

Flat sales call for a new 'non-selling' strategy

That traditional back-slapping, glad-handing, charm-their-socks-off, never-take-no-for-an-answer sales staff could be the reason your sales have plateaued or, worse, begun to fall back.

"Being likeable doesn't carry the day like it used to," says Rick Farrell, vice president of Selling Dynamics LLC, Arlington Heights. "A sales person today must be a strategic resource rather than a product resource, a change agent who helps companies determine whether change (buying widgets from you rather than your competitor, for example) is something they should do.

"Mr. Prospect," begins Farrell's pitch, "I'm not sure I can help you, but I'd like to ask you some questions, to see if I can help."

That's not how most sales spiels begin, but there is logic behind the Selling Dynamics



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approach: The answers to those questions may provide clues that lead to a sale. Perhaps the widgets arrive late or too often don't meet specs. Those are reasons for your prospect to make a change — an opportunity for your company to make a sale.

Alternatively, Farrell's let's-talk-first approach might allow you to call things off — as when price is the issue and your company won't sacrifice profits to make the sale. You're better off discovering those turnoffs early, Farrell says.

The Selling Dynamics approach represents serious change. If your sales staff is starting to feel some pain — "If

they've had enough frustration of not being able to achieve their goals," says Farrell, "or if getting new business increasingly requires costly accommodations" — then the Selling Dynamics method deserves a look.

In fact, that's why Farrell found Selling Dynamics. "I hit a threshold," he says. "My income was topping off at a mediocre level. I was all those things I tell clients they must avoid."

The system works. John Obermaier, vice president at Tramco Pump Co., Chicago, listened to Farrell because his let's-talk approach "got past my gatekeeper. I figured if he could get to me — no one ever asked me those questions — maybe our sales people could do the same.

"Sales aren't any easier" at Tramco, Obermaier continues, "but we now know enough to get out of a poor fit quicker."

Denning Electronic Corp.,

Willowbrook, has adopted Farrell's non-selling selling approach. "It's a very systematic approach," explains President Ken Wippich. "We come in very unusual. I'm not certain I can help, but let's review things and then decide if we should move forward."

Wippich, whose company reps security equipment manufacturers, connected with Selling Dynamics three years ago. The security build-up that began with Y2K had been replaced by budget-freezing uncertainty and a resulting income drop following Sept. 11. "We'd finally suffered enough pain," Wippich says.

"Now we role play and practice more, and people are more accountable."

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