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## Sell Your Promise, While Tangiblizing your Intangibles

by Kathy Ellis, Business Lab Marketing Coach

No matter what you sell (a service or product) some aspect about what you do is intangible. The more service oriented your offering, the more intangible it becomes. When your prospects cannot "try out" your product or service in advance, then the reassurances and promises you make about your offering become a significant part of your marketing effort. In this month's article we will take a look at the three main aspects of selling your promise and provide some useful tips along the way.

The three main elements of what your customer decides to buy from you are: (1) your presentation; (2) who is making the presentation; and, (3) what is being implied in your presentation.

*Tip From The Business Lab:* The first step in making a promise is to be sure you are making the right promise and to be sure you are making promises you can and will keep. Start by asking, "what do our customers really buy from us?" Make certain your promises are congruent with what your customers really buy. Use the example of perfume manufacturers to help keep you focused...perfume companies do not sell bottles of nice smelling liquid, they sell things like hope, lifestyle, ambiance, romance, etc. The next thing to do is be certain you and your company's actions support these promises. Walk your talk!

Your Presentation—How do you package your promise? How are your promises presented to your prospects? No matter how much you may fight it, your prospects will make judgements based only on appearances. In fact, the less tangible your offering, the more powerful this "appearance" judgement will be. Take a good look at all the tools you use to communicate with. What are their appearances? Have you promised high quality but present it on a poor quality brochure or sell sheet? Keep in mind that your literature speaks volumes about your company. Sloppy, poor quality, and/or errors can translate into the appearance of unprofessional, low quality, and an image of incompetence. The same is true for your team. What is their appearance and demeanor?

*Tip From The Business Lab:* Check your presentation and materials against your own vision of what your promise should "feel" and "look" like. Check your presentation and materials against your competition. Also, take a good look at the symbols and metaphors you use to communicate your promise. Are they appropriate and effective in sending the message of your promise? Any mismatches will confuse your prospects.

Who Is Presenting The Promise? From the sales rep to the overall company, you are presenting your prospects

with a credibility expectation. If the delivery of your presentation by your sales team sets expectation levels below what your prospect wants, then it matters little that the plan itself was brilliant and solved all the prospects problems. This is especially true for companies offering more intangible services such as, legal, insurance, consulting, etc. If the execution of your presentation is poor, your prospects will automatically assume there will be something "wrong" with the actual service/product.

*Tip From The Business Lab:* Start with understanding the expectation of your prospects. What is acceptable? What will it take to exceed their expectations? This of course goes back to the "what are our customers really buying from us?" question. Be certain your sales presentation addresses these issues and be certain your team has enough information and training to execute the presentation successfully. If they are on the phone, mirrors help to remind them to smile. If possible, have them tape record their presentations and review it with them. Have them complete a brief questionnaire at the end of each presentation and answer the following questions: What did I do right? What did I do wrong? What will I change for my next presentation?

What Does Your Promise Imply? The implications of your promise must be congruent with the needs of your prospect. If you promise low cost but what your prospect really needs is on-time delivery, then you will most likely miss the sale. Again, this goes back to knowing exactly what your customers are buying from you.

*Tip From The Business Lab:* Write down all the tangible and intangible benefits of your product/service. Compare these benefits against the real needs and desires of your customers (i.e., what they are really buying from you). When you have a match, make this your promise.

More Information? If you would like to learn more about tangiblizing the intangible for your customers please send an E-mail to [ideas@thebusinesslab.com](mailto:ideas@thebusinesslab.com) or fax a note on your letterhead to 281-655-9365.

Author's Note: Kathy Ellis is a Marketing Coach and the owner of The Business Lab, a full service marketing and graphic design company. We specialize in relationship marketing programs including database marketing, company brochures, client newsletters and promotional marketing materials for our clients. We share with you our FREE newsletter to showcase powerful marketing tips, techniques and ideas to help you improve your business. The Business Lab is based in Houston, TX at 281-655-9209 or by E-mail at [kathy@thebusinesslab.com](mailto:kathy@thebusinesslab.com)