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“Dude, You’re Losin’ Me...”

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A couple weeks ago I spoke to a group of individuals seeking their next job about “wedging your foot in the door.” It’s a targeted, value-based approach (ideal for both B2B sales professionals as well as job seekers) to getting your foot in the door at a business where you otherwise do not have a connection. Among the most crucial steps in this approach is developing your value proposition: What positive, measurable result can you create for someone else?

This question presents a challenge for many people. Such was the case for Chad, who approached me after my talk. He had a diverse background, largely in information technology. “I’ve been instrumental in deploying updated systems for one employer; at another I developed new protocols for support teams...”

As he recited his background interwoven with jargon that went over my head, part of me wanted to just hold up my hand and say, “Dude, you’re losin’ me.”

Mind you, this impulse (which I withheld), was not out of indifference. Rather, it was in Chad’s focus on tasks, rather than results. Instead, I engaged Chad by pausing him and replying: “Really? You did that? WHY is that important? Can you tell me a story?”

What stories can you tell? People love stories because they can relate to them. A concise, results-focused story will enable you to emotionally connect with your prospect, and define your value proposition at the same time.

If you are seeking a job, here is a template that might help you develop a story from a previous work engagement:

“When I worked at [name of employer], we had the recurring issue of [identify the problem here], which led to [what did this problem cost in terms of time, money and/or resources]. After some evaluation, I/we [state the solution you created or identified, and thus implemented] which then [describe the outcomes that were created]. This resulted in [the measurable benefit to your employer and other stakeholders].”

How many stories or scenarios from your employment history can you develop and share? What would all of these stories then have in common?

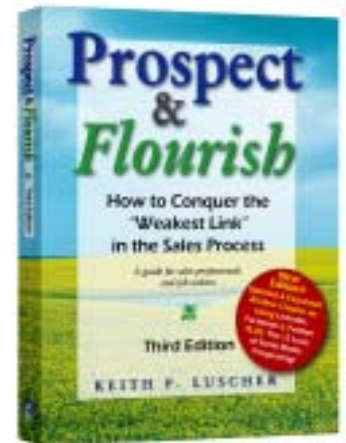
The principle is the same for sales professionals and business owners:

“Not long ago, one of our clients was facing the problem of [identify the issue here], and it was causing [articulate, in measurable terms (time, money, lost sales, etc.), what the issue was costing them]. We sat down with the client and focused in on what the real issue was, and together we [describe the solution that was implemented], which led to [state your measurable, positive results, and the impact it had on all stakeholders].”

Again, how many stories or scenarios from your service history can you develop and share? Develop three and then compare and determine what all of these stories have in common. List them out.

Important Note: This need not always be told from the negative (which is reactive in nature). It can also be told from the positive (proactive). Instead of a “problem” that is addressed, you may do yourself better by telling the story of an opportunity (which is what problems are)—indeed that should be the ultimate lesson learned: how was this problem translated into an opportunity to create a positive result?

To engage with a story is the first step. Tell your story, and then follow up with the connection: “What this means to you is...”



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