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The Client's Agenda Drives Every Sales Call

When we ask groups why most meetings fail, one of the most common responses we get is the lack of an agenda and the tendency not to stick to it when there is one. Too often we go to meetings and find ourselves off track, or focusing in tangential issues, or not focusing on the task at hand. That is why one of the primary responsibilities of a facilitator is to keep the group on task.

The same issue manifests itself in sales calls. Not sticking to the agenda is a common trap that we all experience too often.

Establishing your agenda is very important. But it is much more important to determine the *client's* agenda. And ironically, that is one of the most common mistakes salespeople make all the time.

Many sales professionals will position their meetings with clients very effectively. They will put the clients at ease. They will introduce their colleagues. They will determine who is who on the client side. They will establish the time frame. They will explain why they are there and what they hope to accomplish. But they will forget to take the few seconds required to ask the client for their agenda.

And that's a big miss.

The sales call is a meeting. It is the client's meeting. Even if you initiate it, which is usually the case, you must treat it as *their* meeting. It is all about the client. We are there to address their needs, help them solve their problems, enable them to take advantage of their opportunities, and manage their concerns. It's all about them.

We know all that. But we still forget to determine their agenda. We are so focused on what we want to accomplish, we simply don't take the time to ask.

And this does not sit well with our clients. If there is something they want to discuss, or if they have something on their mind, or if they need to bring something to our attention and they don't have the opportunity to do that, we pay a price. They won't pay attention to us, they will wonder why we are not focusing on them, they will get angry, or at minimum disengaged, and we will fail to accomplish our objectives.

So we need to check in. If you initiate the meeting, state your agenda first, but be sure to get theirs. If they initiate the meeting, get their agenda first and then get yours. But get their agenda and address it first. The thought of a customer not hearing what you have to say because they have something on their mind is most troublesome.

If you have 2, 4, 10 or even more clients in a meeting, get everyone's agenda. In multiple-person sales calls, the guidelines suggest asking everyone to tell you who they are, what their role is in the company and **what they want to get out of the meeting.** And then do what you can to address what each person wants to discuss.

It can seem so obvious. But we all forget this much too often. A memorable cliché suggests that *involvement is the prerequisite to commitment.* Learn your client's agenda, address it thoroughly and watch how committed they will be.