

Degrees of prospect satisfaction

100 degrees is twice as hot as 50 degrees. Right? Actually it is wrong. There is no absolute zero, only degrees of hot and cold to consider.

The same flaw is present when we determine a prospect's level of satisfaction with their current supplier. There are degrees of satisfaction and discontent.

Are you satisfied with your current supplier?

Accurately determining the satisfaction level of a prospect can be a difficult process. Customers will often substitute this difficult question with a simpler question. For example, they might ask themselves "Does my supplier return my phone calls?" "Does my supplier process my orders quickly?" or "Does my supplier take me out to lunch?" Satisfaction is determined in several different ways and means different things to different customers. In our desire for simplicity, we will substitute a complicated question for a simpler one. In Daniel Kahneman's *Thinking Fast and Slow*, he describes this process as heuristic thinking.

The opening question, if answered correctly, gives the salesperson important information. But what determines customer satisfaction? If we lead with this question, the customer will search for the most obvious criteria to determine satisfaction; returned phone calls, quick orders, and free lunches. Most salespeople do an adequate job of fulfilling this criteria.

What if they used more relevant criteria to determine satisfaction; supplier/customer synergy, profitability, or enhanced performance. Perhaps we should begin with these questions to influence the customer's notion of satisfaction:

- How has your supplier helped you achieve your business goals?
- How has your current supplier made you more competitive?
- How does your current supplier improve your profitability?

Now ask the original question...

- How satisfied are you with your current supplier?

When you preface the original question (Are you satisfied with your current supplier?) with these three questions, you establish the criteria for satisfaction. I'm guessing their answer will be different. However, be prepared to show the prospect how you can help satisfy this newly established criteria.

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