

Trust Matters Blog



Cross-Selling: Part 2 of 3 – What Goes Wrong

October 29, 2014 / 2 Comments / in Increasing Sales, Sales / by Charles H. Green

This is part 2 of a three-part series. If your organization offers multiple service offerings, you may find this series of interest.

[Part 1 – What's at Stake \[http://trustedadvisor.com/trustmatters/cross-selling-part-1-3-whats-stake\]](http://trustedadvisor.com/trustmatters/cross-selling-part-1-3-whats-stake)

Part 2 – What Goes Wrong

[Part 3 – How to Get it Right \[http://trustedadvisor.com/trustmatters/cross-selling-part-3-3-right\]](http://trustedadvisor.com/trustmatters/cross-selling-part-3-3-right)

In the first part of this series (link above) I suggested that “cross-selling done right represents the lowest cost-of-sales approach to growth.” Not ‘one of the lowest – the lowest.

And yet – I find massive inertia at best, and resistance at worst, to cross-selling.

If you'd like to reap the benefits of cross-selling, you're going to have to grapple with the underlying causes of what's kept you from it to date. There are three underlying barrier causes, and you can suffer from more than one of them. See which one best describes your situation.

Objection 1. Cross-selling is too complicated for us.

You may be thinking, “It’s hard enough to master the complexity of one product or service – we just don’t have the time or budget to cross-train everyone in everybody else’s offering.”

Or, you may think, “It’s tough enough already getting access to our clients and avoiding channel confusion; adding in the complexity of multiple salespeople from the same company calling on the same client people would just be over the top.”

Objection 2. Cross-selling is crass, overt and unprofessional.

You may be thinking, “We can’t go walking the halls with order sheets – our relationships are built on quality content, client service and trust, not on acting like hustlers.”

Or, you may think, “Cream rises to the top. There’s no harm in occasionally asking a client to put in a good word, but making a self-serving goal out of it actually hurts our image, not helps it. It amounts to asking our clients to become salespeople for us, and that demeans them and cheapens our image.”

Objection 3. We already know how to do this.

You may be thinking, “Networking within the client organization is something we do naturally. We don’t need special training to do something that got us in in the first place, we just need a little more time.”

Or, you may think, “It comes from knowing the client, and knowing how far and how fast you can push things through the organization. You can’t just barge into a situation and demand total access, there are human relationships you need to work through, and trust takes time.”

Handling the Objections.

All three of those objections (and note they’re internal objections, phrased by us in our own heads in fear of speaking to clients, rather than by clients themselves) are false. Here are the headlines:

It’s too complicated.

Myth: you have to understand all your organization’s services in order to cross-sell them. Not true – you only have to understand them well enough to define the problem. (See part 3 in this series for how to do it).

Myth: you will cause channel confusion. Not true – if you actually have a solution. More confusion would be caused by bringing in another seller than by using you.

It’s crass and unprofessional.

Myth: a buyer-seller relationship is inherently distasteful for the buyer. Not true – a buyer whose problems are addressed and who is treated with respect is a buyer who is delighted to buy. It’s how you do it that matters. (See part 3 in this series for how).

Myth: our clients don't want to help us sell. Not true – if we have solutions that will help our clients' fellow employees, they are proud to be associated with us and help us help their organization.

We already know how to do this.

Myth: Cross-selling is no different from ongoing business development. Not true – by definition, you are dealing second-hand with both expertise and relationships. That's very different.

Myth: You can't cross-sell until you've built up enough trust. Not true – you never want to draw down on trust. Done right, cross-selling builds trust. (See part 3 in this series for how to do it right).

To summarize: Cross-selling is the least costly way to add growth. You probably aren't doing it. You've probably got one or more excuses – which don't hold up. But there is a solution, and it's not all that hard. Stay tuned for the final post, How to Get It Right.

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