

BRIDGES OF MORRIS COUNTY...

MORRIS COUNTY
BUSINESS Life



Architecting the Sale: Business's Big Date

By John L. Picard

"I'm late, I'm late for a very important date!" — *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Lewis Carroll

Do you remember the intense passion and focus of that Friday night date of your youth? Your whole world was filled with anticipation. One question defined the whole meaning of your life (at least the next several hours). *What would make this date a success?* To answer that, you had to become the other person and create an experience that fulfilled their needs.

In these challenging times, selling passions have to be just as intense. Everyone, from president to receptionist, needs to share a sense of overriding purpose — to be given the chance to sell and create experiences of mutual profit and even dreams. The passions of the Friday night date *can* come to your sales process:

Setting. Like finding a great restaurant, you need "to place" your communications in ways that will set the ambiance for your prospect. Step back and analyze your sales channels, your people and even the physical places in which you meet prospects. Make these settings comfortable places in which a prospect feels good about sharing and solving problems.

Voice. There is nothing worse for a young guy than having his voice crack as he tries to impress his date. For sales, the parallel is the risk of using the wrong tone, content or voice. Are you talking about what interests *your prospects*? Do your words sound like *their words*? Do you express *interest and really listen* . . . or is the conversation more like: "Enough about me, let's talk about my hair"? Review your sales opportunities and the amount of time your prospect speaks versus the amount you talk. If their needs are discussed 50% to 70% of the time, congratulations, you win. If *you* are the dominant topic, change that sales script!

"What Do You Do?" Like being prepared for the point at dinner when your date asks what you do for a living, being able to answer "what you do" on a sales call can be critical. Prepare an "elevator speech" (a 60-second summary that answers "why you" and "why now"). Make it clear, concise and focused on your particular audience.

Touch Points. Regarding dating, "enough said." But on the topic of sales, consider examining all the places where you touch a prospect. Each of these points must be consistent with the others and deliver a single prospect-centered message. Individualize that message, based on your knowledge of the prospect, and create opportunities for next steps that involve and excite. The more involved you make the prospect with your company, the more likely the sale and the greater the return on your sales investment.

Be Prepared. Having everything you needed in your wallet or purse insured you were prepared for any contingency on your date. Building strategy into your sales materials can offer you the same kind of comfort and success. Customize your sales tools to anticipate prospects' needs and questions — before they ask. Be prepared with backup, expertise or simple case studies/examples that show success and results.

Follow-up. After the date, did you call the next day or did you wait a while so you didn't appear overanxious? The sales process needs the same sensitivity and timing. Each sale has a different pace, but all form their own "urgency and flow" — time your responses and offers to this unique pace.

After the date, people often start thinking of the next date with the same abandon as the last. Driving business is like this as well, moving each step of the sales process forward and adding new first dates continuously to the sales cycle. Business is not a fairy tale, but you have got to keep kissing frogs to find your prince(cess).

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