

Selling Effectively in the U.S. Market

In today's challenging and highly competitive market it is not always necessary or reasonable for a non-U.S. company to attempt to construct an independent sales apparatus for the American market. There are large companies in virtually every sector that are interested in placing compatible and complimentary products through their already existing and far-reaching sales channels. Such arrangements provide the non-U.S. company with the sales clout and reach of the large American companies without the expense or risk associated with attempting to duplicate efforts. Also, joint sales arrangements with established U.S. firms free up the non-U.S. company to create its brand and develop more sophisticated marketing strategies than those currently being employed.

It is understandable that most companies will seek to have some independent sales capabilities, regardless of the extent to which they have successfully partnered with U.S. companies. With this in mind, and in an effort make your independent sales efforts more successful, Tudog offers a few helpful hints on selling to the U.S. market.

Successful selling in the United States starts with a product that offers a compelling solution, and is supported by an organization that can benefit the customer by being able to share information or expertise the customer wants or needs. Sales forces need to get involved in their customer's operations and show how the products/services they represent offer the best solution. Here are some things you can do to improve your sales effort.

- Partner with Your Customers - show your customers that you support their goals and are anxious for them to succeed. Become a resource to them by providing expertise they know they can leverage to enhance their success.
- Focus on the Problem -focusing on making the sale compromises your credibility as a resource. Focus on the customer's problem and how you can offer the best solution. This creates an atmosphere where you are seen as working with them to obtain their goals.
- Think Long Term - make sure you see beyond the sale. You need to think long term and establish a relationship with the customer. The cost of acquiring a customer is much higher than the cost of retaining one. Your chances of maintaining a long-term relationship is determined by how well you establish a relationship during the initial sales contacts. The potential customer may move slower than you would like, the demands for additional information may be more often than you understand, or there may be other bumps in the road. Actually, there almost certainly will be bumps in the road. And every one of them is a test to see how long-term your vision is and how accommodating you can be.
- Position Yourself as an Expert - companies don't want to buy from salesmen. They need the added value of an expert. You need to position yourself as an expert and not a salesman, and you do this by knowing the customer's challenges and goals and how your product/service serves as a remedy or enhancement. You need to engage in extensive pre-sale research and know the company you are trying to sign on as a client. Focus on their business needs as

related to your product. Ask questions about how those needs are currently being handled, and then present your product from its points of difference - or what some call unique selling proposition.

- Recommend as Opposed to Sell - if your product offers genuine advantages there is no reason to hard sell or try to push for immediate buying decisions. If you are hard selling it will make the customer question the credibility of your product and your claims. As a trusted expert, a perception and relationship you have cultivated with the customer, you do not sell your product, but actually recommend it as the most reasonable and beneficial solution. You support your recommendation with an expert analysis of the options and supportive data directing the customer to your product.
- Don't Be a Stereotypical Salesman - we all know the type - cheap suit, bad cologne, points his index finger at you while simultaneously winking and making a clicking sound. You wouldn't buy a newspaper from this guy, let alone bring him into your company as an expert advisor. Don't hard sell. Don't exaggerate. Don't fast talk. Don't make promises you or your product can't keep. If what you're selling isn't right for the customer you won't be able to sell it. And if it is right for them your sales approach and success in being perceived as an expert is what will sell them.
- Think Consultant, Not Salesman - the most effective way to structure your sales approach is by thinking like a consultant, that is asking yourself "How Can I help"? Typically salesmen ask "What can I sell"?, which, insofar as we are trying to establish expertise and a long-term relationship may be a less effective approach.

Some cultures view "getting to the point" as a virtue. Their salespeople seek fast results and are not generally inclined to build relationships where the payoff may be months, or even a year or so, down the road. In the U.S. market this is a necessity. Penetrating the U.S. market successfully means strategic partnerships and high profile sales agreements, but it also means a strong brand, genuine core competencies, compelling marketing materials, a willingness and ability to stay your course for the long run, and adherence to Tudog's principles for effective sales in the U.S. market.

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