

Motivating the Customer – Putting a Shine on Your Performance

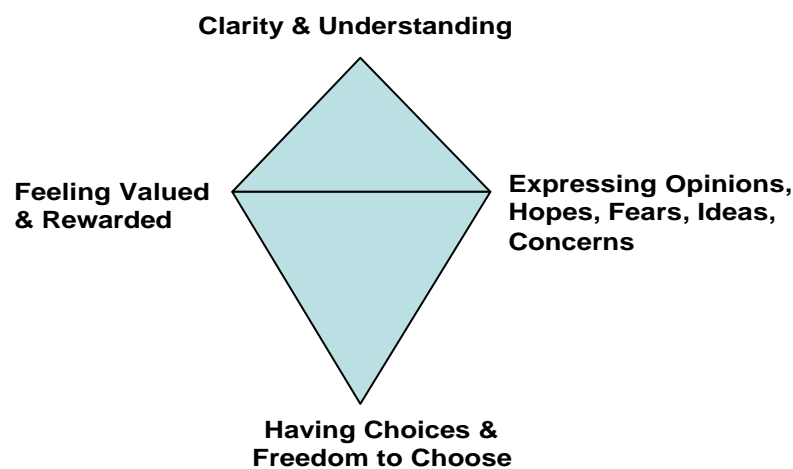
Motivation is a subject that is constantly on the lips of managers and employees and it is a subject that usually confuses more than enlightens when discussed at any length. Traditional theories such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Hygiene Factors Model or McGregor's X & Y theory are regularly trotted out to explain what motivates individuals. Many people find these interesting but potentially baffling in terms of what it actually means for them in their place of work or how these theories actually relate to their customers.

Several years ago I was introduced to a simple model of motivation entitled the Motivational Triangle (Mackintosh A.M, *The Successful Coaching Manager*, Troubador Press 2003.) where the model stipulated that there were three distinct motivators that humans needed addressed before they would be motivated.

- Understanding and Being Understood
- Freedom to Choose
- Feeling Valued.

In this short article I would like to further explain this powerful model in a form I have developed called "Diamond Motivation™". Although this model can be used for individual and team development I would like on this occasion to link the model to the customer and how, by taking a 'collaborative selling' approach, a sales representative can use the 'diamond' to motivate the customer to buy their products and services.

Diamond Motivation™



Let's look at how this simple model of motivation applies to selling to customers.

Clarity and Understanding.

It is vital for any sales representative to have clarity in what their role is and what their performance measures and targets are. Without this clarity the representative will be confused and de-motivated. The customer can also suffer from this lack of clarity in respect to a sales representative when the customer has little information on who exactly the representative is, who they work for, and why exactly they are calling. The first reaction they will have on seeing a new representative is simply, that this is a new representative 'here to try and sell me something'. Not exactly the best start, particularly as the new rep will be classed the same as all the other representatives and good representatives will not want this to be the case! Sales representatives should always want to be 'different' from the rest of the field.

It is vital, in my opinion, that all sales representatives take time at a first call to effectively 'contract' with the customer. By 'contract' I mean that they should explain exactly who they are, who they work for and the reason for their call. Now most reps do this but what happens next can be vital. Before they launch into the sale they should establish how best the customer would like to work with the representative. This assumes that the representative is looking for a long term relationship and not just a one off.

The representative should establish what the customer expects from the representative in terms of approach, time / day of calling, whether they prefer a face to face meeting or group meetings. The representative should stress that their aim is to bring value to the customer and that it would be of great benefit if they knew exactly how best they could deliver that value. Knowing what aspects of the service or product interest the customer most will ensure that the representative has a specific approach to the customer thus ensuring that time is well spent and focused on what interests the customer most.

The effect of this approach (if delivered effectively) will be to not only give the representative important information on the customer but it will also ensure that the customer feels listened to and valued. They will be (or should be) impressed that a representative has not rushed into a sale and has taken time to establish what the customer's expectations and needs are in relation to their dealings with representatives.

When I have promoted this approach to sales managers there has been a reluctance to take it on board as they have a fear that the representative will not have any time left to sell the products. Believe me- time will still be given for discussion on the products! The long term benefits of this approach are numerous and with sales representatives' roles becoming more diverse, it is important that they have an excellent professional relationship with all customers and one which is based on mutual trust and respect. Contracting can achieve this and also 'tick the box' as regards the first crucial point in 'Diamond Motivation™'

Expressing Opinions, Hopes, Fears, ideas and Concerns .

The second aspect to 'Diamond Motivation™' is that humans need to express themselves. If they are dictated to, then, not only do they feel under-valued, they feel frustrated in that they are not offered the opportunity to outline their hopes and concerns.

Sales representatives need to ask the right questions around the customer's situation and needs and where the relationship is new and not yet fully established they will need to be pro-active in questioning to elicit responses. As the relationship becomes more established and trust builds then you generally find that the customer will be more outspoken and the meeting becomes more of a two way discussion with the customer being open and honest about their feelings and opinions. To avoid questioning and take a directive approach whereby the representative does the majority of the talking, will not satisfy the 'Expressing Opinions' aspect of 'Diamond Motivation™' and hence the representative may not get 'buy-in' from the customer. They may get a customer who appears to listen but more often than not, they will actually get a response that hastens and ends the interview process!

Having a Choice in Decisions.

As in coaching, where the person being coached is brought to a situation where they are ready to make choices, it is vital that the representative does similar with their customers. Having questioned to established situations and needs and discussed openly with the customer the options that the customer has in solving their challenges, the representative should present their solutions to the customer in such a way that it promotes 'choice'.

The customer should always feel that it is they who have made the choice or decision and when this is the case, they are more liable to make that decision a reality in that they will act on that decision. They made it, so they have ownership. If the representative just tells them what to do, then the chances are that the customer won't act as quickly as perhaps the sales rep would like!

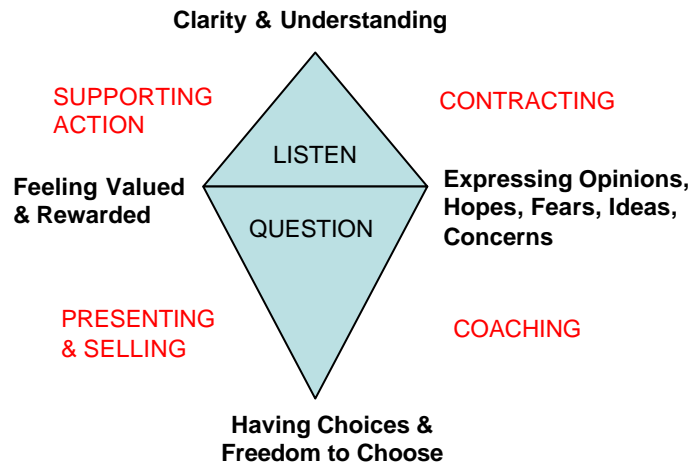
Feeling Valued and Recognised.

There are some extremely simple ways to make someone feel valued. It is as simple as saying 'thank you and 'well done'. It is also very powerful to simply listen and understand someone and this process alone is a sure way of making someone feel valued. And so it is with customers. Listen to them, understand their needs, support them to make decisions (in relation to your products, obviously!) and thank them for their time and their support. Simple.

In summary, if sales representatives are to sell effectively they need to have an excellent knowledge of their customers and their needs. In addition they must have good relationship building and motivational skills together with the ability to use

these effectively to coach, present and sell to their customers. The model, outlining the skills necessary, now thus, looks like this:

Diamond Motivation™



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Motivation is key in everything we do. Maslow's Needs are useful, but 'Diamond Motivation™' simplifies the mystique and takes motivation to a personal level which is easy to understand and apply.

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For more information on the various talks, conference sessions and workshops available based on the Diamond Motivation model please contact Allan Mackintosh directly.