

The Sales Surgeon

It's Monday morning and you have a splitting headache. Your head has been pounding all weekend long. You tried Advil, Tylenol, and Aleve but none of them seem to make the throbbing go away. Finally, you decide you better go to the doctor.

Fate smiles on you and you are admitted into the doctor's office almost immediately upon signing in. Within minutes the doctor walks in.

"What brought you here today?" he asks. You tell him about the horrible weekend you had because of the splitting headache. Without asking a single question, the doctor responds by saying, "I've just learned a new surgical procedure which has a 95% chance of curing any brain tumors. Recovery time is very short. Let's go into the operating room and get to work at ridding you of your headache!"

How many nanoseconds would it take for you to catapult out of the chair and frantically dash to your car to get away from this doctor? If you are like me, you would be torn between calling a lawyer to see how much you could make in a malpractice suit and calling another doctor to get a cure for the headache.

This is obviously a fictitious situation. No doctor would ever dare approach a patient in this way. But, let's think about the situation for a moment. What is it about this scenario that made you feel uncomfortable as the patient? If you are like most people, the anxiety flowed from the doctor prescribing a radical cure to the headache without finding out the cause or severity of the headache, or the doctor's failure to explain the potential risks and effects of the procedure, or the doctor's failure to discuss the steps toward recovery of health and wholeness. Seems rather unprofessional of a doctor, doesn't it?

Let's look at a different scenario. This time, instead of a doctor we have a Sales Executive. Instead of a patient, we have a COO. Instead of a headache, we have an internal project management department that has consistently missed cost and timeframe budgets for the last three years. The company is about to embark on two new strategic projects.

The COO comes out of an executive staff meeting with the CEO and CFO. They have told him in no uncertain terms that they expect the two new projects to come in within budget or there will be a price to pay. Worried about losing his job, the COO calls the local sales office of a training company and asks to speak to a salesperson.

The Sales Executive gets on the phone and asks, "How may I help you?" The COO states that he is looking for a project management course. Naturally, the Sales Executives asks the standard questions about the number of people that would be in the class, the location of the class, the availability of budget for the class, the desired timing for the class, and the types of topics to be covered. Next the Sales Executive begins to describe the Project Management courses offered by the company and the benefits of private classes.

The COO responds by asking for a proposal, which the Sales Executive gladly sends, complete with course outline and price. This begins many weeks of a cycle of phone calls by the Sales Executive along the lines of, “I was calling to see where you stood on the proposal. Have you reached a decision yet? Is there anything else you need from me?” to which the COO replies, “No. I have everything I need. I’ll call you when I reach a decision.” And the opportunity lingers on the sales forecast, month after month after month, while hope springs eternal in the heart of the Sales Executive that one day they will get the business.

Does this sound all too familiar?

The COO in this scenario is not unlike the patient in the earlier story. His doctor (the Sales Executive) has prescribed a cure (business skills training) without understanding the cause of the pain (pressure from management) or the severity of the pain (dollar impact of missed cost and time budgets and potential for being fired). Furthermore, his doctor does not discuss the potential risks and effects of the treatment (lead time before new approaches to project management become part of the culture). Consequently, the patient (COO) chooses to get a second opinion from another doctor (a competitor).

When we visit a doctor, we have an expectation that the doctor will patiently diagnose our situation, probe into our medical and family history, ask us how different parts of our body feel as a result of our situation, and then run tests to determine the type and severity of our disease. Once the doctor has completed this process, we are ready to listen to the treatment plan that is prescribed to cure our disease with a keen ear to risks and side effects.

By contrast, in most sales environments the emphasis is put on closing the deal (prescribing the cure) with little time or attention put into diagnosing the current situation, without probing deeper into the company, without asking how other parts of the business are impacted by the current situation, and without determining the type and severity of the business problem causing the prospect to look for a solution.

The Sales Surgeon is a series of programs designed to equip sales executives with a process to operate like doctors. These programs include:

- Cure for the Common Cold Call
- Cure for the Constipated Sales Cycle
- Cure for the Anemic Pipeline
- Cure for the Hyperactive Discount Gland
- Cure for the Bloated Forecast
- Cure for the Premature Demo Syndrome
- Cure for Flat-Lined Revenues & Margins

Using the metaphor of medicine, Sales Surgeons are taught to identify and diagnose Dis-EASE and to prescribe their solution as the cure for that Dis-EASE. Dis-EASE is anything that causes a C-level executive to lose sleep at night or wake up in a cold sweat

in the middle of the night! It may be an objective they want to achieve, a problem they want to solve, an expectation they want to meet, or a need they want to address.

Sales Surgeons are trained to quantify the severity of the pain associated with the Dis-EASE. This pain is measured in dollars. It can be dollars lost because of inefficiencies in the current situation or dollars missed due to lost opportunity. This number is critical because it becomes the stimulus for a prospect to be willing to change the status quo and undergo treatment.

Sales Surgeons become proficient in prescribing their solution as the appropriate cure for the Dis-EASE in a way that obtains the prospect's buy-in and that minimizes their desire to seek a second opinion.

Sales Surgeons are equipped to manage a sales cycle by establishing an Examination & Treatment Plan that spells out the steps required in the buying process and the implementation with every prospect. This tool gives them the opportunity to anticipate and neutralize objections and competition early. It also helps them to maintain momentum in the sales cycle.

Sales Surgeons learn to develop a prognosis with the prospect that quantifies in dollars the benefits that could be potentially realized by undergoing treatment.

Companies that have implemented The Sales Surgeon have seen triple digit percentage increases in monthly sales bookings and average deal size, and significant decreases in sales cycle length and discounting.

Gerry Baron, Sales Manager of ExecuTrain of Georgia and Founder of The Sales Surgeon, will conduct a session on selling The Sales Surgeon way at this year's ExecuTrain ExpediTion Conference.