

The Customer: “Know the Value before I Know It”

Buyers continue to consolidate suppliers, squeeze costs, and demand high value for every nickel they spend. High-value buyers, however, present fantastic opportunities for high-value suppliers.

“George” is the senior vice president of administration for a Fortune 50 corporation and a long-time client. He has 3,000 employees reporting to him, and thousands of suppliers sell to his company. How can he discover what kind of value each of those suppliers can offer? This is a challenge for both our client and the suppliers.

It is the suppliers’ obligation to know George’s business well enough to convince him to have a relationship with their company. George admits, however, that he does not have time to know each of the suppliers and to understand each value proposition. This leaves him in a position where he needs to discover the right information about a select number of suppliers who can bring him extraordinary value.

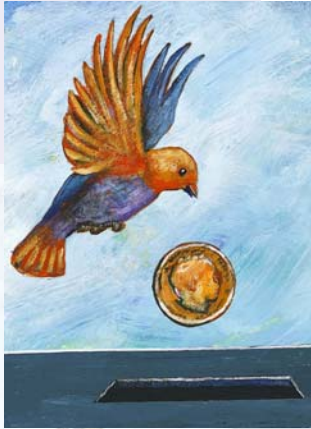
George promotes information technology in his company. He has two account managers who develop business-to-business, personal, and solution relationships with end users. These relationships provide content about value opportunities: Who is doing what? Where is the edge? From that information, the IT organization identifies the most important initiatives of their internal customers. That information, in turn, provides valuable information:

- Identifies the most critical initiatives that IT needs to focus on
- Identifies suppliers that could positively impact the key initiatives
- Evaluates suppliers and their ability to execute against the key initiatives, and the potential reward for information technology from succeeding in the initiatives

The last criterion is a critical one. George expects potential suppliers to assign superior account managers to his account. He wants a supplier’s best salespeople working on his most important initiatives. He wants them to understand and use their organization’s best practices on his priorities.



“I want my partner (selected supplier) to know the value opportunity before I know it. They win by knowing what I need. I do not see them as just another supplier.”



There is more. George wants suppliers to have intimate knowledge of their organization's research and development activities and directions, and to have broad knowledge of their company's overall capabilities—in order to serve his interests. "I want my partner (selected supplier) to know the value opportunity before I know it. They win by knowing what I need. I do not see them as just another supplier."

George is willing to treat some suppliers like customers—if those suppliers help him accomplish his business objectives and create value for both of them. For sharp sellers, this is an incredible opportunity.

Sales leaders will be eager to steer their sales teams toward the exciting opportunities represented by customers like George, but this takes some homework. To ensure that customers perceive value and benefit from each interaction, it is imperative that conversations with customers are oriented toward their business issues. Only then can sales teams align with them to deliver on the customers' value propositions.

The above client anecdote is an excerpt from the book, *Building a Successful Selling Organization*, written by Critical Path Strategies' partners. This book documents tested best practices among leading sales organizations and incorporates them into practical ways to implement high-performance, customer-focused sales strategies. To learn more, visit www.cpstrategy.com/publications.html

ABOUT CPS. Critical Path Strategies helps clients improve the effectiveness of their sales organization. Our portfolio of services addresses the strategic, organizational, and relationship issues that impact selling performance. Our powerful processes enable clients to transform their sales culture, enhance their competitive position, and accomplish strategic business initiatives. Our clients—emerging companies and members of the Fortune 500 alike—typically measure 100 to 500 times their CPS investment in revenue growth.

