

with columnist Robert Ciccone



Answer 4 questions to make the sale

Anticipating these objections will put you in a better place to win business

Whether you create ads, websites, promotional strategies or sales programs, there are four questions you must answer if you're going to succeed in grabbing your prospects' attention, then keep them interested while you build their desire to buy, and move them to action.

You'll seldom hear these four questions directly. They arise in the minds of your prospects at different

and keep – their attention.

So, you must begin print ads and web pages with compelling headlines ... start TV and radio ads with irresistible images and stories ... and open direct sales pitches with 11 electrifying words.

Are your advertising and presentations doing that? If not, your prospect will never get to the next unspoken question, which is ...

our yogurt will help boost your immunity, eliminate toxins from your body, and keep you regular – they may also lower your cholesterol." (Benefit.)

You have to support claims with specifics. When you say: "contains 20 million ...," you have to follow up with a "which means that ..." statement that converts your features to benefits.

This is the point where your prospects see themselves enjoying all the benefits; where the combination of features and benefits justify the price. But remember that people buy for their own reasons, not yours: what you think is important may not be what they think is important. Sure, you've hooked your prospects. But your job isn't finished. There is one more question to answer ...

Who says so, other than you?

This is a demand for proof, for validation. It is the time to introduce your prospects to credible authorities, or to happy customers, who support your claims and endorse your products. Doing this lets your prospects know they are not alone – that they are safe buying from you, because many others already buy and use what you are selling.

Herschell Gordon Lewis, author of *Direct Mail Copy That Sells*, calls this "implying bulk or community acceptance." Robert Caldini, author of *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, refers to it as "social proof." I call it "awakening the herd mentality."

There you have it: four questions you must answer to keep your sales process flowing smoothly all the way to the sale. I urge you to check your website, read your ads, follow your sales reps into a few meetings. Assess whether or not your selling systems answer all four questions and if so, how well they answer them. Remember, just one miscue ... one missed or poorly answered question ... can lose the sale. But answer all these questions well and you'll see your closing rates increase and sales grow.

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points in the sales cycle – and if you don't anticipate and answer all four of them, your advertising and sales presentations will fail, and you won't get the sale.

Here are the questions, roughly in sequence as they arise in minds of your prospects:

Why should I listen to you?

Why should I keep reading or listening to you? Why shouldn't I change channels or surf to another website? Why shouldn't I hang up? Why should I agree to an appointment? What is important enough in this message to keep my attention?

Most people don't start their days wanting what you are selling – whether it's a product, a service or an idea. They have too many other interests and preoccupations. That gives your message only three to 10 seconds to break through the clutter and noise around them; to seize –

What is it?

What, exactly, is it that you are selling? What features do your products or services have that should interest me?

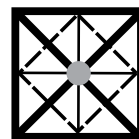
This is where you take prospects from being merely curious to seriously interested. You do this by highlighting the distinctive features of your offering – what it does, why it's new, better or different. Succeed at this and you'll get to answer their next unspoken question ...

What's in it for me?

To answer properly, you have to convert features to benefits. The more irresistible you make those benefits, the more likely prospects are to want what you have. For example:

"Each spoonful of our probiotic yogurt contains 20 million probiotic cells." (Feature.)

"The 20 million probiotic cells in



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