The Four Pillars of Persuasion

Two types of virus can infect a bid. The 'Hard sell' and the 'no sell'.

Beware the hard sell. Consumers hate it, salespeople die from it. Nothing turns a sale off so powerfully and so quickly as a pitch that pushes too hard. Opening lines like "Have we got a deal for you?" and "We are the biggest and best in the business" are almost guaranteed to kill a sale.

but if the 'Hard sell' is wrong, so is the 'no sell' – being so wary of appearing pushy that we simply present a lot of information and leave the customer to make up his or her own mind. Fortunately, there is a better way - the right way - to effectively and safely persuade.

> *MatchPoint helps organisations win bids, proposals and tenders. We harvest and build best practice, and provide our clients with expert resources, skills coaching and more effective ways to win. This tip will help make winning easier.*

Hard sell is just persuasion gone wrong. No sell is avoiding it completely. We need to get back to basics. We need to do four simple things right.

Firstly, people have problems or needs – that's why they look to buy things. The things they buy respond to their problems. These responses give them the benefits they want. And any evidence or proof that these responses will work properly gives them confidence to commit to purchase. And that's it. Issue – Response – Benefit – Proof. The blueprint for a persuasive offer.

And it is all you have to remember to drive the 'hard sell' and 'no sell' out of your bids. Here's how it works:

Issue: The start of every good sales process is empathy. Talk about the customer, not about yourself. Talk about their problems, their needs, their issues – show recognition, caring, understanding. And they will start to open up and listen to you.

Response: Show how your offer relates directly to, and deals with, their issues. Show them why it works for them. They will start to believe it.

Benefit: The holy grail. What is the pay-off for them? Why will their life be better for accepting your offer? Identify what's in it for them. Make them want it.

Proof: Now they've listened to you, warmed to the offer, understand how it works, and really want the benefits you have promised. But they still face the uncertainty and stress of making a decision and committing to buy. So show them it's worked a million times for others, guarantee the outcome, talk about how it worked last week for someone they know. Help them. Relieve their stress, remove their uncertainty. Give them proof.

And that is the magic formula. The four pillars of persuasion: Issue – Response– Benefit – Proof. Those things, in that order. Without these four pillars, the roof of your argument falls in. With them, the argument is strong, compelling, appealing and convincing. Make sure that all presentations and all proposals are built on these four pillars – every topic, every section, the entire submission.

Your clients buy things because they have needs and problems. You can offer them solutions that deliver the type of benefits they crave. And your track record, corporate capability or guarantees can provide them all the proof they need to give you the order.

Your job is to persuade them of this, and give them a reason to choose you. **Happy persuading!**