



### **The Importance of Visibility when Service Issues Arise**

Nobody in sales likes to deal with service issues. We can do everything right to win the business, yet at times we have to deal with service issues. Issues that are often beyond our control.

It can be maddening. It is like making the perfect pass in basketball and the guy misses the shot. Or, preparing a wonderful PowerPoint presentation and your computer freezes. You did everything you had to do, yet things don't always work out.

As sales professionals, our ability to deliver the goods is at the very bottom of the value hierarchy – what we call the value pyramid. It is the most basic thing we do. We intend to do it flawlessly, impeccably, and professionally. But sometimes it doesn't happen the way we planned.

Stuff happens. As sales professionals, it is our job to represent our company well. Never is our role as important or as difficult.

Too many salespeople try to avoid conflict. When conflict arises, they aren't as visible as they could be...or should be. They do what they can to side step the issues. They aren't proactive. They spend more time in the office. They don't return phone calls as quickly as they should. They just avoid the problems.

They could not make a bigger mistake.

When things go south, that is when we want to be most visible. That is when we need to be most responsive. That is when we need to be in closest contact with our clients.

Whether it is by letter, e-mail, voice mail, phone conversations, conference calls, or face-to-face meetings, now is the time to be visible. Keep your clients updated regarding progress. Give them ideas to deal with the issues. Put them in touch with internal resources. Make joint calls with managers or power figures. Send an e-mail highlighting a milestone. Surprise them with an article or idea. Just call to say hello. But stay in touch.

Face-to-face meetings are always preferred. Clients need to vent. They need to let you know how these issues are impacting them. They need to be heard. And sometimes they just need to know that you care and want to help.

*Acknowledge* what they say. Let them know you heard them, that you are empathetic and that you want to help. Encourage them to *elaborate*. Ask questions and do it in a sensitive way. Learn how they are being impacted and what needs to be done. *Reframe* their issues positively. As we say in our training programs, turn *objections* into *objectives*. And then do what you can to address the need. Don't make promises you can't keep. But assure them that you are there for them.

Remember, one of the most basic tenets in sales is to sell yourself first, the Company second and your products and services next. This is a critical time to sell yourself and your Company. As challenging as it can be, we want our clients to respect us as much in troublesome times as in good times.

So be visible. Take a few hits. It is not fun but it is important. Remember that line from *Invictus*: "My head is bloody, but unbowed."