

Persuading the Customer

The task of selling is becoming harder and harder because customers are becoming more and more demanding. Every time a company delivers a new service consumers pocket the gain and place the new goalpost at the new service level. Add to this the ease with which consumers can compare competitors and the generally jaded approach we have to marketing claims, it's almost a wonder anything gets sold at all.

The crowded marketplace, the barrage of marketing messages battering consumers daily, and the mountains of half truths (in the promises being made) all combine to make persuading the consumer a task that requires not only dedication, persistence, and patience, but an actual system. This article details the Tudog system for customer persuasion.

Step 1: Manage the Communication

There are a number of elements that go into how we communicate with our customers, and only one of them is the image we are trying to project so that the targeted buyer can picture himself/herself using the products (imagine the soft drink, beer, athletic shoe commercials). The other elements are actually the most critical and the keys to being perceived as credible, reliable and likable by the customer. Without these factors all efforts to persuade are useless. The core components are:

- **Content** – You need to make sure that you are sharing with your market what need you satisfy or desire you fulfill and why your claims should be trusted and believed. This trust factor is the most critical aspect of your content. If you say something incorrect or overtly designed to mislead people into thinking something different than what you actually intend to deliver, you will find your ability to persuade the customer to be very low, as they will simply decline to believe you, even when you start telling the truth.
- **Target** – Your target needs to be carefully considered. You can cast a wide net and work inward or select a smaller market and work outward, but in either case you need to know who you are talking to so that you know what it is you should be saying. You cannot persuade customers you cannot create a relationship with, and you cannot create a relationship with a market you have failed to (correctly) identify.
- **Channel** – The old saying that it's not only what you say but how you say it needs to be amended to include that it is also where you say it. People respond to communications not only according to what is included but also according to the manner in which they receive it – the source. You need to make sure that the channels you use to persuade the customer possess the respect and confidence of the consumer. This way your good word is reinforced by the channel's good reputation.
- **Promise** – The promise you make is the promise you must keep. You will not persuade anyone (certainly not over the long run) if you make claims or promises that you do not keep. It is better to promise less and deliver than promise more and fall short of the mark. This is sometimes difficult, especially if your competitors are promising more – and are able to deliver. But it won't help you at all if you meet the promises in the market and don't produce. Coming in below the competition gives you room to grow. Come in at market level and perform below standard and you'll have no where to go but down.

- Offer – Your offer is a simple proposition you present to the market. You have concluded what you wish to provide to the market and the price you wish to receive in exchange. Your offer is the essence of your position, and how you structure it will establish how you are viewed in the marketplace. You need to make sure your offer is balanced, that is, that you are giving something that is perceived as having the same or greater value than the price you are demanding. If your offer is right, the task of persuasion is halfway completed.

Step 2: Manage the Exchange

The exchange is how you execute on your promise – the exchange between the company and the customer. If you want to persuade your customer to be a repeat customer this is the phase that gives you your chance. The components are:

- Delivery – You have to make sure that you not only deliver the product/service in the manner and condition anticipated, but you have to make sure that the product/service delivers on the promises you made.
- Fulfillment – The convenience with which the customer is able to access your product will have a primary effect (after price and quality) on the willingness of the customer to engage your product. You have to make sure that fulfillment of the marketing claims, not in terms of product performance, but in terms of product availability is easy enough for the customer to be persuaded.
- Support – Once the sale is made the need to persuade does not cease. This is why it is critically important that you have an excellent support system for your product/service and that you use your opportunities to interact with your customers seeking service as a way to further persuade them of your commitment to fulfilling your products.
- Follow-up – Once again, the sale is not the point of disengagement from the customer. The process you have in place needs to make certain that your company has the means to continue communicating with the customer after he/she has purchased your product. Not only will this serve to further persuade the person to continue buying the product, but also converts that customer into a cheerleader who might serve to persuade others as well.

Step 3: Manage Your Systems

Persuading the customer is all about performing at a high standard all the time. The only way you can hope to establish and maintain an even and high standard of performance is through the creation and development of systems that control your manufacturing, logistics, customer service, sales, marketing, and management functions. The control of systems is dependent upon the creation and adherence to processes that ensure that same result is produced by the same series of executed steps. If you manage your systems you will be able to make – and keep – promises that are compelling to your customers...promises that persuade them to buy and keep buying.

When it all boils down to it, the ability to persuade your customers is all about your reputation. And your reputation is dependent on how well you do what you promise to do. So calculate your promises based on what you can deliver. And watch the customers be persuaded every time.