

California Contract Education TAP Boot Camp

Slide 1: Unit 4 – Real-World Selling

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Slide 2: Selling contracts may not be what you think.

It's easy to think about working in contract education and wonder whether or not you'll feel a little queasy about going out and talking to clients and prospective clients. But I want to say selling contracts may not be what you think. It should never be coercion or hard sell.

Slide 3: It's about the match.

What we're really trying to do is to discover whether the needs of the client and our products and services are a good match. If they are, it's easy to sell. Because what we're doing then is saying, I can help you solve your problem. If we're not a good match for solving their problems, then we see if we can recommend someone who is.

Slide 4: People call you for two reasons.

People really call you for two reasons in contract education. I call these two reasons pain or gain. Pain means they've got a certain performance, and they want a different performance. And they're wondering whether or not you could address that pain point through training or some other method. A gain means that they've got some kind of an opportunity coming down the pipeline. And they want to know whether or not they can partner with you to realize that opportunity.

Slide 5: Is there an opportunity – or not?

So when you're going into a meeting, you're looking to see: Is there an opportunity here to serve this client or not? First thing you do is you're going to explore the client's problems or challenges or opportunity. And you're going to see whether or not in your own estimation, in the client's estimation, what you could do for them would be a good match and a good contribution.

One of the things that you want to be sure to do while you're in that conversation is to ascertain the proof of impact. And what I mean by that is this lack of

performance, or this pain point that the client has, what does it cost them to have that pain point? And the reason that this is important is that when they have that pain point, a certain amount of money is being spent, whether it's actual dollars going out, or it's just a loss in profits and productivity. And if the cost of the training is less than the cost of having the problem, it should be a very easy sale.

We also want to find out in this conversation how the decision will be made. Is it made by a single person or several people? Just so that we understand that process so that we can work with it and not against it. And I think always it's good as you begin to talk about the solution to co-create that with the client. So we're really asking, do you think this would work? What about this? Do you have ideas about solving that sort of thing? The more they engage in the creation of the solution, the more likely it is that they'll buy it when we make the proposal. And then of course, finally, we're going to take some sort of action. If we're not a good match for a client or not a good match for this particular problem, or at this particular time, then we want to just get in the door and understand that and the minute that we understand it, we can leave and let the client get back to work.

Slide 6: Exploring the client's challenges

We're going to explore all of the client's challenges. What are all of the issues? And I just like to ask the simple question, "Anything else? Anything else?" Until they finally say "No, I think we've got it all." I want to prioritize, though. Because sometimes when we have a list of four or five things we want to address, the client will say, well, these are the things and we both agree. But we forget to say what... what's the priority. And we want to know the priority because we want to solve the biggest and most important problems first. I said before in the last slide that we want to develop proof of impact--that is to discover what does it cost the client to have this problem. Now that could be a financial cost or a performance cost or an emotional cost. All those kinds of things are costs. And then we want to take a look at the problem in its organizational context. So if somebody... context so that if somebody says, we have a very high error rate, that doesn't mean the same thing on this job necessarily, as it did on the last job where somebody said that. So we want to be sure that we're really getting enough information, that we understand this problem and how it's playing out at this time in this organization. And then I like to discover how the decision is going to be made. Let's say for example, they say it's going to be made by a committee. Then in that case, when I deliver the proposal, I'll deliver five or six copies of the proposal rather than just one. So really, all we're trying to do is the good problem solving process of trying to understand: Who hurts? In what way? How could we solve it? And kind of how to go about that.

Slide 7: Making a case for proof of impact

When we're making the case for proof of impact, that is what it costs the client to have the problem, we can look at hard data--that is numbers, reports from a manufacturing plant, for example--or soft data. That would be anecdotal stories. Somebody said, "Oh, it's just a nightmare. We have this at the end of every quarter." Or we're looking for third party data, which is maybe an assessment of: in that industry, when we have that kind of problem, it generally is big, medium, or small.

Slide 8: Context for the challenge

Now we want to understand this problem in its particular context. And what I mean by that is we want to know who's affected by the program? Is it three or four individuals? Is it a team? Is it a department? Is it the end customer? Who gets hurt by this problem? And how does the likely solution, which would include training, if it does, fit into the organization's larger goals and activities? When you understand those two things, who is affected by it and how it impacts the goals of the people who are affected by it and who are responsible for the outcomes. These will be important in the sales process.

Slide 9: Find out how the 2 key decisions will be made

I like to find out how the two key decisions will be made. Now the first key decision is: Who, if anybody, will they use for the training? And I never assume when I go into make a sale that they necessarily are going to buy. So I'm listening really carefully. I don't want to waste time if they've already decided on a vendor, for example, but still have to jump through some hoops of process. I'd like to know that, so I don't waste my time there. So I want to know who's going to make the decision? What criteria will they use? And what's their timeline for deciding? Those are my three favorite questions for determining the first of the two key decisions.

Slide 10: Find out how the 2 key decisions will be made - 2

The second key decision is: What's the criteria for implementation? So if they say, "We don't have any idea," that's fine, we can figure all that out. But they may have some very specific idea. For example, it's quite common now, for people to say, "We cannot let people out of the workplace for six hours at a time. We need to let them out in two hour chunks." Well, this affects your instructor and you and therefore the cost of the training. So it's important to find these things out up front.

Slide 11: Why do all this work?

Why would you do all of this work? This consultative, collaborative selling? Of course, we can do it in many different ways. And I would say we do it because we want the client to know that we're not there to tell them what they should be doing. We're there to discover what they should be doing. And so we want to understand their problem. We want to understand their resources. We want to understand their commitment to all of this, so we know whether or not we're a good match.

Slide 12: Presenting a proposal

A couple of tips about presenting proposals. First of all present, in person. The more often you present in person, the more often you will close the sale, when you present the proposal. The second thing is, let the person know that this proposal that you're presenting--and especially if you're presenting it in person, but also if you're not--let them know that it's basically a conversation starter. You're using the proposal to check in and say, "Did I understand your problem and do these solutions make sense to you?" So it's not a done deal when they see the proposal. That's just the document you use to start making modifications. So that, very quickly, you can come to agreement about what you might do together.

Slide 13: Presenting a proposal for a solution

When you present a proposal for a solution, there's a few things that you should do. First of all, you should understand the nature of the challenge that they're facing, or the nature of the opportunity that they have. You want to describe the solution. And you want to be clear and explicit in the proposal that you have the capacity and the experience to implement that solution.

You also want to show that they have the resources to implement it. And you want to write that language into the proposal. So what do I mean by that?? For example, you might say this will take about 32 hours of training. And we've spoken with this manager, that manager to make sure that it would be possible to release people on a schedule, so that we can do this training.

You want to show that the solution is in every way sensitive to their criteria for decision making. So you talk to them about making the decision. And you want to echo back your understandings in the proposal. What you're really doing there is helping yourself and the client determine whether or not the two of you are a good match for this project.

Slide 14: Ducking questions and objections

Somewhere in this conversation, you're going to run into what I call ducking questions and objectives... objections, Objections, of course you know, the primary one is going to be price. And so you're wanting to go into that presentation of the proposal with the logic for why what you're proposing is a good value. The price is not nearly as important as your ability to prove that what you're proposing and at the price you're proposing is a good value for the dollar. But when you get what I call ducking questions, this is something a little different. This is when somebody saying something like this: "We used your facilitators in the past and we weren't exactly happy with the outcome." Well, I call it a ducking question because you feel like just ducking and not answering that question. It's uncomfortable. But what I want to say is, don't gloss over it. Instead, slow down, and inquire. Ask questions, try to learn more, and then speak to that issue.

Slide 15: To overcome an objection

To overcome an objection, there's several things that you can do. If people say, "Well, we're just not sure that the quality of the teachers will be what we're looking for," then that's the time to pull out your testimonials. That's the time to say, "I've got a client who's really satisfied, would you like to talk to them?"

If they say something that you think is not going to be valuable or workable--for example, let's say they say, "We'd like to break this down into two-hour segments rather than a one...one-day class." Why don't you say, if you know this to be true, "Look, that does seem like it would be a good idea. But we've tried it. And our experience has shown..." and then say what's true. "It seems like it would be good, but we tried it. And actually it doesn't work so well." And tell them a story of what you know about that.

Now, if you did have a problem with quality or delivery at some point, and this person is raising that because they heard it through the grapevine, I think you should meet that head on. What I would say is something like this, "You're right. We did have that issue and our clients complained and we listened. And we fixed it. Here's what we did. And here's why it is or how it is that that isn't happening at this time."

Slide 16: You have to close at some point

You have to close at some point in the sales conversation, right? So if they want it, you just say...that I like to say, "Does this make sense? Shall we do it? What do you think? This is making sense to me. Would you like to go ahead?" And very simple. No, no pressure there. If they want it, you arrange it. And if they don't, then you can ask why. It's not a sales process. It's a genuine piece of authentic human communication. "It makes sense to me, it seems like you're hesitating. And I'm wondering why that is." It's quite simple. No pressure there for you or for them. If they decide not to decide, and that's fairly common, right. One of the things that you can do at that point is go back to the proof of the impact. And say, "You told me that every quarter costs you about \$5,000 to have this problem. And I'm saying for \$5,000 worth of training, we could fix it. That means the second quarter that went by, you'd be 5000 ahead and the third quarter, you'd be \$10,000 ahead. What do you think about that?"

Slide 17: Follow-up after the sale is important

I think follow up after the sale is also really, really important. We don't want our clients to feel that because they bought something about us we're done caring. So I like to follow up. Inquire, see how it went, deliver the evaluations, talk about what it was that you learned from the instructor and the participants. This is really the beginning of the next sales cycle. It keeps the relationship between you and the client current. And it sets a great example that it's important to you to follow through, even though their check is already in the mail.

Slide 18: 10 signals that they are ready to close

So 10 signals to look for that the client's ready to close. Well, one of the obvious ones is that when they say, "Okay, let's do it." Also, if they start asking you about your other clients, this is a sign that they're... they're thinking about it. They're visualizing. They're feeling like maybe they should go forward. And they're just dealing with the natural sense of risk that's there. Of course, if they ask questions about your delivery, and your availability, so if we go down through this list.

Slide 19: 10 signals that they are ready to close - 2

And here on the next slide. What we're seeing is things that people say when they're about to say "yes." So when they're saying those things slow down, answer any questions they might have, don't panic, and don't push. They're on the verge of making a decision.

Slide 20: Your current clients are GOLD

Your current clients are worth their weight in gold. This is because they already know you, they already love you. They're so much more likely to buy from you than your next client. And they're also more likely, not only to give you repeat business, but also to recommend others to do business with you. So if you have current clients, whenever you have time to visit with clients, to call clients, to do a little something for clients, that's where that effort should start.

Slide 21: 5 ways to sell more to a client you already have

There's five ways to sell more to a client. Actually, there's more than five. But we have time to talk about five in this... in this slideshow. One is to sell them something new. The second way is to sell them an upgraded program or service. So you can say, "You know, you've been doing this XYZ training with us. But we have been doing something slightly more complex or slightly more robust with other clients and we'd like to tell you about that." The third thing that you can do is you sell them more of the same but in different venues. So maybe, for example, you're selling them the same safety class, but instead of just offering it face-to-face, you now offer it online or as a self-study. The fourth way that you can sell more to a client is to sell them other services. It is so common that we get talking to a client about one thing, like safety courses, and we forget to tell them the rest of the things that we could do for them. And then the last thing that you can do to get more business from a client is to get them to give you a referral, and 25% of your business should come from referrals. And the only way to get a referral is to ask for one.

Slide 22: Getting a client to commit to action

So when you want to get the client to commit to action, what do you do? You need to show that you want both you and the client to move forward in your language. So questions like, "What will happen between now and our next meeting?" You see how we just assume that there will be a next meeting? "Are you comfortable taking this to the decision maker?" "Do you need me to support you with anything when you take this to the committee?" "Is there anything else I can make... give you to make your sale to your boss more easy to understand?" So we're just kind of pushing, but gently. And all of that pushing or leading towards the decision should be coming out in genuinely as our offer to help them and to make it easier for them to take the next step forward.

Slide 23: Getting a client to commit to action – 2

We could say the rest of the things on the slide and I don't want to just read them to you. But what we're really looking for is: Can we get the client to commit to action? And we're feeling what it is that's holding them back and seeing whether or not there's something that we could do, we could contribute, that would help them feel safe and comfortable to take the next step.

Slide 24: Summary

So real world selling is a consultative, collaborative sales process that you engage in with the client to understand their needs. And then you design and you deploy customized training that specifically meets their needs and you always follow it up with another visit and... and... proof demonstration that you care about them and their business, not just getting a contract.