

Sales Tip: Romancing the Stone

By John W David

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Have some fun with this.

Have you ever had the pleasure of making calls for the purpose of getting the annual price increase? You know the ones.

Your company says it is totally necessary. After all, you want an increase, your boss wants an increase, and union membership will strike if they don't get their increase. And, of course, the shareholders want an increase. Yep. It's totally necessary.

Now, to boot, you find that your customer led the stock market today on news that it has had a banner year like no other in its history.

Yet, you know in your heart that the person you call on, the Purchasing Agent, will give you four really great reasons why you can't have a price increase.

Worse, s/he will give you four more other terrific reasons why you should actually reduce your prices.

Ever been there???

Well, first, if you're dealing with the P/A, you have to follow the money, as it were.

The person s/he ultimately reports to in the chain of command is either the VP-Production or VP-Operations.

In either event, the purpose of these two functions is the same: To produce more and better for less cost.

In other words, their part of the profit equation is to cut cost while sales and marketing is to get better pricing.

Combining the two focuses, companies believe that they can make more and more and more...

Okay. You get the picture.

The bottom line is that you are dealing with someone whose job it is, whose bonus is derived from, whose career advancement will be propelled by, and who bases her demand for her annual

increase on the money she has saved the company.

That's right. No matter how you couch it, her job is always focused on cutting cost not increasing it... in any way.

In other words, if you approach the company from the cost-reduction-people side of the ledger, you can only expect to be rebuffed at increase time. And, that's okay.

A little technique I learned by chance about twenty years ago has always stood me in great stead going into price increase time.

This is especially true where the product, the buyer / seller, and the market are very mature and where "better, faster, cheaper" are just not very likely.

I always follow the chain of command. Yes. I meet regularly with my p/a contacts. I also meet with his bosses. And, yes, I always talk up the usual added value of how the little extra in price produces a more reliable ... whatever... You know the drill.

However, I am also aware of the antipathy between Operations / Production and Marketing / Sales in any and every company.

In most cases, the only effective, harmonious meeting between the two is in the boardroom.

However, the most common disharmony between the two is on the floor and in the field. I think they like it that way.

Just as you and I try to keep our clients informed with the most up-to-date relevant information to help them in their jobs, go the extra step and meet with Customer Service, Marketing, and Sales to provide them with advantages over their competitors in dealing with their customers.

Know what, most of the information you give the cost-cutting gang never gets to the revenue-increase gang!!

When you break into marketing with high-end information that helps them with their clients, YOU become infinite value to the one department that really doesn't care about your two or three extra points at price increase time.

To them that increase probably doesn't mean as much as two tenths of one percent in their final selling price.

What you mean to them is far greater: competitive advantage, happier customers, more sales, and better priced sales. Heck, there are four benefits right there that right this minute they'd be happy to get from someone, anyone.

Further, in the boardroom, YOU and what you mean to their growth become center stage with the one side of the corporate equation that gets the most attention when setting forecasts that the shareholders and bank officials like to see.

If you haven't thought of that one, start doing so. It's huge.

So, by all means, Romance the Stone. Get as much blood from it as you can.

However, target and help the Sales, Marketing, and Customer Service people all of whom, in a

progressive company, report to VP-Marketing.

This is where you stop being a production cost and start being a marketing investment and worth every cent at increase time.

Great Selling

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