Selling Safety:
3 Key Elements Safety Pros Need to Close the Deal

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"Thinking outside of the box is difficult for some people. Keep trying."

Sales? Really??
Setting the stage

- Engaging the right people
- Building relationships
- Having influential conversations
- Finding what motivates business leaders
- Delivering safety's value to the business

Soft Selling Skills
Recognize the key elements of building relationships and having influential conversations.

Identify safety's value and be able to demonstrate to key organizational players.

Align safety's value to the motivations of upper and middle management, business function leaders, and employees to create buy-in.
The Safety/Sales Venn Diagram

Safety
- Steady salary/hourly wage
- Primary focus is safety
- People-oriented profession
- Success is contingent on others
- Must generate buy-in
- Must have business acumen
- Must understand organizational values
- Identify issues, but then convince the “buyer” that a solution is needed

Sales
- Paid commission based on performance
- Multi-faceted focus – all parts of business
What is an influential conversation?

How to talk to people, tell them about safety, and win.
What doesn’t work

- “Safety Cop”
- Asserting authority
- Showcasing credentials
- Focusing on operator error (blame)
- Technical solutions without employee engagement
- Emphasis on lagging indicators
Starting a conversation – meet new people!

Meet EVERYBODY
Starting a conversation

- Small talk is okay!
- Break the ice to move into a meaningful dialogue
- Remember names – say them often
- Be positive
  - Smile
  - Criticism falls on deaf ears, increases resistance (Carillo, 2010)
  - The effects of scare tactics are short lived (Page-Bottorff, 2016)
Starting a conversation

• Discuss the other person’s interests
• Listen, understand, and retain
• Be proactive!
  • Complaining about safety not being part of the process VS making everyone else a part of safety’s process
We need to talk about your personality…

- Insurance sales rep study (Ghazizade, Mongared & Baniasadi, 2016)
  - Extroversion
  - Conscientiousness
  - Agreeableness
  - Openness to new ideas
- It’s okay, these things are learnable!
The Power of Language
(Gadzhiyeva & Sager, 2017)

Strong Language Power
- Touching
- Decreased distance
- Forward lean
- Eye contact
- Orientation
- Higher rates of gesturing
- Positive head nods
- Positive facial expression

Weak Language Power
- Hedges (e.g. “somewhat”)
- Verbal fillers (e.g. “like”)
- Vocal hesitations (e.g. “um”)
- Polite forms (e.g. “sir”)
- Intensifiers (e.g. “really”)
- Hypercorrect grammar
- Rising intonation in declarative sentences
- Empty adjectives (e.g. “sweet,” “adorable,” “awesome”)
Influential Conversations – Key Takeaways

**Create**
Create opportunities for open, meaningful dialogue and employee engagement

**Meet**
Meet everyone in the workplace, and involve them in the safety process

**Demonstrate**
Demonstrate genuine care for people through positive conversations; discontinue scare tactics

**Recognize**
Recognize how personality affects the ability to sell, and develop the traits needed to influence through conversation

**Develop**
Develop strong language power, and perfect it through practice
Finding the value of safety

Identifying what you really bring to the table
Everyone has a different motivator

- Money
- Time
- Productivity
- Efficiency
- Sustainability
- Respect
- Safety
  - No injuries
  - No losses
  - Compliance

The goal is to get them to say yes, so start with what they want!
“What’s in it for me?”

- The “buyer” must see the value in what is being sold
- Paint the whole picture
- Build a business case
- Keep your initiatives in check
Move beyond what you know

• More than compliance
• More than just a “safer workplace”
• More than risk reduction
The Business Case

• Return on investment
  • The value of a proposed solution
  • Yield of positive results
• Injury/Incident costs are a good start
  • Costs do come out of the bottom line
  • Safety Pays Calculator

• “What is going to keep this operation doing what it’s supposed to do?”
  • To build a business case, learn the business
  • Find the immediate gains to an initiative
    • Productivity
    • Employee engagement
    • Customer satisfaction (repeat business)
    • Show gains in $$$
Keeping safety in check

- Accountability for implementation
- Business case is a check for wasted resources
- You cannot purchase a safety culture
Aligning safety’s value to the business

Your last stop before closing the sale
Anticipate opposition

- “Many employees and managers may feel a paradox exists between safety and production” (Dunlap, 2011)
- “That sounds expensive”
- “We’ve always done it this way”
- “Look, you’re a safety guy. You just don’t understand what we do.”
Paths to aligning safety’s value

- Safety Professional
- Know business
  - Decision Models
  - Cost Benefit Analyses
  - Forecasts
- Know who to engage
  - Who does this initiative affect?
  - Who can help assign value to safety?
  - How can I engage more people to help build the business case?
Engaging key players to align value

• Engage your expanded network to build the business case
  • “What’s your role?”
  • “How is your performance measured?”
  • “What keeps you up at night?”
  • “If we came up with a solution that helped with your pressure points but also created a safer workplace, would that be something you would be interested in?”
  • “Hey, ____, I could really use your expertise in ___ to help plan out this safety initiative.”

• Who can help?
  • Operations
  • Finance/Accounting
  • Human Resources
  • First-line leaders
  • Wrench-turners
  • Implementation crew
  • CEO/President

If everyone is engaged in creating the sale, who’s left to sell to?
Let’s sell safety!

Scenario

• Large apartment complex, 5 buildings, 500 units, 30 years old.
• Facilities/Engineering team – 43 employees, 3 shifts
• Recent near miss
  • HVAC tech slipped and fell on roof, within 3 feet of unguarded edge. No injury, no losses.
  • Investigation showed that all roofs have unprotected edges. Roof is smooth PVC.
  • There are some anchors for swing stages for window washing
  • Walking path to Air Handlers is slightly rougher surface but covered in slick grime from poor drainage
  • Walking path comes within 1-2 feet of edge in several places
  • Facilities team has a few full-body harnesses and some shock absorbing lanyards. None have been inspected in the last 2 years.

Possible solutions

• Guard rails
• Warning lines
• Resurface the roof
• Clean the roof
• Layout safer walking path
• Install anchor points for PFAS
  • PFAS Training

You are the safety salesperson... You got this!
• Who do we engage?
• How does that conversation go?
• What is the value, and how does it align?
Summary

01 Safety must be sold, so sell it!
02 Practice the key elements of influencing others
03 Discover safety’s value, and keep your initiatives in check
04 Expand your network, and align safety’s value to what matters to them
Read like a sales professional

• How to Win Friends and Influence People – Dale Carnegie
• The Power of Meeting New People – Debra Fine
• Actively Caring for People’s Safety, E. Scott Geller & Krista S. Geller
References


Follow Up

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