Why Don't I Just Write A Check?

Two Myths to Client Development: Client Control and Relationship Selling

There is no such thing as client control. If you think you can truly control other people, then you should try raising a child. Or maybe borrow one from a relative for a weekend. You'll soon find out that you can't be the boss of them. No matter how much authority you exert, they are still in complete control of their own decisions and actions.

When I first started training to the industry in 2003, I questioned the foundational premise upon which our entire industry has been built: client control and candidate control. I was the first trainer to come out and admit that it's all wrong: you can't control candidates and you can't control clients. If you think you can and are still trying, then you are wasting your time. I hate to say it, but this is the primary reason why so many recruiters are not successful in our business, and why traditional recruiter training is ineffective. If it really worked, then everyone would be a big biller by now.

I'll never forget the last vacation timeshare presentation I attended. They said it was going to last only ninety minutes, but instead ended up going on for what seemed like an entire afternoon. The self-obsessed sales rep tried to coax me into making a sizable investment in yet another week of vacation that I wouldn't have time to use. His futile efforts of trying to control me were followed by the grand entrance of the clean cut and nicely-scented sales manager, sporting shiny Ferragamos, starched shirt, dapper silk tie, and fancy French cuffs. Articulate and polished sales presentations based on the bedrock of an empty and selfish spirit may be technically correct in the precision of speech, but if there's no heart, no connection, no authenticity, and no congruence, then there will be no sale.

"Why don't I just write a check," I said to the sales manager about fifteen minutes into his review of what I had previously and repeatedly declined.

"OH! You mean for the vacation ownership package!"

"No, for your commission. Why don't I just go ahead and write out a check for the amount of your commission so I can be on my way. I just get the feeling that's all you really care about right now."

They finally gave me parole and I walked away with a vivid and memorable lesson on how not to sell. If they had found out what was important to me in a vacation, or if they had asked me to describe my ideal vacation, then that would have been a good starting point for them to showcase their value based on my needs, my desires, and my wants. They would have begun the process of showing me their value, gaining trust, and building a relationship with me. Instead, they followed a series of trite and manipulative canned and controlling sales tricks and ended up losing a customer.

Most recruiters and sales people believe that our business is built on relationships. That's only partly true. Effective selling and recruiting is based more on the transference of value more than anything.

Look at it this way. There's a hierarchy of decision-making that your prospect subconsciously processes when you try to bring them along the path from skeptical prospect to raving fan.

1. First, they look at your value proposition. "What's in it for me?" they ask themselves, and it's the question that you need to think about and plan for prior to that sales call. You have to focus on delivering clear and obvious value, whether it's real or perceived. A lot of well-intentioned recruiters and sale people spend more time on relationship building with prospects instead of value creation. Your prospects, especially senior level executives, look to surround themselves with smart people who can solve their problems. They need a problem-solver and value-creator, not another friend.

2. Second, they are looking for people they trust. After they have determined that you are worth having around from a pure value perspective, the next mental box they are looking to check is whether or not they trust you. Can they safeguard their company's secrets with you? Do they know that you will follow through on your promises?

3. Third, do they like you? Finally, we get to the part that's fun and exciting. It's the part that contributes the least to the overall client development strategy, not the most. Once they determine you are a trusted advisor and provider of value and solutions, then you get the right to come within the circle of trust and start building an agenda-free friendship. This is where the business gets exciting and heartfelt, and it's the part that most big billing recruiters relish, but only through this proper sequence of intention.

Instead of trying to control clients, you should try leading them. Forget about Client Control. Focus instead on Client Leadership. Leadership is about serving those around you; it's about taking people on a journey that ultimate leads to something that gives them a benefit. It's about leading them through a series of decisions that ultimately make them better for having known you and deciding to work with you. And when you focus on this, you'll never have to worry about having to control anyone again.

Scott Love trains, motivates and inspires recruiters to achieve greatness in the profession. Visit his online recruiter training center for tips, tools, downloads, videos, articles, instruments and quizzes that can help you bill more. www.GreatRecruiterTraining.com