

## Quadrant II - Notes

**Paper Code: COG147**

**Module Name: Areas of sales Training- Company specific knowledge, Product knowledge, Industry and Market trend knowledge and Customer Education**

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### **Areas of sales training**

#### **1. Company specific knowledge**

Knowledge of your clients company means you understand their message strategy and why their product is of value. Company policies that affect their selling activities.

- 1) How to handle customer requests for price adjustments, product modifications, faster delivery & different credit terms.
- 2) Sales manuals that cover product line information & company policies.
- 3) A well prepared sales manual gives a sales representative quick answers to a customer's questions.

#### **2) Product Knowledge**

Understand what you are selling it is very important for your salesman to understand the products being sold is critical for creating strong customer relationships, building a positive brand reputation and outperforming your competition. Knowledge of the product is more than just knowing what your client offers but the various applications it has and how it is commonly used and how it can potential serve your customers clients. Product knowledge in customer service doesn't mean the salesperson or customer service representative knows everything about a product. They don't need to be an expert, but they should be able to answer basic questions about the product and how it works. Equipping your team with excellent roduct knowledge will help your company:

## **1. Build a stronger relationship with customers**

When your team gives accurate information about your products to customers, they earn the customers' trust. Knowledge of the product also makes customers believe they are dealing with employees who are experts and passionate about what they do—making your company their favorite among competitors.

## **2. Improve sales**

A deep understanding of product knowledge allows salespeople to do two key things. It allows them to customize their product offerings and suggestions to maximize satisfaction and upsells, it also enables them to quickly and accurately give the prospect what they need to make a buying decision.

## **3. Improved customer experience**

If your customer care team has in-depth product knowledge, they can help your customers easily and promptly. Customers won't have to wait on the line for the right person to address the issue, overall improving the customer experience.

For example, a customer wants to know the dimensions of a product or how fast it will go or how much it will hold. The staff should be able to answer these types of questions without referring to a manual or handbook on the product. They should be able to give a basic explanation for how it will work and how it's most often used. New product training is essential to keep up to date on changes in product lines or when new lines are added. If you wonder why product knowledge is important in sales, think of it from the customer perspective. They are trying to make a purchase decision based on facts about a product. If the salesperson cannot answer basic questions, the customer is less likely to trust anything they have to say about the product. For customer service, product knowledge training may look a little different. The person may need to be able to troubleshoot common issues the customer typically has with a product. For instance, they may not know how to put it together or how to get it to work. Basically, a customer service rep should be able to help the customer with basic problems found in the manual.

Product knowledge ensures that sales professionals can communicate effectively and enthusiastically, building trust and confidence in customer relationships. It also means they can answer questions on the spot and overcome common customer objections. In

fact, Dillard's has discovered that every hour its associates spend on product training increases their sales rate by 5 percent.

Here are some best practices for product knowledge training.

❖ **Teach sales professionals to understand their customers' needs.**

Without understanding the needs of their customers, sales professionals will be unable to identify which solutions they can offer to meet those needs. Instead of just selling a product, sales reps will be partnering with customers to solve their problems – a much more effective tactic.

**1. Use just-in-time training.**

Make sales training content and job aids available online and on multiple types of devices. If sales professionals can access product information quickly and easily, they are more likely to use it when and where they need it, even when they're on the road. Publishing training content online also makes it easier to refresh when products are updated.

**2. Provide opportunities to practice.**

Use role-plays, simulations, game mechanics and other techniques to provide opportunities for sales professionals to apply their product knowledge in real-life situations. Pair learners together so that one can practice being the customer and one can be the salesperson, practicing common objections and questions before they are in the field.

**3. Use microlearning.**

Chunk training content into bite-sized pieces: one module per product or service. Microlearning helps employees process and retain information, and limiting modules to a single topic can prevent cognitive overload. Short, bite-sized videos can demonstrate products or services quickly and effectively, providing a concrete, visual memory for salespeople to draw on later.

#### **4. Provide product refresher training.**

Make sure product knowledge training is ongoing. If sales professionals aren't selling one particular product every day, they will need reminders on what the products are and what customer problems they solve. Integrate training into your organizational culture so that employees seek training when they need it.

#### **5. Partner with marketing.**

Your marketing department likely has a great deal of collateral on the products and services your company offers. Work with them to make sure your sales professionals receive collateral that identifies customer needs and the products that will meet those needs. There's no need to reinvent the wheel when you have experts already in your company!

To be successful, sales professionals need the selling skills to communicate value and close deals. But they also need the confidence that comes from a deep understanding of customer needs and their company's offerings. Product knowledge training can transform employees from sellers to client partners

### **3). Industry and Customer Knowledge**

Understand what your customers are looking for, Great product knowledge is supported by an in-depth understanding of the industry you are in and the customers you serve.

It is not enough to train your teams about the specifics of your products, the training program need include aspects that give context to your products.

- How is this product being used by customers?
- What problem does this product solve for the customer?
- Are there trends or changes in the industry?

*Customers no longer engage a salesperson for generalized information; they are looking to sales reps to add expertise and value to their interaction.*

Here are three ways to implement industry and customer knowledge into your training program:

- Allow employees the space to spend time researching industry trends
- Ensure training includes not only who your ideal customer is, but also how your product solves that person's needs - connect the customer attributes to the product.
- Create a shared communication space where people can post key competitor observations

Infusing industry knowledge topics in your training help prepare your team for the needs of the customer. Being up to date on changes in the industry will also prepare employees to foresee possible changes that might disrupt the industry.

### **What is Customer Knowledge?**

Customer knowledge is essentially the science of knowing your customers: who they are, what motivates them, what they want, need, love, or hate. Customer knowledge takes a marketer and makes him into a psychologist. It forces you to get to know your customer as more than just a number, understanding their buying patterns and consumer needs. In today's market, you cannot successfully sell to your customers without first acquiring customer knowledge.

Back before the internet, marketers would obtain customer knowledge in person, because nobody was buying products or services over the internet. It was easy to know who was buying your products, because they had to appear in the flesh in order to shop for them, or at least speak to somebody over the phone.

#### **4) Market Trend Knowledge**

In order to keep your company ahead of the competition, it is important to utilize **market trend analysis**, or the process of evaluating changes to your market. Market trend analysis looks at how your industry started in the market, how it has grown, and where it is expected to go. For example, how cell phones first come about, how their popularity changed, and how manufacturers and retailers expect the market to change.

Therefore it is very important to provide training for the salesman related to market trend

Imagine that the first cell phone has just been released. People are excited and confused by the idea of carrying a phone outside of their home. Few people have cell phones, and some are uncertain that they will become popular. Fast forward 20 years and the streets are dominated by cell phones. A couple years later, the smartphone takes over.

### ***Phone trends***

Take a look around you today, there are smartphones, tablets, and even watches that allow you to make phone calls. This change in the communication market is an excellent example of a market trend. A **market trend** is anything that alters the market your company operates in.

### **5) Customer Education**

Your business has developed a competitive product. It's actually one of the best on the market. You have to trained your sales team to promote it in the best possible way. And customers do buy. But what happens afterward? Do your customers know how to use your product to its full potential in order to get the most value from it?

In the modern business world, too little attention is paid to **customer education**. This is despite companies (especially software vendors) releasing more technologically sophisticated and innovative products that can sometimes leave customers scratching their heads.

The simple fact is that new and exciting products require new knowledge and skills from customers. And if customers aren't educated in the uses and benefits of a product or service, they won't be able to recognize its full value.

This is why "customer education" is also thought of as "customer empowerment". Your product or service should help customers do what they do best, and do it even better than before! That is why it is very important to provide training on customer education to the salesman.

The benefits of customer training range from improved day-to-day satisfaction with a product to increased trust in the brand. But before you start planning your customer

education program, it's important to understand that it's not only new customers that need to be trained.

**Educating customers is key to success across all phases of the customer lifecycle.** Potential and newly acquired customers should be onboarded to use a product for the first time. Existing customers will continue to need education on added features, new products, or upgrades.

### **1. Improved customer satisfaction**

Imagine you've just bought a new car. It's fresh off the showroom floor, and is supposed to sport some mind-blowing new features that make driving easier and more enjoyable. The only problem is that you haven't driven in years.

Your first drive is meant to be fun, but instead, you stall repeatedly and keep confusing the windshield wipers with the air conditioning. Needless to say, you're unsatisfied with your purchase. The great shame is that there's nothing wrong with the car, you just need some training on how to use its cool features.

The point is, **customer satisfaction soars when customers are properly educated in using the product or service.** This is because they're able to take advantage of all the tools and features, without running into problems that make their user experience frustrating.

### **2. Boosted customer engagement**

Customer education improves the experience they get with your product, which in turn increases customer engagement with your brand. And of course, everyone engages more with brands they trust and enjoy.

Through this increased engagement, customers will be more likely to renew or repurchase your product. They're also more likely to spread positive word-of-mouth about your product and brand to their friends and colleagues.

### **3. Increased loyalty**

This probably won't come as much of a surprise, but satisfied and engaged customers are less likely to shop around for an alternative product or service. Why? Because they're loyal. And customer loyalty has many benefits.

Some of the benefits of customer loyalty **relate directly to ROI**, like:

- Lower costs to secure each purchase — securing repeat purchases costs companies much less in marketing spend than it does to secure a new customer.
- Improved brand advocacy through positive customer word-of-mouth and testimonials, which translates to free high-quality advertising.

#### **4. Higher quality customer support**

When companies invest in customer education, there are fewer complaints and questions to be handled by the customer support department. This is because customers are able to figure out these snags using their **product knowledge**.

Removing most minor issues from the customer support queue means that the customer support team gets to focus on the more complex issues that are still reported. And because the support team is free to assist customers with complex issues more quickly, improved customer support feeds back into increased customer satisfaction.

#### **5. A more trustworthy brand**

When customers are empowered to find useful information on products, services, and their benefits, their trust in your brand increases. They understand that you've got their back, and they value your professionalism.

And why build this trust with your customers? A trustworthy brand improves customer advocacy and repurchases, and reassures new customers that **they're in good hands**. All of this increases customer loyalty and improves ROI.