

HOWTO... *have great Sales Guides*

Five top tips for great Sales Guides

Who needs a Sales Guide? You do. Would you send someone on a drive to Grenoble without a map? Would you expect a pilot qualified to fly the Airbus A320 to be able to convert to the new A380 without reference to a flight manual? So why send your salespeople out selling without a Sales Guide? Whatever your offering – product, service or solution – your salespeople need a Sales Guide.

In this article we give you our five top tips for great Sales Guides.

■ 1. Talk customer

It's not about the product, it's about the customer. Where it is necessary to talk about the product, talk about its impact on the customer – that's what your salespeople are interested in. How can your offering save your customer money? How can it enable your customer to achieve that challenging business objective? How will your offering increase your customers' revenues, win them new customers, keep their customers loyal? Your Sales Guide (and all your other sales materials) must make this absolutely clear.

But do you have the answers to these questions? Are you sure your answers are complete, compelling and provable? If not then you need a process for capturing, stress-testing and monetizing your key business benefits, because without this information a Sales Guide is empty.

■ 2. Involve salespeople

You will get a better Sales Guide if your salespeople are part of the process. Using good salespeople to help produce the Sales Guide will ensure you capture what is known about how to sell this product. You need to "bottle the magic" of your best salespeople and distribute it to the wider salesforce so they can all become sales magicians.

You may feel that salespeople will resist being taken off the road to contribute to a Sales Guide. That depends on how you do it – done correctly it is a learning experience for the salesperson. At Solutions for Sales we have refined our methodology so the process of capturing this information actually delivers value to the salespeople involved in it, so we get a win-win result. In our regular surveys about 9 out of 10 salespeople report that the Solutions for Sales process was of value to them in its own right, not just for the production of the Sales Guide.

■ 3. Talk sales

Your Sales Guide needs to be in a language and style the audience will respond to. Use sales vernacular. Most formal sales methodologies have their own special terms – use these in the Sales Guide so that your sales training is reinforced. Explain things in a way that will hit home.

Ask yourself who is going to write the Sales Guide. Whatever made you think that a life-long marketeer or product person could write a good Sales Guide? The best Sales Guides are written by people with real sales experience.

■ 4. Keep it short

Salespeople do not have the time or the inclination to read pages and pages of information. They would rather be out with customers discussing their business challenges. Your Sales Guide needs to be concise. It should contain just what is needed, nothing more and nothing less.

For many companies this is the biggest challenge. There is always pressure to include another presentation, a more detailed description or the latest market report. Before you know it you have a 50-page monster that salespeople use as a doorstop.

■ 5. Tell salespeople about it

There's no value in having a great Sales Guide if no one knows about it. Market the Sales Guide. Make sure your salespeople and the salespeople in your channel know where they can get it and make sure they use it.

■ Bonus tip

Keep it up to date. At Solutions for Sales we routinely survey salespeople and they tell us that any sales material that has not been updated for 8 months is assumed to be out of date and no longer relevant. That is why the Sales Guides we produce are inclusive of updates in the first 12 months. You need to plan for updates and make sure they happen.

Get it right

It's not easy to produce an effective Sales Guide, but these tips will help you get it right. And getting it right is very important. Produce a poor Sales Guide and your salespeople will not give you a second chance.

What now?

Sales Guides are an important sales resource. You can't afford for salespeople to learn how to sell by trial and error – the errors are too expensive. Good Sales Guides earn money for your company by increasing sales success and reducing sales costs. Follow these tips and you will have better Sales Guides.

HOWTO... checklist

Five top tips for a great Sales Guide

1. Talk customer – it's not about the product, it's about the customer
2. Involve salespeople – you will get a better Sales Guide if your salespeople are part of the process
3. Talk sales – your Sales Guide needs to be in a language and style your salespeople will respond to
4. Keep it short – salespeople do not have the time or the inclination to read pages and pages
5. Tell salespeople about it – there's no value in having a great Sales Guide if nobody knows about it

Bonus tip: Keep it up to date – salespeople will assume it is no longer relevant if it has not been updated in the last 8 months

What do you think? If you have comments on this **HOWTO... sales and marketing** guide, or new ideas, questions, or requests for new guides then email us on HOWTO@solutionsforsales.com, or go to www.solutionsforsales.com