

Monologue — the single biggest mistake salespeople make

In my work as a Certified Professional Sales and Leadership Coach, one of the questions I'm always asked is, "What is the single biggest mistake salespeople make and how can we fix it?"

I've worked with thousands of sales teams throughout North America to help them reach their greatest potential and I can tell you that the answer to that question is easy: Treating sales as a one-sided "pitch" instead of as a conversation.

In other words, the sales interaction is too often a well-intentioned monologue at best, and an information dump at worst. Boring!

Here's a story that illustrates the problem:

I was on a ride-along once with a technical rep named Tom who works in the battery industry. He calls on people in the medical devices world and helps them figure out solutions unique to the hospital environment.

I could tell the customer he was calling on truly liked Tom because he was knowledgeable, had high integrity and really wanted to help. So far, so good.

Tom was really excited about his solutions and launched into an enthusiastic but long and technically detailed —that's right — monologue. Big mistake!

I noticed the customer's eyes glazing over. He tried to talk a few times, but Tom missed that and kept right on going. When he stopped talking and the customer was slow to respond, Tom didn't know what to do next.

Talk about uncomfortable!

Here's how Tom could have engaged his buyer in a friendly, natural conversation and achieved a much better result:

1. Set the tone for an open exchange at the outset. Tom and the buyer should have shared information about what they hoped to accomplish during their meeting.

2. Listen carefully to what the buyer is saying to pick up clues about how to meet their needs.

3. Ask curious questions. Tom's curiosity would have created space for the buyer to tell him more about their needs and the challenges they face.

4. Pinpoint the buyer's needs to make sure your understanding of those needs is in sync with the buyer's.

5. Satisfy the buyer's needs by providing ideas on how you and your company could help. Tom might have had to go around this questioning/satisfying loop several times during the conversation because buyers have several needs that factor into the decisions they make.

6. Agree on next steps to move the process forward, setting up the negotiation and close.

Have a conversation. It is so simple and yet so effective! Try it out. It's a far more human and meaningful way of selling that will leave your buyers feeling engaged, understood and appreciated ... and help you more easily achieve your sales goals!



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Nicki Weiss is President and Co-founder of the SalesWise Academy (www.saleswiseacademy.com), an innovative on-line sales development program designed for sales leaders and teams that sell technical or complex products and services with long selling cycles. SalesWise Academy trains more effectively by teaching the way adults learn best, in frequent, "bite-sized" lessons, delivered via 10-minute audio podcasts and support materials to members' inboxes every two weeks.

Nicki is ERA's sales consultant, the brainchild and facilitator of ERA's free teleforum programs. To learn more, go to saleswise.ca or call 416-778-4145.

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