)

Table 3 Situation-Primed Insight Tool

Situation	Unique Elements of the Selling Situation	Potential Insights and Intuitive Reactions
Objections and hesitations		
Products and service needs		
Contact level		
Group dynamics		
Prospect internal politics		
Customer perceptions of needs and solutions		

Exercise:

1. Describe the unique elements of your selling situation across the six common situations
2. Reflects on previous sales experiences or knowledge from other's experience and identify insights and potential reaction that were successful for each situation
3. Make the report in the google sheets

Contact Level (Executive, Mid-Level, and Lower-Level)

An attempt to train up the team on how to reach executives proved to be unsuccessful. Below is the findings according the survey imposed to the sales force to see what they thought ¹. When asked why they were not accessing the executive level, the following response by the sales force given (common sense):

- Most of the time I do get to the right person or level
- The decision makers are usually not in my territory (city or state)
- The executives tell me to go back to the shop manager
- The shop managers will not allow us to go over their head
- I do not know how to get the top executives or what to say to them

The following conclusions are based on the sales rep's collective responses:

1. The sales force did not see the issue as a major problem
2. The sales forces generally was content on talking to anyone who would listen and, as a result, did not put forth much effort into locating decision maker
3. Management did not clearly convey the reasons they should engage with top executives

Unfortunately, these types of responses tend to be consistent with many sales forces.

A key first step to improving your sales contact level is to decide that it is important and needed. Each sales organization may be different, but in general, access to higher levels is a key requirement for selling advanced products and services.

Beyond the challenge of reaching the executive suite, sellers also are interested in selling to key sponsors. These are mid-level managers who drive new innovations within larger companies. Moreover, many sales industries require that sellers engage with multiple levels of contacts. In such cases, the seller must be able to navigate through different layers while adapting his sales messages for each buyer

Data Record

In this section, the data record is about the customer feedback and the student's response to handle the complaint and maintain or improve those positive feedback from the customers. The customer preference and the seller (students) response is put in this google sheets link at column J for customer feedback and column K for seller (students) response.

Link: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/12eTulQXcyW_exUEjr6jkU-S0AvWfZaiLbc6VsOk0MI/edit#gid=584078404

Reference

¹Hill, Sedric. 2016. Expert Selling: A Blue Print to Accelerate Sales Excellence. New York. Morgan James Publishing. (e-Book Access through web.p.ebscohost.com)