

Presenting the new generation of sales pitches

An experience that staff and the client will enjoy rather than endure

WORKPLACE STAFF

MOST consultative selling up to now has been a fake process, with sales teams typically asking their clients questions only until they get an answer that leads to what they are selling, says Vanessa Bluen, managing director of the Consultant Powerhouse.

"At that point, they stop listening to the prospective client and start telling them what they should be buying," she says.

The Consultant Powerhouse does training in an innovative approach to sales that turns the traditional sales pitch on its head.

It is called "IOWEU" and teaches consultative sales teams to be insightful. "We must build strong networks beyond our own businesses, and banks of knowledge that we can bring to bear on our clients' issues," she says.

"If we are unable to meet the



ADD VALUE: Vanessa Bluen

needs of our client, we should have the integrity to use our network, and our insight, to refer our clients to the experts in the field.

"Through this process, our client will build a relationship of trust, which will draw them to choose us for the needs we are able to fulfil."

Bluen cites the example of a building company which consulted a client about city improvement. Instead of merely discussing the costs of building and architecture, the company used its network to put

the client in touch with leading global thinkers in city design.

The Consultant Powerhouse is accredited with IOWEU International – a global organisation operating in 50 countries. IOWEU training programmes explore how to build long-term relationships of value, ensuring that every interaction with a client is an opportunity to deliver value there and then.

"If you can deliver value to me in the space of a meeting, I will assume you can deliver value long term," she says.

"Instead of telling me about the size of your company and how long you have been in business, share insights and experience which will build my confidence in your ability to deliver.

In other words, she says, instead of stating you have a global network of offices, focus on how you are able to deliver information and services anywhere in the world, for your clients' global operations.

Bluen believes this programme is valuable for those in sales, key account and relationship management roles.

She shares the following insights and skills from the approach:

- Consider your most recent

meeting. Did you have a clear objective? Did it seek to get the sale or build the relationship?

- The way you open a meeting signals your intent. Start with a different question: "what's in it for you", as opposed to "what's in it for me".
- Challenge the traditional mindset of "I uncover a problem that there is a need and therefore I automatically move to providing a solution". The conversation should rather become a journey that proceeds at a natural pace, with the consultant facilitating the clients thought processes, helping them to achieve their goals.

This results in an experience that the client enjoys rather than endures, that is recognised as different and that the client wants to repeat.

- Buyers expect that you will push them to buy. Insightful questions enable you to understand what is truly important to the client. Differentiate yourself from your competitors by displaying a strong desire to understand issues and share experience.

- Stay in step with the buyer, responding to their moves, as opposed to taking control and forcing the pace. This ensures that

you arrive at a solid and shared understanding of prioritised needs.

- Bringing the conversation to a conclusion is not about closing the deal. The focus is on giving the power to the client, enrolling them to establish their view of the next steps. This creates a different outcome for you and the client where they are expecting to be sold.

The result is that:

- Clients trust you and look for your opinion on matters other than their core offering.

- Clients want you to talk to them and you are the service provider of choice.

- Value is more important to them than price.

- Deeper relationships are established and you enjoy working together with your clients.

- You have a relationship with your clients – there is no defining start or end.

Bluen believes this is "the next generation outcome that we need to master if we want to be distinctive".

- Contact The Consultant Powerhouse at 011 234 6127 or training@theconsultantpowerhouse.co.za or visit www.theconsultantpowerhouse.co.za