



Answering the Tough Questions

A tough prospect asks, "Why should I buy from you and/or your company?" The untrained, impulsive salesperson responds with a plethora of benefits which look and sound like the competing salesperson who called on the same prospect the day before.

"We've been in the business for a thousand years, we're local, we're national, we're green, we deliver high quality, we hire experience and the list goes on...."

So what is the right response? There isn't one right answer because each sales call is different with a diverse cast of characters and dynamics. The astute salesperson knows a variety of influence skills and brings out the best sales tool based on all aspects of the sales call. Here are three proven sales tools to add to your repertoire when asked this tough question.

1. Tell the truth. If the prospect asks this question early in the sales process, before you've had time to ask questions, tell the prospect you really don't know why they should buy from your company because you haven't had time to diagnose what's working, not working, and if the problem(s) are big enough to fix. Get permission to continue asking questions to determine if there is a good reason for both parties to do business together.

2. Respond with a compelling '30 second commercial.' An age old saying in sales says, "No one cares about what you do, they only care about problems you solve." Most salespeople talk in 'do' language:

- *We do financial planning.*
- *We do heating and air conditioning.*
- *We do lending.*

A good '30 second commercial' talks about problems you solve.

"Companies who buy from us are tired of turnover on the sales team, not sure how to sell value versus price, or are experiencing long buying cycles that affect cash flow."

A well-crafted '30 second commercial' reminds the prospect of their pain or missed opportunities. If the prospect isn't experiencing pain or desiring gain, it's going to be a short sales meeting, AND THAT'S OK. Keep your sales pipeline pure by filling it only with prospects who want to improve or need to solve an issue.

3. Redirect – nicely. This is an influence skill that’s often abused because the salesperson answers a question with a question without proper intent. Redirecting a question with proper intent means seeking an understanding of the prospect’s position. Many of us assign our own assumptions to a statement, question or word. “Why should I buy from you?” is not the real question. Redirect to understand.

“That’s a fair question and I could give you a pat answer like we are bigger, better and faster. I think what’s most important is discussing what you look for when partnering with a new vendor. Tell me about some of your best partners and what makes them so good.”

The salesperson’s intent is to understand the question behind the question. Was this prospect burned by a company in the past? Are they unsure of how to make a right decision? Prospects will clarify and respond with key decision criteria, which will open the door for more and better questions.

Be ready for the tough questions, tell the truth, develop a great commercial, and redirect with the right intent.

Colleen Stanley is the president of SalesLeadership Inc. Reach her at cstanley@salesleadershipdevelopment.com or 303-708-1128.