



Understanding & Driving Customer Perceptions

By Suzanne Rabauer

What do your customers think of you? Better yet, do they think of you at all? Can your team answer these questions?

If you are still thinking about how to answer, you might want to consider that the costs associated with acquiring a new customer are substantially more than the cost incurred to retain one. So, you can save time and money by discovering what motivates your customers relative to selection criteria, process, and your competitors. By leveraging your customer's opinions, you will know where they stand, and as a result you can exceed their expectations, and develop a loyal customer base that will ultimately grow your business and increase the chances of success with future prospects and customers.

Win/loss analysis helps the sales team understand where they need to focus in order to refine their techniques and engage better with buyers. In addition to sales, it is also the responsibility of the marketing team to analyze the results and use their findings to help shape and understand customer perceptions.

The customer's perception is our reality. So how can you drive customer perception? Image ... Performance ... Collaboration ... Expectations ... Needs ... Personnel ... Quality ... Value ... Let's take a look.

As we talk to buyers, one thing that has become clear is that every customer has a slightly different set of criteria for quality. So, in order to meet the customer's needs and expectations, it is important to understand how they define quality and what is important to them.

It is also imperative to understand how the customer perceives value. We hear hundreds of sales stories where negotiations always come down to price. The real question is "did you understand the customer's definition of value and did you align your selling tactics around that definition"?

Clearly understanding quality and value in the customer's mind is essential to establishing the foundation for a long-term relationship.

Driving customer perception is a process of eliminating issues and/or barriers that could potentially get in the way of you delivering on the promises made to your customer and/or prospect.

You can improve your chances for success by educating customers and prospects as to the best possible options for their business environment. The net result is that you will reduce the inconsistencies that lead to losses and increase the marketing penetration in high value customer/ prospect areas.

The ultimate question to ask as you look at where and how to improve performance with customers is "do you understand the customer's perspective or are you only relying on your own internal judgment"?