

Strategic Brief for Environmental Professionals

To Sell on Value, Master the P.R.O.C.E.S.S.

Author: Dianne P. Crocker, Principal Analyst
 Email: dcrocker@edrnet.com

To some environmental professionals, the thought of selling has negative connotations. Thinking of themselves as salespeople may conjure up unsavory images like slick TV ads that use corny slogans or gadgets to sell everything from cars to furniture to legal services. Yet, many environmental professionals have a business development role at their company. They may not wear the “business development hat” eight hours a day, but they are nonetheless tasked with bringing new business in the door. In a service organization, any one person can cost the company a project, so in essence, every employee is in sales and responsible for maintaining strong client relationships. Likewise, any interaction with a client can be a business development opportunity.



In today’s market, finding new opportunities and winning new projects are not easy feats. Competition in the Phase I environmental site assessment industry is intense—and the market pressures of recent years have only intensified. When EDR Insight surveyed environmental professionals across the country and asked them to name their top three business challenges, the results (shown in the tag cloud¹) reflected the widespread concerns about pricing wars, perceived commoditization, pressure to keep costs down in a tough economy and helping clients understand the value

proposition.

To help environmental professionals tackle these challenges head on, EDR’s Don Grauer hosted a web event on June 26th with a nationally-known sales expert at Zig Ziglar, Bryan Flanagan. For those of you who missed it, EDR Insight is pleased to provide the following summary of Bryan’s three key points.

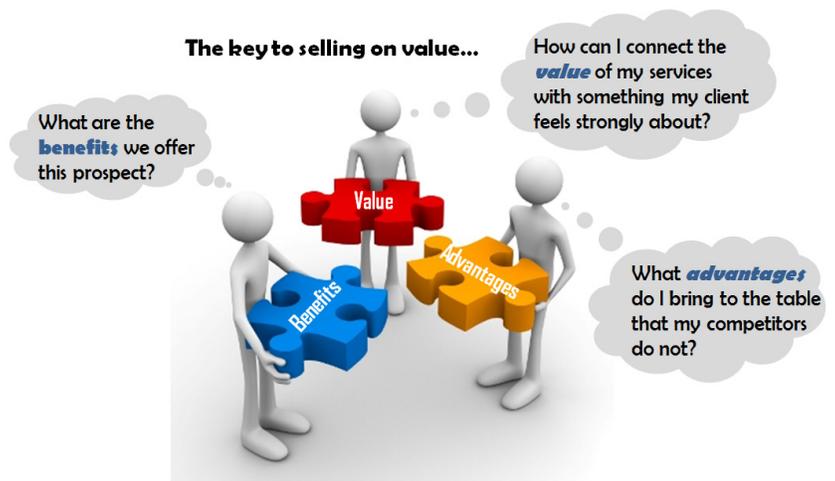
1. The Power of V – A – B

If you bring something to the table that your competitors do not, you are not offering a commodity.

Value. Advantages. Benefits. If you can learn to talk about the services you offer in terms of these three words, then you have a chance to avoid the price war—or at least make price less of a deciding factor.

Find out what prospective clients need and value most, then match your services to that. If you want to help your firm grow, then you must get more involved in this process. Winning business is not about what you offer. Rather, it is about what your service does for clients. Condition yourself to use these three words in conversations with prospects, and you will prepare them to be open to hearing a value-based message.

The key to selling on value...



2. The P.R.O.C.E.S.S. Methodology

Selling does not come down to just one cold call or one meeting. It is a process of being able to communicate with prospective clients in terms of values-advantages-benefits. Having an underlying process to follow takes pressure off the salesperson and the prospect. Zig Ziglar’s P.R.O.C.E.S.S.

¹ This tag cloud is a visual representation of the most common words appearing in the responses to this survey question. The most common words are represented in a larger font.

maps out a clear progression for identifying a prospect's needs and offering recommendations.

To identify client's needs, you are only as good as your questions and the information you receive from them. Take the spotlight off of you and your price, and put it on the prospective client. Be naturally inquisitive about the prospect, their organization, goals and obstacles. When was the last time you asked your client what their goals are? Master the art of asking probing questions. Learn about their business, needs and goals. This information then allows you to strategize on what you offer that relates to their unique business needs.



3. Lead with Need and Avoid the Price Game

“While price is important, if you learn how to sell your value, you will not have to defend your price...as often,” emphasized Flanagan. “Train yourself and your colleagues to ‘lead with need,’ to talk about your values, advantages and benefits more often. Use these three words to separate your firm. Focus on how you can help prospects move forward while your competitors are out there talking about how cheaply they can deliver a product. Do this well and you will win repeat business.”

The reality is that there will always be clients who are price shoppers. You, as a provider, might not want to play in that game. If not, you need to find out what factors other than price are important influencers to a client in making a decision. Many buy a service at a low price because they are under pressure, or they're not educated about the available options. Your job is then to educate.

To avoid competing against firms that low ball, Flanagan advises:

- Don't even quote your price until you've established your value. Fend off those who want to talk price right away by slowing down the process to find out what they want.
 - “For me to give you an accurate quote, I'd like to ask you a few questions...”
 - “In the past, what's been important to you?”
 - “Other than price, what do you make a consideration?”
- Don't go to prospects with a message on the services you offer. If you do, you will force them to make a decision based on the commodity you're selling.
 - “What have you been using? What would you like in the future? What would be the benefit to you in closing that gap?”

- Then, talk price but wrapped in a value-advantages-benefits message.
 - *“We could give you this at this low price, but you’re missing a lot.”*
 - *“We have a premium product at a fair price and it puts you in a better position. Here’s why....”*

In the end, clients will pay a little more to someone who understands their needs—and helps them meet their business goals. While it is perfectly acceptable not to be a sales professional, every environmental professional should strive to be a professional –one who can sell the value-advantages-benefits of their services.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you are tasked with prospecting and growing your firm’s business, this webinar is worth a listen. As Bryan said during the webinar, whatever you do, “Invest in your learning. You never really graduate.”

The replay will be [posted here on EDR’s Events page](#).

NOTE TO READERS:

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Questions or comments?

Dianne P. Crocker | Principal Analyst

Email: dcrocker@edrnet.com

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