

Types of salespeople: the relationship profile

By Peter Gilbert

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In this, the third of my series on types of salespeople, I take a look at the relationship salesperson (QIII), who is typically hard working, conservative in his or her views and very protective of “his” or “her” customers.

A relationship salesperson is required if the products are consumables (such as chemicals), component parts or subassemblies to be used in larger systems. The technologies are well understood by the customer but features and options typically change with different customers and orders. Customers, themselves, are experienced with the products.

However, the decision to change suppliers is complex, involving multiple people and trust in the new supplier's service capability and commitment. Customers need assurance that product specifications can be met and capabilities exist to respond to variations in product specifications and their delivery needs. Supplier loyalty will guarantee a long-term relationship.

Fulfilment approach (low-tech and high-touch):

Requirements	QIII relationship solutions
Seller's company image	Caring; friendly; loyal; dependable; personal; nonbureaucratic service; serving established customers; high quality reputation
Lead generating methods	Offer a free service (an audit, analysis, evaluation, etc.); seek opportunities to develop relationships; treat prospects like customers until they are customers
Qualifying criteria	A warm market; prospects want or need the product; looking for the best provider; question seller's ability or commitment to provide extra service
New business presentations	Show capabilities via facility tours; build personal relationships; demonstrate personal and company commitments; offer other client relationships as supporting evidence
Solid answers to natural objections	Objection: Customer is Likely to Invoke Not-Invented-Here Objection; Response: Convince Customer of Superior Delivery and Added Value Advantages, i.e., We “serve” you, not “replace” you
Closing techniques	A handshake; one-on-one development of personal relationships; specification bid; quick response to customer needs
Customer relations	Regular personal contact by account manager; tours of facilities; entertainment; trade shows; user group meetings
Customer service	Provide top-level service delivery; emphasize accessibility to key account managers; install hot lines and internal systems for instant response; provide on-site seller representative; automate and share production tracking; j.i.t delivery
Resale	Expand product or service purchases from same user or other users in the same company; perform annual relationship audits

Sales force approach (low-tech and high-touch)

Requirements	QIII relationship solutions
Type of salesperson	Relationship
Traits & characteristics	More loyal to customer than his/her own company's policies; strong work ethic; self-sufficient and independent; strong values

Sales style	Responsible; dependable; customer loyalty
Sales focus	Service; care for the customer
Role	Account manager; out-bound phone sales
Technical ability	Be customer/market expert; understand customers' problems
Training	Customer/market awareness; product knowledge; competitor information; service/manufacturing/delivery; techniques; pricing
Length of time to close	One to two years to get major share of customer's business
Length of contact after close	For years
Corporate support and structure	Moderate: company advertising; sales aids; service support; entertainment "events" for customer goodwill

ABOUT PETER GILBERT

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