
How Has Sales Made Me A Better Person

Contributed by Praful Krishna

It was 11:35 am on a Tuesday. The hedge fund I worked for was drafting a proprietary investment strategy, in which we could potentially deploy hundreds of millions of dollars. I had just gotten out of lively discussion with a senior team from a boutique investment bank about some pieces of the strategy. They had a very interesting point of view.

At 2:30pm the same day, Morgan Stanley came out with their After-Market-Close reports. One of them completely undermined the boutique bank's point of view, and very convincingly. I was irritated. I forwarded that report to the head of the team I had spoken with earlier in the day. I added a very simple and effective message: (sanitized) "??WTH". They called back. We had another lively discussion to my satisfaction, and the job was done.

Sales has this reputation of making snake oil look like the elixir of life. Truth is, of all the roles I have played in my professional life, Sales has pushed me the most to be a better person.

Fast forward a few years to now. I run a startup that provides tactical cognitive computing solutions to large enterprises. I wear many hats; the most important being that of the Chief Sales Person. Recently, I had to write a similar email to someone, which is what made me pause and post this article. If I had written the same email today, it will be very different. It will definitely start with "Dear Bob", and go on to take a very understanding tone.

Sales has this reputation of making snake oil look like the elixir of life. Truth is, sales made me a better person, in at least three distinct ways:

- First is obvious. I have become more polite, more personable, more responsive and more approachable. I genuinely have begun to care more for people around me. That is only the cliched tip of the iceberg.
- One of Coseer's core values is to "Earn the customer's trust before their revenue." Trust in this context is not just a fruit of high integrity, but also the faith that we will do the right thing for the client at all times - give them the bad news when needed, put their interests first and be as supportive in their endeavors as possible. This is a high enough bar to meet in a day job, and it becomes incredibly higher in personal life.
- Then there is the idea of empathy. Cognitive analytics is an upcoming field - Customers often don't really know what they want. It's my job to read between the lines and come back with solutions that they were hoping for but not asking for. Sometimes, it's the other way - it's my job to set the expectations right, even if we don't get the business. The easiest way to do this is to establish an empathy with the client. Indeed, if I look back on the projects that have been disasters, either for Coseer or in my personal life, what has been thoroughly lacking is empathy.

I have played many roles in my career - engineer, consultant, investor, advisor, technologist and now, sales person. Each role has pushed me and helped me grow, but none other has

transformed me personally as much as my tryst with Sales.

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