

Does your selling strategy need to evolve?

Complex disruptive technologies have drastically changed the IT needs of customers. Apronics' Sales Director Richard Blewitt takes a look at how technology companies can change their sales selling approaches to adapt.



Richard Blewitt

Traditionally, IT was a cost centre in a business. As a result, the sales cycle around it was both faster and more price driven. Customers would give their IT requirements and solutions providers would fulfil these, without much additional conversation. Thanks to the proliferation of technologies that have radically changed the way we live and work, there has been a paradigm shift around the way companies use IT.

Cloud, evolving security solutions, virtualisation - the IT industry likes to throw around these terms like confetti, but how does the average business even begin to develop a realistic strategy around them? How can companies transform these disruptive new technologies into business enablers rather than intimidating buzzwords?

We're seeing the sales setting adapt in response. Businesses need help in navigating the ever-shifting technological landscape, and selling has had to step up. It's imperative that today's sales teams understand their client's core business needs and how they can add business value.

The trap

However, many sales people still fall into the trap of selling on price rather than business value, often because they lack the understanding of their client's business. Changing this requires a radical shift in thinking towards not only the way they approach clients, but how they develop relationships with them.

Often, the biggest barrier to understanding client needs is that sales teams approach organisations at the wrong level. Interfacing too far down the ladder - say, with more operationally focused managers - will not yield the depth of discussion needed to determine a company's strategic needs.

These initial discussions need to happen at a C-level tier. Clients at this level already understand trends in the marketplace - they just need assistance in turning them into real business value. It's a lot easier to come into a sales relationship from the top and work downwards than vice versa, particularly when it comes to customer buy-in.

Even at this level, many sales people make the mistake of failing to listen properly. Understanding what clients are looking for doesn't just take place at the initial discussion of business requirements, but at each and every interaction.

Seek out customer pain points

Sales people need to seek out customer pain points proactively and map how their offerings can address them, before bringing in the right skills to assist in driving those opportunities forward. Resellers and vendors that fail to do this will soon find themselves in trouble.

From our own perspective at Apronics, we achieve this by becoming entrenched in our customers' brands and becoming their advisor over the long term. It's not just about selling a one-off solution or project. It's about closely aligning with the customer on what they want to achieve and going forward from there.

Businesses don't need the cheapest iteration of a technology that might not work for them. They need guidance. It's up to the sales teams of today to create a value-driven partnership with their clients rather than the outdated seller-buyer model.

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