

Sales Are Not An Afterthought

Coaching Questions

“How important are sales in your business?”

Topic Introduction

There are a few different types of approaches to selling.

1. Product orientation: “If we build it, they will come”. The concept of merely manufacturing and having the product or service instantly sold was the mentality up to early 1900s. In a communist nation, this would continue to exist as the products are preordered by the government at a specific volume and the businesses are often owned by the government, so the contracts are guaranteed. Here, sales are not important.
2. Inventors: Known for coming up with the best gadget. With this in mind, they are not worried about selling the product. Again, they believe that if they come up with the best, most unique, cool product, it will sell itself. Sales are important, but the act of selling is not focused upon.
3. Entrepreneurs: Look for the marketability of a product and the customer’s willingness to pay.

Discussion Questions

- How important are sales in other parts of your life?
 - Do you sell yourself at work? Do you sell yourself at trying to get a job? Do you sell yourself to new people you meet?
- What type of seller are you? The product orientation? The inventor? The entrepreneur? Other?
- How do you make sure that you put your best foot forward in all aspects of life?

Key Learning: Selling is something that you do everywhere and isn’t always easy. The concept of building something great only works if you tell people about it and if they are willing to buy it. Your business needs to be sales oriented to be successful.

“When is it important for you to start selling?”

Topic Introduction

Many entrepreneurs are timid to start selling. There could be a lot of different reasons ranging from the feeling that they are not ready yet to worried about critique on their business idea. The challenge is that until you try to sell something, you will never know if people will buy it. Selling is a key stage of your business as it dictates if what you are doing makes sense.

Discussion Questions

- Are you selling today? Why or why not?
- What are your barriers to starting to sell? What would you have to do in order to start selling?
- Could you start selling within 2 weeks? What would you have to start doing in order to do so?
- Have you considered taking pre orders? Or piloting your business concept with friends who might be willing to buy prior to your final solution is fully developed?
- Could the biggest hurdle in starting to sell actually be in your own mind? Why are you resistant to selling?

Key Learning: Postponing starting to sell postpones when you start to get cash into your business. Most businesses can’t afford to wait. And if they decide to wait, there should be a very good reason for waiting.

What % of your time should be spent on selling? Why?

Topic Introduction

The CEO / owner of a company is often the best sales person in a business. Why? They are passion and energy when they speak about the product or service, they have credibility as the leader, and they have the most visibility to the public through speaking events and press releases.

Discussion Questions

- How many people in a business are typically revenue generators? Should everyone be selling?
- How can people in different roles still continue to sell?
- What are your barriers to selling yourself? Are there ways to remove them?
- Do your employees have barriers to selling? Are there ways to remove them?

Key Learning: Everyone in a small business is a sales person. This is through their customer service and interactions, speaking about the business to their family and friends, or in a sales role. Everyone should know that that is part of their role and given tools to help them generate revenue.

Examples

Real Life Example: Inventor Vs Entrepreneur

“A carpenter friend of mine wanted to have his own business and had been tinkering around in his basement with a few different ideas. One was a portable rod which helped someone perform calve exercises almost anywhere. He was really excited that he had been able to design something like this.

Unfortunately, he hadn’t thought about the fact that potential customers interested in strengthening their calves would likely have a gym membership, women often don’t complain about having fat calves (thereby shrinking the size of the target market), and there was a small option (a thick elastic band mechanism) that was even easier to carry around. Sales were going to be difficult!”

Real Life Example: Delay Tactics

Smallbusinesssolver.com was officially made live online October 30th 2009. It took until November 11th 2009 for the founders to pick up the phone and start calling small business centres. Although it was launched as a beta training product, the founders took a pause before selling. Most of the delay was based on mentally not being ready to sell it.

The first phone call occurred on November 11th. With it being Remembrance Day, all of the government small business centres were closed. Due to this, an email was sent to all of the small business centres saying,

“Small Business Solver is an online learning tool to support small business owners. Now, even when small business centres are closed, they have somewhere to turn.”

So although the founders delayed their sales at first, they still took advantage of when they did start selling.

Real Life Example: Everyone In Sales

An IT company providing a custom retail management system had been in existence for 10 years. The company had 8 employees and zero sales people. The challenge was that the only person who closed a sale was the president of the company. The rest of the employees were programmers and administration. The company failed consistently in realizing their sales expectations as the president couldn’t run the business and sell at the same time.

To get out of this spiral, he ended up finding channel partners with other Presidents and CEOs that helped him expand into other countries and finally expand his sales team. Secondly, he brought on a marketer with a sales background and his son who would eventually run the company. By not making sales an afterthought in his business and extending the reach both internally and externally, he was finally able to grow at a faster pace.

Mini Case Study

Sandra is planning her jewelry ecommerce website. She is starting to order jewelry and is building her website.

COACH: “Sounds like you’ve been busy over the last few weeks. The pictures of the jewelry look great! You must be excited about everything.”

SANDRA: “Yes. I finally feel like I’m in business. It still seems like a long way off before I start making a ton of money from this. But I’m getting excited.”

COACH: “You should be excited. Now the important question, how many sales do you have?”

SANDRA: (with a frown) “What do you mean? I don’t have a website up yet. I don’t have any sales. That’s still a few months away.”

COACH: “I’d agree that it might take a few months to get your website up and running the way you’d like. But I’d hate to see you wait that long to figure out if you jewelry has a market. There are other ways we could look at getting you selling earlier. Have you considered eBay? Or a creating a Yahoo store? Or even getting some samples to show to people in person? Is there a way that we could get some income sooner rather than later?”

SANDRA: “I never really thought about that. I could order samples and have them here in a week. That would be pretty neat.”

COACH: “And how about eBay. How long before you might be able to set up an account?”

SANDRA: “I could do that in a day. Wow! So now I just have to wait until the jewelry gets here and I could set up the store.”

COACH: “Is there something stopping you from setting it up today? It might take a few days to get set up and even longer to start generating traffic. By the time you get a sale, you probably will get the shipment. What do you think?”

SANDRA: “I think that you are right. I need to start selling. Now that I’m actually thinking about selling, I’m realizing it probably will take longer for money to come in. Any other ideas?”