

The Thinking Salesman Letter

June 1, 2011

Hello Everybody,

Al Brosseau, forty years identifying, setting up and administering distribution networks across the USA, Canada and Latin America as salesman, sales mgr., independent rep and now consultant.

Our Mission:

To openly discuss and challenge all aspects of sales and distribution and to promote the sales profession.

Al Brosseau,
Former President, ALBRO Export & Marketing, Inc.
Former CSI (Vermont chapter) & CDT
CPMR (Indiana U., 2003)
MANA board of directors (2002 to 2007)
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On the Firing Line

Question, challenge, imagine,
think out of the box and try "the never tried",
Dare!

Reps and Principals have been focusing on exclusivity of products and territory in their relationships. We all need to "think out of the box", look at new ways of doing things. Just like Larry Weber of the Sales Group has been doing:

From: -----@thesalesgroup.com
To: al@TheThinkingSalesman.com
Subject: The Thinking Salesman, May 1, 2011 issue
Date: Thu, 5 May 2011 09:32:29 -0700
Just wanted you to know I am using an LOP type contractual letter with a software developer to sell his service as a non exclusive. It is a good solution to this type of service sale.
L. G. Weber, MBA, CPMR

Larry is using the LOP/LOP concept (exclusive customer base vs. territory base) to sell commodity products. The main advantages for him are that:

- He increases his offering.
- The LOP/LOP agreement gives him exclusivity with his normal customer base.
- He does not have to go outside his usual customer base keeping his overhead in line.
- He increases his order/call ratio.

Sales calls 101 (3) The joint calls (II)

Sales Mgr., Reps schedule joint visits around customers with whom they have a closer relationship. Make sure visits with customers they have a lesser relationships are also scheduled.

FOLLOW UP TRIPS INTO THE TERRITORIES.
A follow up trip into the territories should be made 2-3 months after the initial trip. Reps are human beings and they can forget or stray away.

Avoid joint calls with more than two people. They are awkward; it's just too many people.

Meet early, preferably for breakfast. Go over agency/Principal business; review the day schedule, the points to highlight etc.

These joint calls taught us to **LISTEN, OBSERVE!**
We call it our "listen/talk ratio"; "if I talked for more than 1/3 of the time I talked too much".

With the Customer:

Sales Mgrs, remember, you are in your Rep's territory; you're his guest. Let him lead. Let the Rep interact with the Customer and observe. When we do joint calls with a new Rep, at breakfast we agree that we will do the presentations in the morning and that the Rep will take over for the afternoon calls. It gives the new Rep a chance to learn from the sales manager and then practice his presentation knowing you're there to back him up; it builds the Rep's confidence.

Reps talk about products they are familiar and at ease with. Making sure all your Reps are familiar with your products is a good investment.

Taking leave:

Keep in mind these Joint call tend to focus on

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recent deliveries or problems. It's important the Sales Mgr. gets an overall view from the customer and before leaving a customer we always like to raise questions such as:

- From the Sales Mgr. *Is there anything we're not doing and should be doing?*
- From the Rep: *Mr. Customer, would you please relate to Mr. Sales Mgr. your recent experience with his company? (or the competition).*

In the car, in between calls:

Review the presentations with the Rep. then move on to market, competition conditions etc. and LISTEN.

We have learned more about the local markets and the competition in cars -in between calls- than anywhere else.

And take notes, make sure you don't let anything "slip in between the cracks" -however, taking notes in a moving car is not practical- therefore, we carried a pocket size dictating machine (Sony has a nice one for under \$100.00) where we dictated our notes and re-entered them in our notes at night. The number of details we would have forgotten without notes and the dictating machine is incredible. And, **BTW, don't use recording devices with customers; they put everybody ill at ease.**

Follow ups

Most sales mgrs we've met were great on F/U (follow up) and understood part of their role is to make the Rep look good.

When we acted as Sales Mgr. we preferred getting back to the customer directly because it's quicker and more efficient. However, we ALWAYS discuss these issues with the Rep beforehand

and we keep the Rep abreast either by cc'ing them on email or with a telephone call.

Whisky Tango Foxtrot Moment

What businesses need the most are new ideas, out of the box thinking and the "never tried before" and the best way to get these is through cross pollination.

Reps, because of their different natures and their individuality offer a wide range of fresh ideas to the Principals. Yet, the most common complaint we hear from Reps is that their Principals don't listen to them.

Unfortunately far too many Principals are stuck in a rut with controls, standardization and top down macho management and they don't listen and adapt.

P.S: Ditto to our associations. They need to "bring in" their "poor cousins", their associate members on board, listen to them.

P.P.S.: Ditto to Reps. We need to "listen" to changing market conditions and adapt. Fast.

Thought:

**Take risks.
You are a lot better off being
scared than being bored.**

Next issue, June 15, 2011,

How & where to find compatible Reps

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