Sales Article #69

September 30, 2022

Impact of Perception and Interpretation in Sales

The following are examples of salespeople’s perceptions and interpretations that led to failed sales outcomes:

* The prospect has an impressive office, so they must be the decision maker
* If I tell the client everything about the product they will buy
* Prospects do not like to be interrupted by phone calls, so I will email
* I need to discount to win the business
* I only deal with the CEO. Don’t need to see anyone else
* I don’t need to build relationships. The product sells itself
* I have plenty of time to achieve the sales target.

Why failed sales outcomes? The salespeople acted on their perception and then interpreted the sales opportunity, void of facts. A fact is something known to be true, a verifiable existence. Is it a fact as per one of the above, a prospect who has an impressive office must be the decision maker? This may or may not be true, but the problem is, acting on it as if it were true. By doing so the salesperson involved did not qualify and left the meeting unaware of the prospect’s level of authority or influence.

**What is perception?**

It is the process of creating understanding from sensory information - seeing, hearing, or becoming aware. Most of your reality and mine is based on perception and not fact. If you disagree, think of five facts in the next ten seconds. It’s not easy, is it?

**What is interpretation?**

It is an action of explaining the meaning of something. You respond to what you become aware of. Everything is an interpretation and it’s personal. We have been conditioned to look at things one way, ours. If an interpretation is counterproductive, such as being fearful of business development, take the interpretation and the emotion out of it. Think of seven other interpretations or possibilities about business development and look for the facts. Pick the interpretation that will drive you to where you intend to be.

Example: *“I have achieved great new business results in the past. I am in the process of doing it again.”*

Perceptions and interpretations are created from beliefs that can originate in childhood and are unconscious. This leads to being in autopilot mode and making the same mistakes repeatedly. This keeps you trapped in old behaviour patterns.

You will achieve what you set out to when the interpretation is aligned with the outcome you want. Interpretation is a choice, and therefore you are never stuck with your initial interpretation.

The impact of perception and interpretation in sales can work for, or against you. Develop the habit of listing seven alternate interpretations then pick the one that gets you where you intend to be. By changing your interpretation, you change everything. A wise person once said: *You are not ruled by circumstance; you are ruled by your interpretations.*



Kurt is a sales practitioner who created sales records in five industries and won major sales awards including Salesperson of the Year. The products and services he sold were newly released, consultative, relationship and retail. He is a recognized sales expert, successful author and respected sales and personal development coach who has guided organizations and salespeople to vastly improved sales performance and profitability. His clients range from small to multinational companies in Australia, the Middle East, Asia, and Europe.

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