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LinkedIn Maximizer Programme

Module 10: Prospect Conversion

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Every product or service that is being sold will have a different buying cycle. What we are outlining in LMP is a two-cycle process. You need to determine what your ideal cycle is and adapt what we are covering in this programme to your situation. What is not negotiable is to have a formal process: without it you may be swayed by the recency effect and you will never be sure as to why sometimes you are successful in your sales and other times not. A formal process that is actioned consistently, analyzed and fine-tuned is the only way to implement continual improvement.

There are some fundamental facts that affect selling today that are common to all sales. These include:

- Buyers are more educated and are on the look-out for sales “tricks” that are used on them
- Buyers are largely mistrustful of salespeople
- Many of the traditional sales methods create resistance in the buyer
- Buyers have access to an enormous amount of information about you, your company, your product or service, hence they feel less reliant on your expert opinion

Well there are a bunch more than this, but hopefully this sets the tone for what we need to develop in converting our prospects into customers. In the qualification process the engagement was very much based on ourselves controlling the process and obtaining information that we required. Executed correctly, you would have begun the process of building trust and authority in your relationship as well as made it clear that you need to get to the base of their problem or desire, and this may lie a little deeper than being on the immediate surface.

During the conversion process from prospect to customer, we need to spend a whole lot more time in their world and to really tap into their emotional triggers, to get them to acknowledge that you have the solution to their pain.

As humans, we tend to use our logic reasoning when determining what to buy. How to influence this logic is influenced by their behavioural tendencies, so if you have not undertaken a full DISC assessment then I highly recommend this as it will assist you with understanding the key triggers in human types and how to effectively communicate with both their logic and emotional triggers.

Ensuring that you have clearly laid out your features and benefits is another useful way to ensure that you appeal to their logic. However, the final decision is invariably made emotionally. And exactly what emotion works in any situation varies. It could be as simple as “they really like this person”, or “I really feel that they understand me and my challenge.”

The following is a brief overview of my 3-P Consultative Sales Process that follows the Prospecting Pathway Model covered in module 9.

Note: The qualification and the conversion are two distinct processes, these are often carried out by two different people. Even if they are performed by the same person, it is good practice to re-cap in the conversion conversation what was covered in the qualification process.

STEP 1: PREPARATION

1.1 Rapport

Spend 2-3 minutes building rapport, show some genuine interest and care in them and their lives. Again, from a DISC perspective, limit this with the C's & D's, and with the D's in particular search for opportunities to authentically recognize any achievements they may have.

1.2 Re-Cap

This is very much about setting an agenda for the meeting. Summarize from your notes that you took during the prospecting call, covering the following:

Who do they help and how do they help?

What results they would like in the future (say 12-months.)

What results they are getting now.

What are the possible roadblocks that will stop them from achieving these future results.

1.3 Why Now

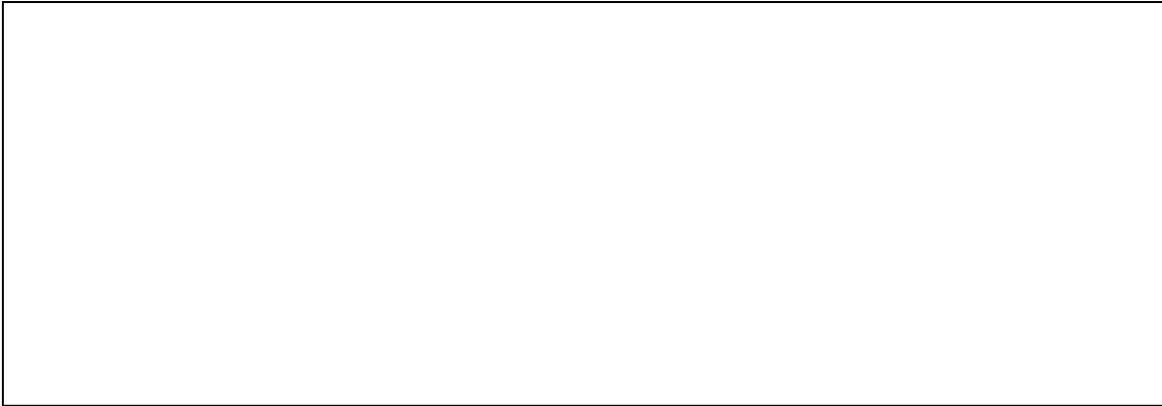
There is every chance that they have buried the *why now, why me* answer, so we need to remind them. You can either simply ask this question again or, repeat their answers and wait for them to say: "yes that is correct."

1.4 Pre-Objections

I frequently quote the phrase: "the elephant in the room," and in any sales conversation there is always an elephant in the room. What is sitting inside your buyer's head that you would really like to know, and if you knew this, not only would you be more effective in selling but you would also be more effective in helping them. Acknowledging pre-objections early in the sales conversation is the way you achieve this.

I have found the most effective way to start this conversation is to refer to common objections that you typically come across. By raising some of these concerns and asking if any would apply to them, or if they have another concern that you have not suggested, you get the opportunity to manage these objections while you are with them. The alternative is that they take their objections away with them and you have little chance of helping them manage their decision-making around these objections.

Complete inside the block on page 2 some of the common objections you normally come across when someone is considering buying your product or service.



1.5 Understand Them

You covered this during the prospecting call. How does what they do help their customers? You can either ask them again or recall what they said and ask for their confirmation that this is correct. Since you have allocated more time for the conversion conversation, you may find some benefit in delving a little deeper into this area.

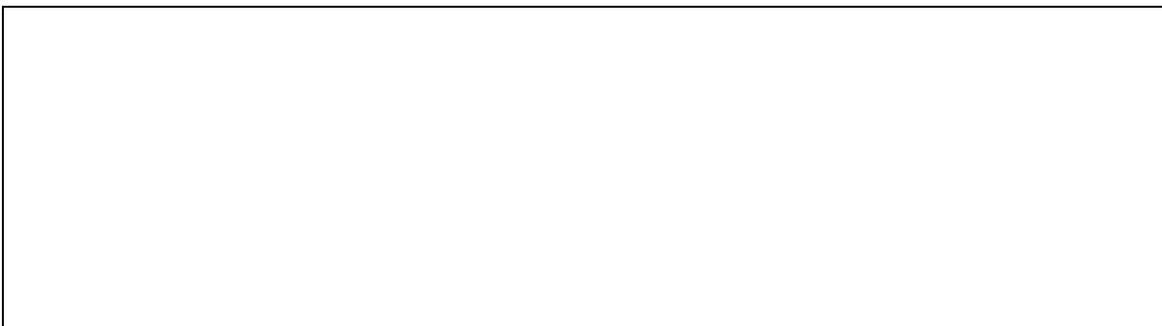
The objective of asking this question is that we need them to think of their business beyond a mere “gadget” that they are selling. Remember people using logic to differentiate between alternatives (various gadgets) but make their buying decision on emotion. Helping your customer tap into the real reason why their customers buy from them is you helping them tap into this emotional state and in turn they start placing themselves into this state which is advantageous for your own sales conversion.

STEP 2: PAIN

2.1 Transition

Now because you have a little more time, you can go a little deeper into the individual roadblocks that have been raised. I have found it beneficial to say something along the lines of: *“let’s dig a little deeper into the three most critical roadblocks that you currently have”* if you were selling insurance you could say something like: *“lets explore a little further the three areas that you feel you are most exposed ...”*, if you are selling managed IT service you could ask: *“Let’s explore a little deeper the three areas that your business is exposed to poor IT delivery ...”*

What wording will you use?



After they have identified some roadblocks then in sections 2.2 to 2.4, we want to understand these challenges in greater detail, including the actual numbers (\$'s) that are involved and the impact that these results are having on the business and/or people.

2.2 Desired Outcome or Results

For most prospects talking about the ideal future outcome is easy. Spend as much time as is necessary in this space to ensure that they get it all out. Surprisingly, many people don't get many opportunities to talk about their ideal future and when they do get this chance, they both love it and often grow their ambitions along the way. For others who have become victims of their fate and are a little downtrodden because of a lack of progress or incessant problems, this discussion can be slow to get going, but persevere.

During the conversation make plentiful use of open ended questions where you can detail both quantifiable results, such as bottom line results, as well as the more subjective outcomes like: *"how would this make you feel"*, *"what else would this allow you to do?"* etc.

During this phase of questioning, it is all about them – give them the limelight and make sure they are in a positive mind frame, where required build optimism for the future.

2.3 Reality

Again, we have covered this question in the prospect call, but only scratched the surface. We need to go a little deeper and now that your relationship has developed further, there is a greater chance that they will open with more information about the current situation.

Just like you did in 2.1, ask them about both the quantifiable results (\$'s etc.), as well as the impact that these results are having on the business and their lives right now. Your objective during this phase of questioning is to understand if there is a disconnect between their future desired state and the now. If the gap is small it is either because you have not discovered the gap yet, or it is simply very small. The chance of you converting this prospect into a customer is slim, unless there is a need for them to change something that will give them a result that is far greater than the effort and expense required in gaining this future state.

2.4 Roadblocks

In 2.1 you identified some of the primary roadblocks but you did not discuss them. Now is the time to explore them a little deeper and because you have put your prospect into a more positive mindset together with balancing their reality you will be in a better position to explore these roadblocks.

Your discussion is still very much all about them. What you would like to achieve during this questioning phase is to understand from your customer's perspective, what they see as the possible roadblocks going forward and the possible solutions. Spend time mirroring their words

and phrases and truly understand the scenario from their vantage point. Resist the temptation to solve or recommend. Your motto here is: *“first understand before being understood.”*

2.5 Summarize

Up until this point you have not told your prospect much about what you do or how you help others, it is all about them. You need to nail this. You should recap what you understand to be the conversation you have had thus far. There must be no chance that what you understand is different to what they recall about the conversation. This phase ensures that you are on the same page and for your prospect that you truly understand their situation. In terms of building both authority and trust, there is nothing more powerful and effective than your prospect genuinely believing that you 100% have heard them and understand their situation.

A suggested format for your summary questions could be as follows:

- You are wanting <x> results ...
- You understand that you have at least <x> roadblocks that are causing:
- This particular problem, and
- This is impacting on you by (\$'s, time, health, happiness etc)
- A possible solution to this problem could be

For your business, for your customer and offering type, what is the best summary questioning format to use? Complete this below:

STEP 3: PRESENT

1.1 Permission

Right now you could have used up three quarters of your meeting time with your prospect and only now are we ready to present our solution. Pitching so late in the conversation is unnatural for most of us and requires both discipline and practice to master. But there is one final set of questions to ask before presenting your solution, and this is permission. I recommend you phrase this along these lines:

- Is everything that we have covered so far making sense?
- Are you 100% comfortable with what we have discussed so far?
- Where should we go from here?

These three small questions are important as they will give you a last chance to uncover any relevant facts that may be hidden thus far; you are ensuring that your prospect is acknowledging that they are being both honest and vulnerable to you (the perfect way to build trust), and lastly you want to create the mindset in their minds that they are requesting help from you and not you selling to them. Remember, everyone wants to buy (we love buying), but no one wants to be sold to!

How are you going to word your permission questions? Complete below:

3.2 Present

I need to state the obvious here. If you have got this far and you 100% clearly understand what your prospect will benefit from, and your offering is not a match, then it is time to bail out. Do you know where they can get the solution they are after? Can you facilitate this? What you would like to avoid is taking on a customer that is not an ideal match. Invariably this creates an unhappy customer and time-consuming complications for your business. It is just a matter of you rationalizing in your mind how far off ideal you are willing to migrate.

Now is very much the time to ramp up your visual presentation skills. Do you have a visual model that you can organically present to your prospect that will help them see themselves as part of your solution? Personally, I give preference to something that you can draw out in front of them (or remotely with your drawing pad), rather than relying on a corporate developed glossy brochure. Your prospect needs to see themselves easily implementing your solution. You are the

expert in what you do, your prospect is not, so dumb it down and make it easy for them to grasp. If they want deeper technical details then they will ask specific questions which you should answer.

3.3 The Offer

Sometimes it is not always possible to present the asking price for your offering at this late stage. If your prospect has asked you about price earlier on you can only softly delay this question with stating in reply, something along the lines of: *“happy to discuss price now, but until I understand your situation better there is no way I can be sure as to exactly what you need. Are you happy for us to explore that a little deeper first and then I will present a price based on something that I know for sure will benefit you?”* Invariably they will agree, if they don't and they continue to urge you for a price at an early stage, it is better to simply state the indicative price, rather than building up resentment in your prospect.

Every buyer would like to believe that they have control of their buying decisions. If you present your offering and you give them no choice then you will be taking away from them their feeling of choice. They will believe you are in complete control and that will make them feel uneasy. How do you mitigate this?

Simply give them choice. There is some great background research about choice, like the well quoted “jam experiment”, or the TED presentation by Barry Schwartz. You can watch his [video here](#).

Here are some simple ways that you can introduce choice, obviously some of these will not apply to your offering:

- Offer different versions of your offering, maybe one has more personal support or add-on's than the other
- Offer different time frames for the delivery of your offering
- Offer different payment options
- Offer completely different options, as in we could go route A or route B

The secret about ensuring that choice works for you is that you need to ensure they are limited. Between 2 and 3 options is ideal.

If you have the opportunity to build in scarcity regarding your offering, then include this.

Do you only have a limited quantity of your widget, or limited personal time for you to implement? Is the price or package makeup about to change? Is this end of season or some legislative changes will affect future offerings? There could be a multitude of scarcity options but use them cautiously. I am not a fan of completely fabricated scarcity – scare tactics. These are often seen through very easily and can instantly destroy the trust that you have been building up thus far.

3.4 Deal?

Asking for the Deal, the request to purchase your offering is tightly interlinked with the “The Offer” explained above, but I have separated it, simply to raise the importance of how this aspect should be managed. There are really just three possible outcomes here: 1. They accept your offer and purchase; 2. They reject your offer and say no; or 3. They request a decision extension

1. **They accept your deal** – again depending on what your offering is, you really want to take their commitment right now and make it happen. No matter if you are dealing with them face-to-face or remotely (e.g. a Zoom meeting), get them to place their paw print on the “deal document”: this could be a piece of paper or an e-document. If possible, take full payment or a deposit. And confirm the details of what they get, when the start etc.

The next step is a little more difficult to implement because it runs against your normal hardwiring. Give them a chance to opt out! The bigger the purchase amount, the bigger the “buyers’ remorse” becomes, and it happens to us all. What we would like to avoid is getting a deal signed only to have it cancelled 24hours later. Once this happens you have virtually no chance of recouping the deal: it is gone.

Immediately after they have committed to the deal and they are still in the fresh memory of why they signed up, and before the “gap or need” diminishes, what you would like is to do is to ensure they commit themselves to their own commitment which is: continuing with the deal.

The question (half statement) to ask could go something along the lines of: *“<name>, is there anything that we have not sufficiently addressed now, that will make you want to regret your decision today to move forward? If there is then ideally, we should address this now while we are together.”*

What is your version? Complete below:

2. **They reject your deal** – at least you know where you stand. But you do need to understand why it is a *no* deal. Depending on the answer they give you, you can either save a whole bunch of time of not following up on them when they have no intent or capacity to buy, or you can work on your offering or their mis-understandings.

I have found the following questioning (again, half statement) to be an effective way of managing a no deal. *“Hey <their name>, I appreciate your direct feedback, no point in me blabbering on if the fit is not perfect. But just off the record, what is the real reason for your no?”* you need to remain silent after this and give them a chance to answer and if necessary to through in some short replies like: *“such as”,* or *“you mean?”* in order that you can get to the route cause, the ultimate reason for them saying no.

Going through this questioning process you may uncover some concerns that you have not uncovered yet and after addressing these, you may very well get an acceptance of your deal.

So what phrasing are you most comfortable using? Complete below:

3. **Extension** – you don’t want these, but they are common. Do they genuinely need an extension? Are they just confused? Are they really saying no, but just don’t have the gumpf to tell you directly? Is there something that you have not uncovered yet? Is this just part of their normal behaviour (common in high S, DISC profiles)

There is a 99% chance that your rapport with your prospect will be strong even with a No verdict. You have invested heavily in the relationship already and have genuinely tried your best to help them by helping them better understand themselves and you have ensured that your offering can make a positive impact on their future outcome, so now the law of reciprocity comes into play. There are two ways I recommend you manage this, try this:

“Oh <first name>, that does surprise me. Do you not value the <12-month outcome> that you stated, or do you feel that this X will just not get you there?”

Alternatively:

“that’s OK <first name>, it is not uncommon for me to get that feedback, it is after all a big decision to make. Just off the record

Or

“that’s OK <first name>, it is not uncommon for me to get that feedback, it is after all a big decision to make. In the past when I have asked customers why

they hesitated the usually say it is because , do any of these apply to you?"

Your turn again, write down some responses that could work for you.



The 3-P Consultative Sales Process needs to be adapted to suit your style and your offering. I have developed this 3-step process to suit many sales situations, but it is not possible that it will suit every situation. Please feel free to adapt the process but be cautious about removing some of the important psychological aspects of the process.

Make sure you download the 3P, Consultative Summary Sheet.