

From Sales Competency to Sales Fluency

Software for handheld devices that improves customer interaction

What if you could walk into a negotiation or a sales presentation equipped with a better game plan? Getting the maximum out of any presentation involves truly connecting with a client or prospect, communicating with them on a level where both parties walk away feeling it's a win-win. Talking about things that are actually of interest to the client is a great way to start the process.

Moving beyond sales competency to sales fluency (greater retention and proficient use of acquired skills) can be a key element in sealing the deal. New technology and software applications have made it easier in some respects to attain that fluency, but it starts with listening to the client and observing clues they are transmitting about their communication styles. Most salespeople like to discuss things that interest them about their product or service, not what their clients need to hear in order to make a buying decision because, in many cases, they just don't know.

Sales Performance Technology

Sales performance software available now for handheld devices can be used in sales and management environments to help sharpen interpersonal communication skills.

Picture a sales process. On an initial visit or phone call before the serious negotiations begin, the user looks and listens for clues about the demeanor (behavior) of the prospect: Are they rushed for example or are they offering a generous time slot, perhaps centered on an invitation to lunch? What seems to be of interest to them? Are they quiet or very talkative? Are they detail-oriented or do they see the big picture?

Before the next meeting with this prospect, those observations are loaded into a program which can be updated before each subsequent meeting as further clues emerge about a prospect's communication style. The application then produces a handful of specific key points that should be employed while dealing with a client – information delivered “just in time” (JIT).

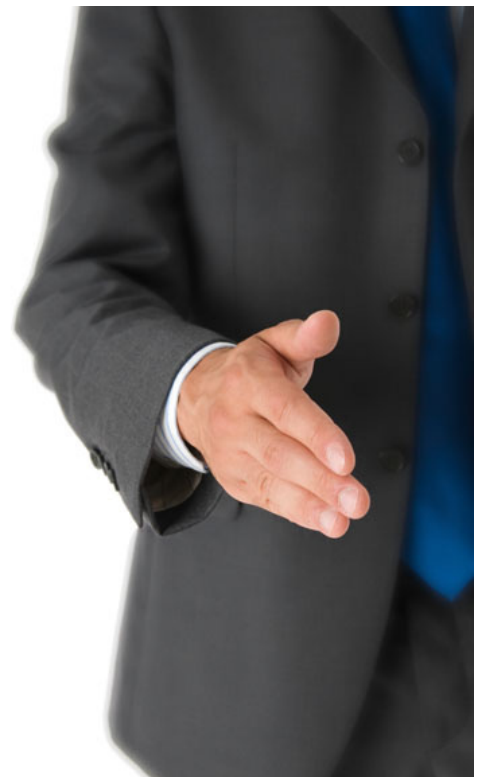
Call it simplified, focused communication: one application available at the touch of a finger will produce in 30 seconds five product benefits that would appeal to a particular prospect or client. After all, everyone hears, sees, thinks and acts differently. Not surprisingly people are motivated by different factors too.

JIT is a term that some associate with the manufacturing world, but the concept is valid in many

fields through mobile learning and communication support software applications. In this case, it is information about a client or a prospect delivered just before a negotiation begins that can be the deciding factor in the sales process.

Those details will also help build quality business relationships. The competitive advantage is realized when the salesperson builds trust and can actually predict how the client or prospect will react in a negotiation or sales process.

That same technology can also be used as a tool to help managers



communicate more effectively with those reporting to them. Asking someone to change a course of action, to try a different approach to their job, is often met with resistance or even fear on occasion. Recognizing and meeting someone's interpersonal needs can help overcome that hurdle. People are more likely to change if they can see what's in it for them.

Performance Development

Professionals who attend workshops leave with the best intentions, armed with all sorts of new information and often techniques. Retaining what has been learned is critical, but by some estimates as much as 80 percent or more of the knowledge gained in training can be lost if not applied regularly and in a timely fashion. That's another area where handheld technology can help reinforce the skills (trust building, interpersonal flexibility, empathy projection, etc.) acquired at workshops.

It's all about performance development and the ability to use technology to enhance what has been taught at workshops where attendees use role-playing and other techniques to learn how to overcome communication barriers. Employed on a just-in-time basis just before the start of a negotiation, the user finds a better way to appeal to the prospective buyer, by isolating the details most important to that individual.

In this case, the software application (programmed in advance) can also break down the benefit statements

of any product, service or concept, matching it with specific personality traits observed.

What if better interpersonal communication skills could lead to improved success during negotiations? Recognizing what interests the client most and adapting to their *modus operandi* (communication style) can make all the difference. Two-way relationships are built on trust and lead to more openness, with better results in shorter time frames. When it comes down to it, building trust is a performance enhancer and a strategic advantage.

Beyond Competency

They haven't come up with a manual yet for every single person and their particular communication styles, or one that shows them how to deal with someone else who may have an entirely different skill set. That's where new software applications and handheld apps can help attain a level of fluency, be it in sales, management or at the supervisory level.

There is something beyond competency. Fluency involves greater retention and proficient use of the communication skills learned. New software packages can help develop that fluency, but it all starts with *listening and observing skills*. The signals are there for those who care to interpret them.

Jon Gornstein is the founder and president of *Persona* GLOBAL, an international industry pioneer in the practice of change leadership. Based in Sausalito, Calif., the company has just released Game Plan Mobile, an expert system software application, available for Apple iPads and Android phones that enables the user to further sharpen sales fluency and personal communication skills.

