



Mastering Technical Sales

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Pain and Gain and Sales Engineers

The Missing 20%

Every sales methodology out there talks about discovering the “*customer pain*”. They may actually use the PAIN word, or disguise it as a key business issue/driver – but we all know it as PAIN. As Sales Engineers, we look for that PAIN, and then present a solution to make it go away. Preferably faster, better and cheaper than anyone else can to get a competitive advantage. Yet, if all you do is focus on the PAIN – you are only doing 80% of your job. That missing 20% is the difference between a very good SE and a great SE.

The Missing 20%

The missing 20% is **GAIN**. Whenever I participate in a Sales Operations or Quarterly Business Review meeting, I always analyze the pipeline and divide it into opportunities that are driven by PAIN, and those driven by GAIN. Over the past twenty years the split has remained remarkably constant at about 80:20 in favour of PAIN over GAIN. Therefore, if the sales team pursues PAIN, they have at least an 80% chance of hitting the target. However, they’ll also miss some opportunities – which will either result in a no decision or else be won by a smarter competitor.

Explain The Difference

PAIN is exactly that. Literally, it’s “*Do something to stop the bleeding*”. It evokes an immediate and often tactical need. You’ll hear “*we’ve been hacked five times already*” or “*it costs too much / takes too long to..*” or “*we failed an audit*”. Technically that is CURRENT PAIN. A tougher variety is LATENT PAIN, when the customer either won’t admit they have a problem or else doesn’t even know that the problem exists.

GAIN is something that is strategic and future driven. ‘*We’d like to position ourselves to expand if the need arises*’ or “*We believe there will be new compliance regulations next*”

year and we want to get ready now” or “There is a major competitive advantage to getting our products out faster”.

Discovering the Difference

Naturally, the best time to uncover GAIN is during Business Value Discovery (and the earlier the better). If a customer says, *“It’s taking us too long to configure our trans-warp reverse osmotic servers (TW-ROS)”* there are many PAIN-oriented questions you can ask.

These are just a few:

- a. Tell me what you mean by too long? What would be acceptable?
- b. What is causing the delays?
- c. What is the impact of that on your department? On the organization?
- d. What would happen in the next 3 months if you don’t fix this?

Then try..

- a. Let’s move ahead six months. What would you be able to do that you can’t now?
- b. Where would those hours / heads / materials that we saved be deployed?
- c. Once your TW-ROS are being quickly lit up, what other projects could you start?

Viva La Difference

Many deals have both PAIN and GAIN. Assume that your competition is smart (enough) and they will find the PAIN as well. It is the GAIN, the emotional draw of the GAIN and the ROI attached to that GAIN which will make the difference. This is also the perfect way to introduce the Challenger Methodology into the process and use it for good instead of scaring (a.k.a rational drowning) the customer. Walk your customer into the future and let them experience the *“puppy dogs, unicorns, sunsets and walks on the beach”* that GAIN brings, as well as the immediate and pleasurable relief from PAIN.

“Those whose life is long still strive for gain, and for all mortals all things take second place to money.”

Sophocles , Greek Philosopher

Talking Points is a monthly column authored by John Care, Managing Director of Mastering Technical Sales. For more information on this and other Sales Engineering topics visit the website at www.masteringtechnicalsales.com.

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