

How to Create Customer Evangelists

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The goal of most salespeople is to call on senior-level executives. However, rarely is the sales person's first point of contact in a large organization with the CEO, CFO or CIO. Usually, salespeople call at a much lower level initially. To short cut the amount of time it takes to penetrate more deeply into an organization, wise sales professionals turn their customer contacts into evangelists. At every customer interaction, they remember to:

1. Keep the message simple
2. Create memory hooks
3. Deliver it passionately

A mistake that a lot of salespeople make is to tell their clients everything they possible know about their product or service. Instead of feeling impressed, listeners often feel confused and overwhelmed, particularly if the explanation has been technical in nature. People only care about their own interests. A better approach is to keep the message simple. Less is more. Three well-supported key points that provide a solution to the customer's problems are ideal. In fact, there is research to back up the notion that people remember best in groups of

three. With a simple message, the speaker's points stand out, and customers can repeat what they have heard to others higher in the organization. If you want to turn your listeners into evangelists, remember the Rule of Three.

People have short attention spans. They are often preoccupied with things in their personal or business lives. People who want to sell their ideas to others have to make their listeners pay attention to them. Personal stories, customer examples, and analogies can make a listener remember a speaker's point years later. For example, a large corporation interested in growing their global markets while saving costs would be very impressed by the way IP Telephony has saved millions of dollars for a similar-sized corporation over a five-year span. Without memory hooks, listeners forget fifty to seventy percent of what they have heard in a matter of days. If a listener can't remember what was said because none of the points stood out, there is no way a sales-person will penetrate deeper into the organization through this particular contact.

When a speaker is passionate, it is contagious. Customers automatically listen more attentively. Their questions suddenly become about application, delivery and implementation. In fact, listeners who are excited by a speaker almost immediately share what they have heard so that others in their organization can also reap the benefits of this terrific product or service. Speakers who are passionate maintain sustained eye contact with each individual. They use powerful gestures and facial animation to help their listeners understand the importance of what they are saying. Their voice is also strong and compelling.

"To preach the gospel" related to your product or service to others on a higher level, remember three things with every client contact:

1. Keep the message simple
2. Make it memorable
3. Deliver it passionately

If client contacts understand the message, see its relevance, and remember what they have heard, they most certainly will tell others in the organization. They will not hesitate to act as a reference.

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***Question:** What advice do you have for creating customer evangelists? What have you found improves customer loyalty? We're interested in your reaction to this article. Click here – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

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