Michael Lovas

The Values Controversy

You can't give service until you learn what the client values

Scenario #1. Picture yourself launching into your regular presentation. But a minute into it, you get the sense that the people in front of you just aren't buying it. What went wrong and what can you do about it?

Scenario #2. Picture yourself talking face-to-face with a prospect. You sing the praises of your products, services and philosophy, but her wandering eyes tell you that she's lost interest. What went wrong, and what can you do?

Scenario #3. Picture yourself talking with someone about estate protection or insurance. You make your case and the person says, "I know I need it, but I still don't want it." What went wrong? What do you do?

If you can't answer those questions, you probably can't consistently give excellent service. That's because the root of all those scenarios is an agent who doesn't recognize what his prospects and clients want. He bases his presentations on his own sense of what's important.

The element we're looking at here is called "criteria." Those are your client's most important values. They are vital to you—if you want to help the prospect accomplish at least three tactical goals:

1. *Wants.* They are instrumental in turning a need into a want.
2. *Relevance.* They are your direct link to relevance-without them, your presentation and your service is probably irrelevant.
3. *Motivation.* They create a motivating link between you and the other person.

In other words, when you can learn your prospect's actual values, you will be directly connected to the exact things that he or she wants you to provide. Isn't that what service is all about?

Have you ever heard of an agent who couldn't convince a prospect to take action on something she needed? That's probably an advisor who doesn't know how to elicit someone's values.

Next, you need to avoid the three biggest dangers of focusing on values.

Major Danger 1. Does he trust you? Here's the situation: we're in a face-to-face conversation following your annuity seminar. You ask me to name my values. If I don't already trust you, I'd rather not tell you my values. I've seen this time and time again—the agent fails to build rapport, thus trust is never gained, and consequently, the agent never learns what the prospect values. Until the agent learns those values, sales won't come and service will be immaterial.

The good news is that there is a simple Universal Three-Step solution.

1. Read the person in front of you to see how to build better rapport.
2. Deliberately build rapport with that person.
3. When the rapport is strong enough, start noticing the values words used.

Major Danger 2. The "real life" value of values. In our industry, the standard communication tactic is a direct, frontal assault. In other words, if you want to know my values, you'd just ask: "Er, Mike, what are your values?" Not a good idea. As a clinical hypnotherapist, I need to learn people's values all the time. That's one of the most important tools for reigniting passion or helping them get over call reluctance. But I never ask them to name values directly. It would be a futile exercise. That's because many people do not know what their actual values are.

If not the direct approach, then what? The key to learning values is the two paragraphs above, the Universal Three-Step solution. It a simple process of building honest rapport, asking contextually appropriate questions and listening carefully to the answers. This is the process you should be using if you want to learn someone's values. And, if you want to give exemplary service, you must learn your client's values.

Major Danger 3. Installing. Installing is the most common error committed by people trying to understand someone else's values. You hear it all the time. It sounds like this: "Mike, what's important about money to you?" Why is that a major danger? Because the research shows that most people don't list "money" as one of their top values They list what money represents, or what it buys: education, self improvement, charity or accomplishment.

Here's an analogy. You ask, "Mike, what's important about worms to you?" The client answers, "OK, well, they're good for my lawn. And, they help people fish more successfully. And they eliminate heavy metals from the dirt. And boys like to scare girls with them. So, I guess they're really pretty important." That may all be true, but they still don't have a place in my values. So, the worm-related "values" the client gives you are nonsense.

Rules about values: Values have to come from the clients themselves. You can't suggest them. Clients have to tell you what their values are during a conversation when they can express them candidly. They have to express them to you in conversation, without realizing it.

Is this harder than you thought? Probably. Is it impossible? No. What's the difference between this approach and the direct approach? The direct approach will give you false answers. This approach will tell you what the client truly values most.

How can you use my values to improve your service? You can use them to deliver solutions that are relevant to the client's life. You can use them to turn the client's needs into things that they actually want, things that are more valuable to them than insurance products alone.

Note: This article is taken from Michael's workshop "Psychological Persuasion for Financial Seminars."

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