



Are You Creating Customer Resistance?

This article might seem obvious to you. But I can guarantee that, if you heed its message, you will decrease the patterned and periodic resistance you encounter in certain areas. How's that for an inducement to read on?

One of the most common problems people come to me with is - the customer consistently demands a price reduction, how do we overcome price objections? The idea is that if I can provide an answer or technique to handle these price objections (and other forms of resistance from customers), then they can apply it across-the-board.

I can provide the answer, but it's often a painful one. I've found that in virtually all cases where you encounter consistent resistance among disparate customers that the cause is somewhere in your own behaviour and language. You wouldn't be facing uniform resistance on identical points among a diverse group of customers if you, yourself, weren't doing something to cause and even encourage it.

I know that's an almost an inconceivable proposition, but bear with me.

When I role-play these situations in group or individual coaching sessions, inevitably we turn the "switch" that sends the train down the wrong track. For example, I found one person who consistently faced the problem of buyers who wanted a "deal" who was saying early in the relationship, "We'll work with you flexibly in every facet of the relationship, and we feel we can provide you with a better deal than the competition." That's pretty much an invitation to say later "The competition will do this for 30% less than you will. Can you give us a better deal?" You want to outdo the competition on value delivered and ROI, not on low price!

An account manager who found that the buyer at a new key account didn't follow through on agreements to set up a next meeting date was committing two errors: He was not providing any value whatsoever during the initial meeting (focusing solely on the track record of his company) and he was not confirming a next date and time while facing the buyer during the first meeting.

A large consulting firm which found itself constantly delegated to the human resource department and low-level people who could not make decisions, was using human resource people for testimonials and the principals constantly used "HR" in their initial language with the prospect. Small wonder they were delegated to the place that was clearly in their hearts and minds.

The most egregious example of creating your own constant resistance was a consultant (and this story is absolutely true, as are all my stories) who, when asked about fees for his workshop, replied consistently, "The



normal workshop I've described is \$7,500, but we have less expensive alternatives if that's an issue" Have you ever observed a used car sales person, or someone selling high priced clothes, say to a customer, "This is our best selection, but before we even talk about it, let me show you something cheaper"? You probably haven't because they wouldn't last very long.

Grit your teeth and commit to that most punishing of self-development tools, introspection. Ask yourself if your resistance does take on a somewhat consistent and patterned form. If so, is there anything at all you can be doing differently to reduce the likelihood that you are actually the creator? I've seen people begin speeches by saying, "I'm not very good at this," which quickly convinced the audience of that fact despite the quality of what followed. First impressions create ongoing perceptions which inform a person's reality.

Modestly and humility do play a role in the sales and marketing process. But in achieving a healthy confidence in your relationships with customers, don't let the little guy on your shoulder whispering in your ear that you're not good enough or that your prices are too high cause you to plant the seeds of your own demise. Flick him off your shoulder and focus on the tremendous value you bring to the customer.



Article by **Tom Richardson**

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