

Knowing + Doing = Being



Know+Do publishes monthly *think papers* for its subscribers and clients highlighting different issues that promote the philosophy of **'knowing+doing=being'**. Our approach is: if you cannot define where you want to **BE**, how can you **KNOW** your plans are correct and what you are **DOING** will help you reach your goal? This is the fifth paper of our fifth series covering 'Sales Made Easier'.

For more information on *Know+Do's* services, solutions and resources view our website www.knowanddo.com or contact info@knowanddo.com / (0161) 280 4567

Selling the Benefits to Your Customers

Think Paper No 5. Series 5: Sales Made Easier

Welcome to the fifth series of our popular *Think Papers*¹. The papers have been designed to capture our company values², including sharing and simplicity. We aim to take topical areas of knowledge and share our thoughts and experiences of these in an accessible way to encourage you to take action. We welcome your feedback about how the Think Papers have helped you or your teams.

This series – *Sales Made Easier* – addresses the issue of how businesses sell. A growing business will understand that being able to use an effective sales process creates clear advantages in the current marketplace and trading conditions. This series aims to make it easier for managers and their staff to engage and embrace a proactive sales culture that supports businesses to trade more successfully and sustainably.

The last paper³ covered the importance of listening to our customers to ensure that products and services meet their needs. In this paper we will examine the conversation between supplier and potential purchaser in more detail, **as we look at ways all members of staff can help customers understand the value of buying from your business.**

When we work with companies we often find the wider staff team is nervous about sales; however, whether a person acknowledges their part or not, they contribute to the marketing and sales processes. This can be direct or indirect, accidental or deliberate. As outlined in the first paper in this series⁴ the term 'sales' is much more than just cold calling, attending industry exhibitions and visiting clients. The impression given about a company also influences a potential customer's level of trust in the business.

An example of the importance of all staff supporting the sales process can be something as simple as answering the telephone. I called a large company recently and my first interaction with them was an automated menu. I did not understand where my enquiry should be directed, so I pressed a number on my key pad. After I'd been greeted by a dull "huh-llo" of a real person and explained my enquiry her first words to me were, "Oh, you've pressed the wrong number. You need to phone back

¹ You can view the Think Paper library and download past publications for free @ <http://knowanddo.com/resources>

² <http://knowanddo.com/about-us/values>

³ <http://knowanddo.com/archives/2498>

⁴ <http://knowanddo.com/archives/2411>

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and choose 3.” Technically, it was correct but her dismissive tone and attitude, created a terrible impression of that organisation. Her response could have been so much better for example: “Thank you for your call, I’m afraid I cannot help with that enquiry but I can transfer you to the service department as I think they are better placed to answer the question.” My impression of the care and quality of that company plummeted with the very first words spoken. It is now much harder for anyone in that company to sell to me.

There is a wealth of evidence to show that selling is often a relational process for which the most fundamental tool anyone needs is to ‘actively listen’. A wise person once said, ‘We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak!’ However, saying we need to listen better is one thing – doing it consistently well is another!



Know+Do encourages and teaches the development of active listening in our coaching and management training and it is a topic we can cover in a future Think Paper⁵. For developing confidence in sales, the key ingredient is shifting our focus from the preparation of a sales ‘pitch’ (i.e. speaking **TO** another person) over to managing our **RESPONSE** to their questions and conversation (i.e. the unknown part of communication).

In his book, *The Jelly Effect: How To Make Your Communication Stick*, Andy Bounds focuses heavily on teaching the reader to listen to the person/s they are speaking to and understand how to communicate relevant details; encouraging us to ask of ourselves, ‘What does the other person want to know?’ Instead of only, ‘What do I want them to know?’ This difference is, as Andy says in his book,

“...an example of the principal reason why verbal communication often does not work well. Because the speaker and their audience have different focuses.”

The Jelly Effect is written in a practical fashion with a staged approach to thinking through how we can communicate better in business. The author shares a number of ways we can learn to listen to the primary motives of the person to whom we are speaking and adapt our approach; to ensure we leave them with the correct message and not just our message.

This is why selling - in all its forms and styles - should always be focused on what the potential customer’s needs are. Creating a deeper understanding of this helps you to sell yourself and/or your product or service better. We can only do this by asking the right type of questions and listening carefully for the answers. It takes practice but is well worth it if you want to improve your confidence in marketing and selling your company.

A simple strategy for any member of staff, at whatever level or department they work in, is to create a better understanding of the features, advantages and benefits of the products or services your business offers. The table below provides an overview of ‘F.A.B.’.

⁵ There are also a number of helpful web sites with explanations and information on active listening, e.g. http://www.businessballs.com/empathy.htm#levels_of_listening

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F: A feature is an objective and observable characteristic or fact of your product / service	<i>Example: We design our training with current service users input</i>
A: An advantage is what the <i>feature</i> does, the service that it performs. This could be something a client has asked for	<i>Example: Helps ensure that it is relevant and practical for those being trained</i>
B: A benefit is the value or gain the product or service provides to this individual prospect	<i>Example: Increased positive feedback for trainer from the learners</i>

Our natural default in conversation is to explain the features of our product, service or company first. This is the least important thing of the three aspects a listener needs to hear. By training ourselves to start with the benefit of our product or service, then explaining the advantages it holds before sharing the features we keep our focus on what the other person needs and wants. If they are not 'hooked' on the benefits, features will rarely impress them. ***In simple terms - Features tell but benefits sell.*** This is because benefits tend to be viewed emotionally and features / advantages logically.

Don't fall into the trap of telling the prospect everything that you do or offer in the hope that some of it will make sense. Take the time to ask them what they need and how important something is to them. The more you understand about what a current or potential customer needs from you the more likely you are to create repeat business with them.

Marketing, in this instance, can simply mean ensuring that someone wants to buy your services again or trusts their contact in your company enough to re-commission you. The need may change over time though, so keep asking questions to ensure that you understand your customer's primary need and also how you can help them to understand how you have delivered or can meet that need.

Good companies maintain a regular relationship with their customer base so as to anticipate future needs as they arise. This helps to ensure that you can either serve these future needs or realise that you are likely to no longer work with this customer if you cannot meet their needs.

Try this exercise for yourself. Overleaf is a FAB template that you can print out and fill in. Perhaps you could try giving this to a few colleagues and choose one product or service your company sells. Complete the template independently then compare the results. This could help you to learn new ways of presenting the product or service and give you information to use in future conversations.

If you would like to explore how to enhance your organisational marketing and sales process, Know+Do offer in-house training on a range of strategy and management issues. We also have expert business coaches available to support leaders in business. For more information please contact us on info@knowanddo.com or call (0161) 280 4567.

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FAB Exercise Template

Choose a product or service your organisation currently offers...

Describe the product/service:		
Q1. What is the FAB for this product or service to the person(s) who <i>pays</i> for it?		
Features:	Advantages:	Benefits:
Q2. What is the FAB for this product or service to the person(s) who <i>uses</i> it?		
Features:	Advantages:	Benefits:
Q3. Can you list actions below that your organisation could take to <i>improve</i> the way it sells the FAB of this product or service?		
Features:	Advantages:	Benefits:

You could repeat this exercise with colleagues and share ways to review and adapt your marketing plans. NB. If you need more room use separate A4 sheets for each element.