



Presentations That Create Impact

by Rick Davis

The presentation is the stage in the process where salespeople, rather than creating momentum, often lose a sale. But the factors that make a high-impact presentation are not as mysterious as you might believe.

Bob is a salesman for a roofing and siding dealer in my hometown of Chicago. During a presentation to a potential customer, Bob did an incredible job with a presentation that solidified a sales opportunity. His client was a well-dressed man who was building a new home and working directly with the builder on product selection.

Before even making a presentation, Bob did what any good sales leader should do by first asking questions. He learned a lot about the new home and even the client himself, ultimately discovering that the homeowner had already visited a competing showroom and was close to selecting a roofing product that Bob's company did not offer. The builder was a loyal customer of Bob's and wanted to direct the business his way. But the homeowner and his wife had found a product they liked on the Internet and were pushing the builder to use that product.

Bob calmly made the presentation that probably sealed the deal. He said to the homeowner, "Well, they are a great company and a good competitor of ours. And that product is a good product. So if you choose it, you are definitely not making a mistake. Would you mind if I told you what we bring to the table?"

At that point, you might expect that Bob boasted of the features and benefits of his products. You might expect that Bob talked about the service record and delivery capabilities of his company. Bob highlighted only one feature of the recommended product, noting that the aesthetics of it were the kind that melded well with the style of home being built and that neighbors would actually notice the beauty of the roof.

He never spoke of his company's service capability. Instead he spoke of the "roofing system" that his company provided. You may say to yourself that every company has a roofing system; this is old hat. But what is old to you is new to a customer building his first home. Bob was smart enough to recognize that and explained how ventilation, underlayment and installation (the last provided by the builder's subcontractor that Bob knew personally and expressed confidence in) were the keys to a quality roof.

Two days later, Bob told me that he got the sale. Amazingly, the client was a sales manager for a printing services company and told Bob that the competitor was very aggressive in its pre-



sentation. He noted that Bob's informative style made the difference, high praise indeed from a fellow sales professional. The presentation had the three key elements that generate results.

1. Establish credibility. Credibility results from trust and knowledge. Bob gained instant trust by complimenting his competitor. He proved his knowledge by focusing his presentation on educating the client regarding technical features of a roof system.

2. Focus on the client's interests. This was a homeowner who was interested in status. Bob sensed this because of the clothing the client wore and nice luxury car that he drove. He was right! The comment about neighbors noticing the roof of his home created influence.

3. Make the right presentation for the right audience. Note that I specifically said how Bob avoided comments about his company's service. Service capabilities might be influential to a homeowner and would definitely matter to a contractor with whom you hope to establish a long-term relationship. But a homeowner is buying a roof once and the more important factor is the security and knowledge that the roof will be installed properly and requires no future maintenance.

When you craft your presentations, remember that sometimes less is more. Focus on the three key issues and use an economy of words. You'll get better results in the long run. **R**

Rick Davis is president of Building Leaders Inc., a Chicago-based sales training company devoted exclusively to the construction industry. For more information, call 773-769-4409, e-mail rickdavis@buildingleaders.com or visit www.buildingleaders.com.