

Whether you have a multi stage or a one visit sales model, you should have a consultative selling framework in place on which to base your interactions on.

Consultative selling is all about pulling out the requirements from your customer and acting as an expert in your field, recommending suitable solutions specifically for their needs and wants. As an expert it requires you to have your finger on the Pulse. Not only on the pulse of your customer's needs but also on the pulse of your industry. That's where you can demonstrate a real differentiation from the competition.

You can actually use the acronym PULSE to base your consultative selling interactions on. In order to make sure that your sales interactions and meetings are productive and focused on solution selling and adding value, it's useful to use some sort of model or approach to remember the main steps you should take. PULSE will achieve just that.

It stands for:

POSITION

UNDERSTAND

LEVERAGE

SOLUTION

and EVOLVE

Let's take a closer look at each one starting with POSITION.

Now with an initial meeting the customer can be a little unsure as to what is going to happen. He or she may not understand how you, your product or company can help them. So right up front you must establish an overall objective for the meeting or interaction. You need to show the value of the interaction and establish a basis for trust.

Your goal for this stage is to build your credibility by taking charge of the interaction and to set the expectations for the meeting.

The U stands for UNDERSTAND.

It's vital that you understand the needs of the customer and you should achieve this by asking questions to learn about the customer's business situation, problems and needs.

That doesn't mean that you interrogate them. The questions should be conversational. Remember, this is a discussion. And because it's a two-way conversation, you can also provide information to the customer as well, who is learning about you at the same time.

Your goal for this stage is to mutually define the customer's needs.

The L stands for LEVERAGE.

You need the customer to take action and they will only do this if they have a full appreciation of the impacts of the problems they are facing, or if they do nothing and take no action. Therefore you have to build some leverage. You have to build some pain.

Your customer may only perceive a "partial" problem, not being aware of the impact or consequences of either a need or a solution. Your job as an expert is to make sure that they fully understand the situation and the impacts.

You achieve this by involving the customer in exploring the impact of both needs and solutions by using questions that enable the customer to understand. Your goal for this stage is to explore problems and create urgency when appropriate.

The S is for SOLUTION.

So you've set the scene, you've unearthed the needs and wants of the buyer and you've discussed the impacts. Now is the time for you to present your solution.

At this stage your customer has a high level of understanding about their needs but is not aware of the benefits of your product or solution, so you need to discuss the pros and cons of available options and decide on the best solution. You need to focus on the benefits of the solution rather than the features and concentrate on building value throughout this stage, linking back what your solution does to address and alleviate their needs.

Also, think about the common objections that you receive and build them into your presentation. It's best if you can handle objections yourself without your customer even bringing them up.

For example, if you always receive price objections because they are the highest in the industry then focus on this, don't shy away from it. When presenting your solution explain in detail why you are the most expensive and again link it back to their needs as the **ONLY** possible solution that they should consider.

Overall, your goal at this is to gain customer acceptance by involving them in solution decision making.

And finally the E stands for EVOLVE.

At the end of each interaction you need to move the sale forward in some way. Now that could be seeking commitment for an order, the arrangement of an additional meeting to discuss your proposal or to ask the customer what the next steps are.

Either way you need to progress the sale. Both parties need to leave that interaction with knowing exactly what has happened and what needs to happen next.

Your goal at this stage is to gain the customers commitment to an action.

So there you have the PULSE model.

Position, understand, leverage, solution and evolve

Follow this as a framework for your interactions and you'll soon find that you're having far better and more productive sales meetings with your customers.