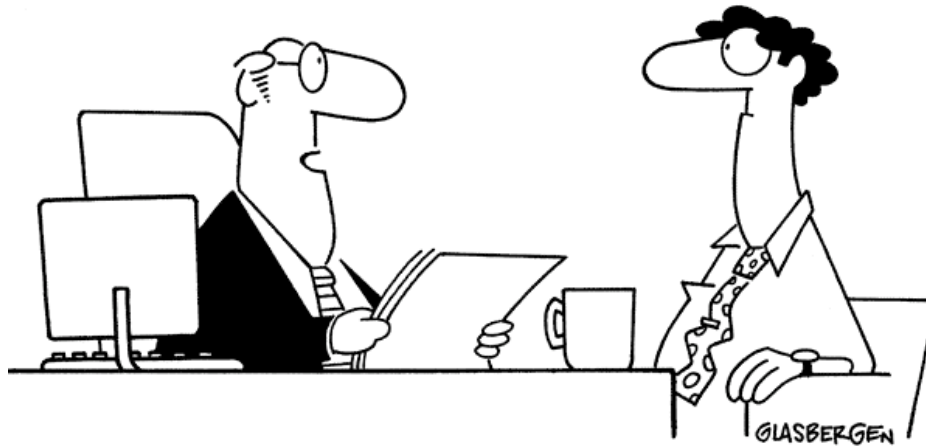


Too Early to Quote – The Secrets of Successful Proposals

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“I haven’t read your proposal yet, but I already have some great ideas on how to improve it!”

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If you are involved in business-to-business sales, sooner or later in the buying process you will need to prepare a quotation for your potential buyer.

What are quotations actually for? Why do we need to quote?

What may seem like silly questions are actually not. Pause for a moment to consider them before you continue reading.

Got the answers? Some I've encountered include:

“So that the customers know what we can do for them.”

“To inform them about the price of our offer.”

“To give more detailed info.”

...

Perhaps your answers are similar to those above. Have you noticed that these answers actually presume that you need to quote in order to communicate something you cannot (easily) communicate otherwise, for example, during the sales conversation?

What actually is the difference between a quotation and a sales conversation?

The key difference is that a quotation is a one-way communication. The seller sends it out and the buyer receives it. At that moment the seller has not the slightest idea of how the buyer will respond to it. It is impossible to know if the buyer will actually find your offer attractive, relevant, too expensive, appropriate, outrageous, whatever.

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That's why some more savvy sellers always try to present a quotation in person so that they can immediately grasp the response of the buyer and deal with it. While this certainly constitutes of an improvement, there is still a remaining problem: A quotation has a somewhat official character, i.e. what you quoted, especially the price, cannot be changed considerably anymore without losing at least some credibility.

More importantly, if quotations are made for the reasons cited earlier, then chances are that you may invite objections, which result from resistance. That's not something that we want in the buyer-seller relationship.

So the question is: How can we avoid resistance when making a quote and how can we maximize the possibility that our proposal will be accepted?

The answer is actually simple, but it requires a shift in the way we look at quotations. We suggest that instead of providing additional information with our quotations, we transform the meaning of quotations to become paper confirmations of discussions with potential buyers.

That means clarifying with the potential buyer all (!) what we want to quote before we actually prepare the proposal. And if we notice in the course of preparing the quotation that we missed out on clarifying any aspects, well, then we will have to get back to the buyer first and complete our homework.

This approach towards quotations gives the following benefits:

- **We save time** – because we stop wasting time preparing quotations that lead to objections, revisions, etc.

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- **We maintain rapport and trust** – because we only confirm what was already agreed upon
- **We increase the chance of getting the business** – because we can first (!) discuss any discrepancies between both parties' expectations and find a solution that is acceptable to both

What makes you want to prepare a quotation too early in the process? Does it give you a sense of achievement? The sense that you're getting closer to the deal? Is it the hope that the buyer will just confirm your offer and accept all points you actually haven't discussed before but stated in your quotation?

The Stop Selling! approach aims to accelerate your business through a highly efficient, completely buyer-oriented philosophy. One important part to make this a reality is how we view and deal with quotations.

Are you ready to Stop Selling! and transform quotations to confirmations? It is one stepping stone to getting more business more quickly.

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Charlie Lang is an Executive Coach and Trainer who founded Progress-U Limited in 2002. His mission is to achieve a positive change of the image of sales. He is a passionate and professional Executive Coach, Mentor Coach, Trainer, Public Speaker and Author of articles related to leadership, change management and innovative sales.

In 2004, he initiated the Master Coach Alliance (see <http://www.master-coach-alliance.com>) in Hong Kong, a network of professional Life, Business and Corporate Coaches. End of 2004, he started authoring the book "The Groupness Factor" (see <http://www.progressu.com.hk/Groupness-book.htm>) which got published in August 2005. 12 of his articles got published in publications like Human Resources, Banking Today and CareerTimes.

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