

Becoming a Seller Thought Leader

Posted At : October 27, 2012 1:32 PM | Posted By : AMZ

Related Categories: Opportunity Development, Creative Selling

In the last post I talked about the value of the Seller/Thought Leader. In this entry, we'll explore how Sellers become Thought Leaders.

There are four steps to becoming a Seller/Thought Leader.

1. Build Industry/Market Knowledge and Contacts

A Seller/Thought Leader joins industry associations and attends events, roundtables and workshops to give her a deep understanding of the challenges and growth opportunities in her area of focus. She invests in reading the analysts reports and understanding emerging best practices. She cultivates relationships with other thought leaders both inside her company and her industry who will challenge her thinking and help solidify her point of view. She is a constant learner, always seeking out opportunities to engage with customers, prospects and experts *in non-selling environments*. Most important, she focuses beyond her company. She deeply understands the *emerging strategic competitive landscape*.

2. Find Mentors

Becoming a recognized member of an industry or group is a start, but to truly become a thought leader, it is critical to find people willing to mentor you. Not simply mentors to help you build your network, but mentors who proactively work with you to build your expertise and credentials. Some of that is accomplished simply being associated with mentors of the right caliber. But, good mentors don't suffer fools or laziness. A good mentor will hold you accountable for not only growing your expertise, but also becoming innovative in your thinking. A good mentor is a collaborator who will help you articulate and then validate and promote the point of view you bring to the market.

3. Know the Prospect

Being a recognized expert is only half the battle. Creative Sellers also know how to *apply* their knowledge in real life customer environments. It is what separates them from the purely technical thought leaders. Creative Sellers add a large dose of common sense to the equation. They do this by becoming intimate with their prospect's environment. Seller/Thought Leaders use their reputation as value creators and problem solvers to gain access and enter into discovery conversations.

4. Formulate a Point of View

The most critical step to becoming a Seller/Thought Leader is packaging your company's thought leadership, your expertise and the prospect's environment to formulate a unique point of view. In the process your mentors are an invaluable way to test your thinking, refine your point of view and improve your ability to articulate it.

Becoming a Seller/Thought Leader takes time and dedication. But it is an invaluable investment for both the Seller and his employer because Seller/Thought Leaders are able to create opportunities and build competitive barriers to entry. This results in lower cost of sale and higher margins. In this economic climate, that's definitely a win win!