

Sales Skills Reinforcement

The Importance of Skill Practice and Reinforcement

Research shows that people tend to forget 90% of what they learn within one month UNLESS the key concepts are reinforced. Stay motivated by continuing to practice and use the skills learned during the workshop.

Sales Training And Results, Inc. (STAR) believes in workshop follow-up and reinforcement for real results. We provide follow up services to help integrate essential skills learned into daily routines. Reinforcement is the best way to realize maximum benefit from your training investments. In addition to our workshops, we provide one-on-one coaching services.

Next Steps

Ask yourself the following questions and write down some notes and objectives for future reference:

- What is the most important skill learned from the workshop that I will use?
- How can I develop these skills further?

If possible, schedule some time with a colleague from the workshop to brainstorm ideas and provide feedback to each other on the reinforcement tasks you'll be working on from the STAR Reinforcement Kits. You might wish to include your manager.



SALES TRAINING
And Results, Inc.

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IDEAL® Questioning

IDEAL® Questioning is a sophisticated questioning technique that provides a roadmap for planning and asking great questions. Almost everyone involved in selling to key accounts and prospective customers can improve their ability to identify the customer's critical needs and concerns. Here are some key points from the workshop:

- ★ Do your homework so you can avoid asking a lot of **Information Questions**. In the words of a past participant: "Too much 'I', no 'DEAL'".
- ★ You will identify sales opportunities by asking **Dissatisfaction Questions** from the customer's perspective and about your competitors (potential for both internal and external dissatisfaction/areas of improvement).
- ★ Don't skip over the **Expansion Questions**, which help intensify the need, and build value for your solution or change. These questions also help identify other sales opportunities.
- ★ The **Action and List Options Questions** help you to gauge the customer's buy-in or commitment to next step or action. You should ask these prior to describing the benefits of your recommendation in detail.

Reinforcement Tasks

Recall the importance of using IDEAL® Questioning:

The best sales professionals differentiate themselves by the quality of their questions. STAR's IDEAL® Questioning model highlights that it really helps to plan and ask a few good Dissatisfaction Questions. Some general examples:

1. What would you like to improve?
2. If you could change one thing, what would it be?
3. What do you like about your current situation? What don't you like?

Use different 'D' Questions with different decision-makers. For example, are you calling on a purchasing agent or the technical manager?

You also should end the questioning portion of your customer conversation with either an Action or a List Options Question. This helps you gauge how interested the customer is, because most customers usually won't agree to a next step unless they are genuinely interested in using your products and services.

Integrate the skills learned into daily routine by doing the following:

For every relevant conversation this week you have where IDEAL® Questioning would pertain, prepare some 'D' Questions in advance. Tailor each question to fit the situation. Plan also one 'A' or 'L' Question to use at the end of the conversation.

Analyze your behavior and take away "What works best":

Afterwards, ask yourself which 'D' Questions were most effective. Second, which 'A' or 'L' Questions worked the best? Reflect upon which questions had the most impact during your customer interactions.

Future Actions

After several weeks, revisit the summary above, and ask a colleague to brainstorm with you to come up with more examples of good questions. Role-playing with your colleague or manager is also helpful reinforcement.

See the brainstorm list of IDEAL questions on the next page!



IDEAL Questions Brainstorm List XYZ CORP Selling Skills Workshop

During the January *Selling Skills* workshop, we cited that one of the characteristics of top sales professionals is the **ability of the salesperson to ask great questions.**

In order to utilize the collective expertise of all the XYZ Corp sales professionals and managers, recall that you worked in small groups to brainstorm a list of IDEAL Questions for XYZ Corp sales situations. Your responses were consolidated and are shown below. Please use this as a reference sheet. It is not meant to be a script.

Informational Questions (*fact-finding questions*)

- What products do you use?
- Who are you currently buying from?
- What does your company do (or make)?
- How many locations do you have?
- How long have you been in business?
- What is the focus of your business?
- How many people are on the purchasing and technical team?
- Who else should be contacted within your company?
- Who is responsible for...(purchasing; technical evaluation; switching suppliers)?
- How familiar are you with XYZ CORP?

Dissatisfaction Questions (*identify the customer's needs, issues, concerns, expectations*)

- Are you happy with your current supplier?
- What does your supplier do that you like? Don't like?
- What kinds of issues are you having with your existing supplier?
- What are you missing from other suppliers regarding customer service?
- What kind of improvement are you looking to make internally?
- What would you expect from us?
- What do you want from a relationship (such as type and frequency of communication) with your supplier?
- What is most important to you?

Expansion Questions (*follow-up questions that expand upon the customer's answer*)

- Can you explain these issues/problems in more detail?
- How are you going to do that?
- Who gave you this pricing, terms, etc.?
- Can you provide specific examples of what you mean by timely supply?
- How did that affect your production?
- How much did that issue/problem cost you?
- Can you clarify what you just said?

Action Questions (*next step or action by the customer*)

- Recap the conversation and then offer a XYZ CORP solution based on the customer's response.
- Can we send you a sample?
- Explain what we can do regarding local supply and ask if the customer would be interested in moving forward.
- If we did (a particular action), would you be willing to give us an order?
- What if we set up a meeting with your technical/production people?

List Options Questions (*choices or alternatives for the customer*)

- We could either provide some stocking assistance for Product A or a special container for you that would be stored at your facility. Which of these would you prefer?