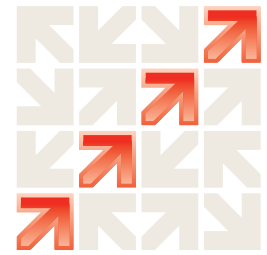


Have Credibility, Will Win



CRITICAL MOMENTS

Credibility is part of the sales process, which is often overlooked or taken for granted. Why would you bother to check? Any sales professional probably learned about credibility on their first training programme. Smart appearance, positive and helpful communication, logical reasoning - what else is there to add? You're credible.

Actually, credibility deserves a little more attention. There are critical moments when your credibility is being assessed and you need to be aware when this is happening. It's an essential 'check' for every sales professional regardless of competence and before every call. Credibility is vital if you're going to successfully win a new customer or continue an existing relationship. But did you know there are various types of credibility?

When you join a new team or a new company, you and your customers might be polite to each other. But if you want people to buy from you, you're asking them to take a leap of faith to believe in you. If you have no track record in your new environment and they don't know you, all the credibility you have is established by the company name on your card and by those around you in the meeting. Some people call this 'established' or 'brand' credibility. Of course your past reputation might count but what evidence do you have that you can do equally well in your new role? This is a critical moment and you need to be prepared.

Similarly, if you bring people with you to a meeting or ask a colleague to do something for one of your customers, their actions on your behalf will affect not just their own credibility but also yours. This is called 'transferred' credibility. This is another critical moment. Did your colleagues send the information your client requested? Was it received in good time? Were there any initial reactions? What are you walking into? Will the meeting go as planned?

As your relationships strengthen and you generate more sales and more satisfied customers, you become the owner of the strongest credibility of all - earned credibility. This critical moment is a vital milestone on the path to a good relationship and future sales. Would you buy much from someone you did not consider credible?

Sounds easy. Yet, like anything worth doing, it's part of sales training that you need to work hard at to get right. I was sitting in an airport lounge the other day, listening to a couple of sales people bragging about the best ways to grab instant credibility. They talked up how they opened meetings with new clients by outlining their backgrounds and pulling out impressive CV highlights. They reckoned their qualifications were so impressive that clients would instantly open the door and sign the deal.

These sales professionals went on to justify the fact that this tactic didn't always seem to be working with a comment that "some of these clients just don't get it and we don't want to do business with people who don't understand the value of our backgrounds." They started to actually limit their number of potential clients.

This is a great example of ego led, backward thinking and it can often lead to bad discussions and negative decisions.

Customers care about their issues and problems. These two bullish sales people would make a better connection by solving similar problems with other clients and having real, current and apposite stories to tell, rather than trying to impress with a personal career description. It's simple – just tell your clients what they want to know:

- the history of your company
- how your company is different
- if your company understands their particular industry
- if your company understands their specific issues and challenges

As soon as you communicate a fit between your company and your clients' company, that's a powerful time to mention any individual expertise that's applicable to the client i.e. industry, position level, business problem, etc.

How to earn and keep your credibility:

1. Resist the temptation to talk about yourself and your background too early. It's only compelling once your client is beginning to connect with your company
2. Understand that you only earn credibility by listening and asking questions well
3. Think with a level of precision
4. Stay Win-Win with your client throughout your meeting

Keep checking to make sure your credibility is still intact. Something may have changed since your last meeting. Maybe an existing contact hasn't transferred credibility to a new contact. A competitor may have cast doubts on your company. In Critical Moments sales training, it's vital that you understand that as a top sales professional, your credibility is directly related to your chance of winning. No credibility - no new client.

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