



MORE Powerful Marketing Minutes
50 New Ways to Develop Market Leadership

Book Excerpt Chapter 4

Tell Me More

When you ask a customer or client a question, there's a tendency to take their response at face value and assume that their answer is full and complete.

Many times this assumption is simply not true.

Customer responses are a bit like bikinis. What they reveal is most interesting. What they keep covered, however, is vital.

Few customers are going to tell you everything about how they feel and think, or everything about their needs, wants, and desires. It's up to the inquiring professional sales person to dig deeper into customer responses by probing and follow-up questioning.

Good sales people are like journalists chasing a good story. You do not just want the facts. You want to know the who, what, why, where, when, and how that gives you the story behind the story, or the deeper answers behind the stated responses.

Or, to use a metaphor from my favorite pastime (scuba diving), you cannot understand the whole structure of a coral reef just by snorkeling around the top. To see its beauty and full composition, you have to dive a bit deeper.

The same is true with customer situations. To ensure you fully understand the customer's situation, and all of the factors affecting that situation, you need to dive a little deeper through your questioning tactics.

Of course, you do not want to be seen as an inquisitor, or a busybody, when having a discussion with a customer. That's why the direct approach to asking questions does not often work well.

Instead, try the indirect route. Just say simply, 'Tell me more.'

This signals to the customer not only that I'm listening, but also that I'm interested in

what they have to say.

Being interested in what the customer has to say, of course, is an extremely valuable way of building credibility, trust, and confidence. After all, it's human nature to want to be listened to.

Sales people tend to jump into the conversation, and often rush to present solutions and ideas before the real needs of the customer have surfaced. This common mistake often results in the customer walking away saying that they are not ready to buy yet (when what they really mean is that they haven't found someone who has listened thoroughly enough to understand their problem or situation).

It takes discipline to hold off presenting solutions and continue probing. But this will lead to better understanding of customer needs, and higher successful closing rates.

Three simple words: tell me more. That's all it takes to be a good journalist, or a good sales person.

Good luck, and good selling.

KEY POINT:

Being interested in what the customer has to say, by asking good follow up questions, is an extremely valuable way of building credibility, trust, and confidence with a customer or prospect.

TAKING ACTION:

What other phrases can you use to get customers to tell you more about their wants, needs, and desires?

Evaluate the probing skills of your sales staff. Where are there areas for improvement? Who is in the best position to coach them on probing skills?

Are your sales people capable of being the advisors, counselors, problem solvers, and consultants that is required for consultative selling? Why or why not?

This Chapter is excerpted from MORE Powerful Marketing Minutes by Steven Howard.

The Author

Steven Howard is a Melbourne-based marketing consultant, author, conference speaker, and Non-Executive Director in both the profit and non-profit fields.

Visit his web site, www.howard-marketing.com for valuable information and links on marketing, customer retention, branding, and corporate image management or

to sign up for his free weekly newsletter The Monday Morning Marketing Memo and his marketing blog.

He is a positioning specialist, whose 30-year marketing and sales career in Asia and Australia has covered a wide variety of fields, ranging from consumer electronics to publishing and from a national airline to personal financial products.

He is President of Howard Marketing Services, which provides consultancy and project management services in the areas of Marketing Management, Product Development, Positioning Strategies, Customer Retention Strategies, New Product Launches, Event Management and Brand Management.

He consults on a regular basis to companies in the financial services, industrial products, consumer products, restaurants, petroleum, publishing and hospitality fields.

Contact details

Phone: (61-3) 5428-1388

Fax: (61-3) 5428-1399

E-mail: steven@howard-marketing.com

Website: <http://www.howard-marketing.com>

Blog: <http://www.howard-marketing.com/marketingblog>

Free Newsletter: Receive Steven Howard's free weekly marketing newsletter, the **Monday Morning Marking Memo**, by subscribing at www.howard-marketing.com.