

## IV. The PEAK Sales Process - PROSPECT

Most sales people know that they need to develop a relationship with their clients. If they don't know this in today's society and business climate, then they are probably living in a coal mine in Tibet. However, what they may have difficulty with is knowing what to do to develop that relationship as well as how to do it. Sales training and a sales process are the keys to knowing the "how".

The "what" to do is addressed by a CRM (Customer Relationship Management) strategy combined with CRM technology. This combination of strategy and technology helps sales people with knowing what they need to do next in order to move the relationship forward. For instance, given the right contacts for an account, you may need to establish a meeting with the decision maker, schedule a demonstration, and develop a proposal. However, these are just the mechanics of a sales process – the "what" to do for each step of the way.

While the mechanics are critical to the sales process, what they don't address is the "how". How do sales people reach the decision makers to set up a meeting? How do they develop the best solutions-based proposal? How do they handle objections and negotiate in a win-win fashion? The best way to build a relationship with a customer is to learn the "how" of selling, which is obtained through sales training. Sales training comes in many shapes and forms, but the best ones are those that follow a process. Each step of the process moves the relationship one step closer to a win-win solution and encapsulates the selling skills necessary within each step.

A basic flaw with many sales representatives' style of selling is that they try to solve the prospect's problems by educating him with a product pitch. Customers, especially decision makers, are not interested in the technical details. What he needs to understand is how your solution will fix his problems and remove his pains. Another mistake made by sales people is making product pitches to lower-level employees who are not the decision makers. Obviously, this wastes everyone's time. What needs to be done instead is to focus more on asking the right questions, listening carefully to what the customer is saying (or implying), developing the right solution using your products or services, and presenting those solutions as they directly relate to the customer's problems, all involving the right decision maker(s).

Each of these steps, and more, are learned processes and skills. The saying, "Good sales people are born, not made," is false. Selling is mostly a science, not an art. With proper sales training and a solid sales process, practically anyone can become a successful sales professional. So what does a good process look like and what are the skills needed for each step?

Earlier I introduced the **PEAK Sales Process**. **PEAK** is an acronym, which stands for: **P**rospect, **E**ngage, **A**cquire, and **K**eeP. The pyramid diagram at the beginning of this Section depicts the steps in the **PEAK Sales Process**, where each step builds upon the prior one.

The **P**rospect step is where the initial contact is made which includes cold calling in order to find a prospective client. At this point, this is really just a raw lead rather than a qualified prospect. Here, the sales training involves how to make cold calls, your overall attitude towards sales, the first impression

you make, and the approach you make during the first phone call or meeting. Once you've prospected and found a candidate, you can then move on to the next step in the **PEAK Sales Process**, which is Engage and will be discussed in another section.

Having a clearly defined sales process with specific selling skills for each step will ensure that you replicate your successes and become more consistent and effective in your selling efforts. Regrettably, many sales people are not trained or experienced with these skills, nor do they perform them in the correct sequence because there is no process. They ask the prospect qualification questions when they should be closing, or they try to close when they should be qualifying, or they do a myriad of other actions at the wrong stage of the sales cycle. Performing the right actions at the right stage of the process is the key to successful selling.

With proper sales training and a first-rate sales process, you will not only learn the appropriate skills but also when and where to apply them to become more successful. Thus, you will learn "how" to sell better. Combine this with the "what" to do, by developing a CRM strategy and using CRM technology, and you'll have an unbeatable, world-class sales career.