

# Sales & Marketing eBulletin

*A quarterly eBulletin from the people who bring you the  
Sales & Marketing Executive MindXchange*

*June 2008 Vol1/Issue 3*

## Don't Train the Person Out of the Salesperson

*By Rich Lucia  
Sales Speaker  
Consultant, Coach*

Have you ever noticed that when you hire salespeople, you do your absolute best to find someone who has great communication skills? We all tend to make our decisions based upon the candidate's ability to demonstrate superior listening skills, as well as a keen interest in our organization, and a strong desire to understand the mission ahead.

We look for a person who can relate well to our customers (and potential customers), while honestly gaining trust and an eventual commitment for our product or service. Though we have the best of intentions, once the hiring is accomplished, we begin to train the actual person out of the salesperson we hired.

We begin our sales training process much like a recipe that has been passed down through generations. Unfortunately, the end product just might be a cake that no one wants to eat.

We start with a full cup of the standard one-size-fits-all list of the product's features and benefits. Then we add two canned pitches that can be memorized, along with a heaping tablespoon of what we call an "elevator pitch." (It's called that because if you only had a short time, like in an elevator ride, you could give the short version of the lengthy pitch.) Our training recipe wouldn't be complete without half a cup of pre-written retorts, providing some automatic responses in case the prospect has an objection. Add a teaspoon of "pointing prospects to the website" for more one-size-fits-all benefits, and just a pinch of the "template of a standard proposal," and you have it.

But wait, what has happened to our newly hired salespeople? We have given them all the standard sales tools, and they have memorized and practiced until their presentations are flawless. However, with this recipe, we have discouraged them from being the people we hired. No need for them to listen intently as they did in the interview, for we have trained them to believe that what a customer says will not change what we present. Why else would we send them into a sales call with a pre-written pitch book or the same PowerPoint presentation that everyone gets? No need to relate specific benefits to their prospects, as the memorized version includes everything anyone would ever want. All the qualities we hired for now take a backseat to a bucket of one-size-fits-all presentations. We have successfully trained the person out of the salesperson.

Sure we need to train our hires on our product or service, but if we can't train them to choose their benefits and presentations carefully, we are creating a recipe for failure. A feature or benefit that has no interest to someone is not only ineffective, but can add a nuance factor that will send your prospect running. Instead, spend your training efforts on teaching salespeople how to customize presentations to prospects. Throw away standard one-size-fits-all presentations. You know, those presentations that when they don't work, you teach the salesperson to just give it to more people.

So put your training to the test. Sure it must provide product and service information, but does it compliment the communication skills of the person you hired? Does it reinforce the practice of not only carefully listening, but taking that gathered information and building trust? Does your training focus on how to relate specific benefits that are of key interest to that individual prospect? If you can keep on track and understand the recipe for adding a productive, valued sales resource, you will have a greater chance of serving a cake that your customers will return for again and again.

Hire well, train to what you hired, and avoid training the person out of your salesperson.

About the Author

Rich Lucia ([Rich@RichLucia.com](mailto:Rich@RichLucia.com)) is a sales and marketing author, speaker and consultant.

([www.RichLucia.com](http://www.RichLucia.com)) Rich has worked for several Fortune 500 companies as well as small and start up organizations. His message is about how customers have changed and new sales tools are needed in today's world. He is currently working with Frost & Sullivan as the Sales Growth Thought Leadership expert.