



Your Real Competition

You have visibility to only two of your four competitors ... no wonder we don't close more opportunities. TAZ

I'm not in competition with anybody but myself. My goal is to beat my last performance. Celine Dion

The truth is, there is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow men. True nobility lies in being superior to your former self. Whitney Young, civil rights leader

What? Master salespeople understand competition. They understand that competition is really captured inside four different buckets.

1st level of competition is YOU (first be best ... then be first). Will Rogers said: "Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there."

2nd level of competition is change (and there are two types of change that require a different approach).

(A) Are you competing against the loyalty that the incumbent salesperson has built with the buyer?

(B) Are you competing against human beings' natural tendency to hate change? The fact is that buyers, like most humans, don't like change. Is the change you represent more about the product features or more about the buyer organization's having to learn something new (a new functional way to work with your solution), and they are comfortable with what they have?

3rd level of competition is nontraditional (any other product or solution that is pursuing budget dollars inside your buyer organization is ultimately competing against you).

4th level of competition is traditional (the products that you consistently compete against).

So what? If a buyer asked you for a pen, would you hand him or her a watermelon? Of course not!!!! However, you are unconsciously doing that when you engage in competitive tactics that don't match against the real competitor. You are harming your reputation with the buyer (wasting his or her time) and just as important you are wasting your time (i.e. you are competing against the buyer's loyalty to the other salesperson, but your response to that situation is to compete by giving a product feature and benefit presentation!?).

Your company hired you because it believes that you will always be focused on level 1. Your superiors expect that you will be constantly working on your game ... and they were right because you are reading this book!!!!

Your company spends a lot of time and resources helping you understand the competitive products features and benefits (level 4 of competition). However, most people are not trained on how to deal with the more insidious and difficult competitors (level 2 and level 3). The ability to effectively address these levels of competition is what separates average salespeople from master salespeople.

Now what?

- 1st level of competition is YOU (first be best ... then be first). Are you reading at least two books a year and or trying at least two or three new skills a year?
- 2nd level of competition is change (and there are two types of change that require a different approach)
 - Are you competing against the incumbent salesperson (the loyalty he or she has developed with the buyer)? Your best tactic is to love your competition. Why? Because your buyer loves that salesperson. Every time you speak with the buyer, he or she will smile and be pleasant, but will never move forward with you no matter how good your presentation. Worst of all, the buyer will never really give you critical information because he or she doesn't really want you to win. So, here is a six-step plan to convert this competitive situation.
 - Whenever you're talking with the buyer, make sure you glowingly speak about the competitive salesperson: "Rick is such a great guy and what a great family."
 - Mention to the buyer that "I know you'll never buy from me as long as Rick is your salesperson. I think it's great that you have that much loyalty."
 - After five sales calls in which you were glowingly speaking of Rick, you finally say, "I know that I'm never going to sell anything to you, but I would like to build a loyal relationship with my other accounts. What is it about Rick that has made you so loyal?" The buyer isn't going to give you the sincere answer if you haven't done a good job of steps 1 and 2. When he or she tells you, make a mental note and later jot it down.
 - Four weeks later, casually say, "You know, I was thinking about your situation ... and if Rick ever gets promoted or changes jobs, then what are you going to do? I was wondering if you would consider giving me a tryout to see if I'm worthy of being your Number 2? If I were to service just this one product [worth \$75,000], Rick would still have \$500,000 worth of business, but you could see if I'm worthy of your loyalty as a backup plan for you and your business."
 - When you get the "tryout," every time you deliver something for the buyer, you ask if this matched his or her expectations, and be specific by asking "Was I responsive, on-call, and efficient?" (By the way, those were the words that the buyer used to describe Rick!!!)
 - Are you competing against pure change? The fact is that buyers, like most humans, don't like change. Is the change more about the product features or more about the buyer organization's having to learn something new and the people are comfortable with what they have.
 - If it is product features and benefits, you will need to be very clear on how this solution is better.
 - If they are not interested in changing because of the hassle of change (they have gotten comfortable with all the processes of using the competitive product; it's not really the product, it's just easy to keep using the product), then you will need to really understand what is the concern about change. Here are some examples: the fear of losing something of

value; misunderstanding of change; disbelief in change; low tolerance for change (don't want to change current comfort); risk/reward ratio is not big enough; management doesn't support change as a strategic initiative; the buyer doesn't feel pain ... and this is the big one!!! Without pain, you can't move forward!!!

- You need to be sure that you have uncovered enough pain in order to have them consider changing. Here is a great formula to use:
 - **P + V + EA = change**
 - Pain + vision (for pain removal) + ease of adoption (how easy to implement) = change

- 3rd level of competition is nontraditional (any other solution that is pursuing budget dollars inside your buyer organization could end up impacting your ability to make a sale). You don't have visibility to the needs that other departments have inside your buyer's organization. I have seen deals get lost because, at the last minute, another department politically "stole" money from my buyer's departmental budget. Your plan of action here is to ask early on, "What other purchases are you considering in the next eight months? What are other departments requesting?" You need to be prepared to talk about how your solution impacts the strategic, key business drivers for your buyer's business. What you are doing is setting up the nontraditional competitor to be viewed as a "functional" need and not a strategic need (i.e. "My solution will help you drive more revenue, whereas that other product you mentioned will only incrementally help contain costs.").
- 4th level of competition is traditional. Yes, you need to know the differences between the feature, function and benefits of your product and your competitors' product. However, you also need to watch for the overall behaviors/processes that your competition uses in order to compete against you!! For example, I had a company that was a \$50M division inside a \$5B parent company. Its next closest competitor had \$20M in sales. The competitor started flying in five of its executives (in suits) to be involved in every deal in order to show that it was committed and so that it wouldn't look so small. When caught in this situation, we counseled our client to respond to the buyers by saying, "Instead of flying all of our executives in to meet with you, we are taking that money, as well as the additional funding from our \$5B parent company, and investing it into the next version of software as well as expanding our service teams. Quite frankly, if our executives had that much time to spend flying in for every opportunity, I'd be concerned about our future innovations!!!" Within two months, the competition stopped this tactic.

Warrior Sales Monk

What are the key concepts of this topic (skill)?

Why is this topic (skill) important to me?

How can this topic (skill) be customized to my selling environment? Write down your example:

Visualize yourself using this skill in your selling environment. Now write down a specific upcoming opportunity to try this new concept or skill tomorrow, this week, or this month (it is important that you keep trying this new behavior for the next 22 days).

By not using this concept or skill, it hurts my ability to :
