



Elaine Fletcher, Logica

Sales Life

from SolutionsforSales

Our regular feature 'Sales Life' invites senior salespeople to give their views on key sales issues.

This quarter we talk to Elaine Fletcher, Director of Business Intelligence at Logica.

What is your job title and what do you do?

As Director for Business Intelligence I am responsible for the strategy, sales and delivery of Logica's Business Intelligence services and propositions across all UK market sectors. I also manage partnerships and OEM agreements with BI partners and run the UK portion of the global Logica BI group.

What is the top sales challenge you and your team are currently facing?

This year more than ever we have experienced significant competition from large offshore providers. Our traditional BI market has been threatened so our reaction is to focus on the more bespoke areas within Business Intelligence, the projects that the big offshore organisations do not have the skills to manage. For example we have been focusing on our predictive analytics, identifying patterns and using these to create models to predict future behaviour. This is the kind of business where Logica can provide real value over and above the more general Business Intelligence providers.

"If you are trying to sell to someone you should always put yourself in their position"

What is the best piece of sales advice you've ever been given?

Many years ago one of my customers said to me "Elaine, you're good because you have one mouth and two ears, most people who try to sell to me have 10 mouths and no ears." This has always stuck with me. If you are trying to sell to someone you should always put yourself in their position. I think that you would want to be listened to and offered a solution that fixes your problem, not just sold the product the salesperson wants to sell you before they even hear what your challenges are.

Describe a memorable deal

A few years ago I was working with the fleet operation of a large global company. Their vehicles required numerous garages, storage premises and support facilities. These facilities were not being used to full capacity and so they were not very cost efficient. Logica was brought in to reduce the cost base. We came up with the idea of trying

to recover the expense by selling the spare capacity to other users. Within 9 months we had gone through a whole vertical market sector and won every deal. It became our client's fastest revenue growth sector. At first the client had not been able to see how they could release any value and could not believe that what we proposed would ever work, but after 'giving it a go' they released that there was great potential.

What is the most important thing to learn about your industry?

The only thing you can ever predict is that things will change. When you start talking to a client they will tell you what they need, this usually ends up being about 10% of what they really require. You must have an open mind and the ability to discuss and analyse the situation before starting to build the solution.

Who in your industry do you most admire?

Ralph Kimball is one of the original founding fathers of Business Intelligence. Kimball designed a way of navigating around data that is intuitive. He has great insight into the ways in which data is used and pioneered the view that data needs to be used by humans, not just computers.

Where do you get your best ideas?

Speaking one-on-one with my customers is the best way to produce new ideas. I believe that the best ideas come when your customer trusts you enough to speak openly about the challenges they are facing. New ideas require a certain amount of risk and it is only when you are comfortable enough to kiss a few frogs that you will find an idea that may be a prince.

Which do you think is most important when winning new business; technical expertise or sales skills?

You need a combination of the two but strong sales skills are essential to close the deal. You need the skills to talk with your customer about their challenges, as well as having enough technical knowledge to shape a high level solution and pass on to someone with more technical expertise when the time is right.