

The 4 Key Skills of a Customer Focused Sales Professional

By Ernie Chen

With the advent of globalisation, corporations in Malaysia must now prepare their sales force to be customer focused sales professionals in the competitive environment. Excellent sales professionals are no longer defined by just suiting up and looking good for the clients. For individuals to be innovative and competent sales professionals, they must leverage on the four distinctive key skills of a self- driven and self- directed sales professional to meet the changing needs of the new economy.

The four key skills are strategic thinking, knowledge responsibility, creativity and solution focus mindset.

These key skills with the support of technology will enable a sales professional to achieve sustainable performance and ultimately competitive advantage for their organisations.

A structured identification exercise must be conducted to establish the 2 major preferences in thinking – Left- Brained versus Right-Brained thinking. The Left-Brained thinkers tend to be factual and logical, and the Right-Brained thinkers tend to be intuitive and non-linear in their approach. For a sales professional to be thinking strategically, one must be able to stretch outside the boundary of their preferred thinking mode to achieve desired goals. Strategic thinking will assist a sales professional to address personal deficiencies and to have a strong conceptual mind.

A culture of responsibility towards knowledge must be inculcated into the daily routine of a sales professional. Firstly, sales professionals must constantly support their leaders, colleagues and peer groups with current and specialised knowledge by asking who am I accountable to for knowledge. Secondly, identifying people who can provide critical and valuable knowledge to assist us in selling by asking who is accountable to me for knowledge.

Sales professionals must have a strong desire for ideas generation and a passion to create critical and valuable knowledge at their battlefield. A significant focus on creativity must be in place to make things happen. Sales professionals must have knowledge, skills, an attitude and habit for self-driven continuous innovation to achieve significant work improvements.

Solution focus mindset is the belief that there is a solution to every sales challenge and having the positive end result in mind. This can be done through a culture of preservation by capturing, storing, updating and constantly leveraging on valuable knowledge to address sales challenges.

External motivations such as sales compensation given to sales professionals are no longer sustainable because this ploy will only work if the market is healthy. Today sales professionals must have professional discipline to develop a high degree of professional pride to achieve excellence through self-directed initiatives increasing favourable perceived value. Sales professionals must continue to form strong positive work habits and loyalty towards their chosen profession and not organisation. This is the result of the emergence of extreme careers and the departure of dream careers where sales professionals are searching for organisations that can provide employability and not employment.