

Planning Your Territory

All sales people have a territory, an area, geographical or otherwise, that we alone are responsible for developing. We have to devise a theory for building the sales in our territory.

Sun Tzu wanted to put the traditional view of strength into a larger context. The traditional view was all about size. A bigger sales force was stronger than a smaller one. Bigger companies and better-known products are both seen as stronger. Sun Tzu sees this view as too narrow. He sees strength as coming from focus. Our relative strength depends upon the prospects on whom we choose to focus.

When we are planning our territories, we must choose how to organize our time. We must choose our prospects. We must prioritize our actions. In other words, we must manage our territory. By managing our territory, we put ourselves into a better position to win customer sales.

Sun Tzu wants us to see territory management as a competitive act. Although we may not know who our competition is, our organization or lack of it is part of the competitive battle. We are either investing our limited time poorly or well. We are either making ourselves stronger or we are making our competition stronger. There is no middle ground.

Question One:

What role do sales skills play in developing your territory?

- A. Everything depends on your selling skills.**
- B. Some territories cannot be saved no matter what your skills.**
- C. Some territories are so good that skill is not necessary.**
- D. All territories require the same selling skills.**

Everything depends on your selling skills.

From *The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- A. Everything depends on your selling skills.

A sales territory does not exist until sales skills develop it. We tend to think of the territory existing separately from our sales skills, but a territory is more than lines on a map. Those lines may define the geographic boundaries of a territory, but they define no feature within it. Prospects, accounts, product placement, reference customers and all the other features that exist in a sales territory are created by sales skill alone. None of them would exist without some one's investment of effort into a territory.

Everyone who has worked in that territory ahead of us has used his or her skills to develop that territory. Sales people shaped our territory to what it is today. They may have worked for our company, or for the competition, or for companies that are completely unrelated to our own. They all had sales skills and they all contributed to the psychological terrain in which we work.

Since our territory was shaped by sales skills in the past, our selling skills can and will reshape it in the future. Everything we do or say as sales people has impact. We decide who we visit and when. We decide what we say and how we say it. We decide how well we use our time or how poorly. We are limited only by our own imagination. No one can say what the potential of a given territory is without discussing the potential skills of the person working that territory.

Question Two:

How can you tell strong sales people from weak ones?

- A. Strong sales people are smart; weak ones dumb.**
- B. Strong sales people are experienced; weak ones are new.**
- C. Strong sales people are focused; weak ones are unfocused.**
- D. Strong sales people with large territories; weak ones have small territories.**

A focused company is superior.
A diverse company is inferior.
A single product line is easy to sell.
Many different product lines are difficult to sell.
A concentrated effort is successful.
A divided effort fails.
A small territory is strong.
A spread-out territory is weak.
A unified message works well.
A mixed message works poorly.

From The Art of Sales

Answer:

- C. Strong sales people are focused; weak ones are unfocused.

Sun Tzu redefines strength as focus. At any level of sales, focus is what separates sales strength from sales weakness. A focused sales person will consistently beat smarter salespeople and sales people with more experience.

Of course, we say “focus,” but in the original text, Sun Tzu actually just used the Chinese ideogram for the number “one” contrasting it with the character that means “divided” or “broken.” He meant “unity,” but he also meant focus, single-mindedness, and, as he described in a later chapter, concentration. He meant unity of purpose, ideas, and actions.

This importance of focus ties directly to the idea of having a sales philosophy or a sales mission as the overriding purpose of our sales efforts. We must be totally focused on our sales mission.

Question Three:

What should your sales goals be?

- A. To use your focus to win your key sales battles.**
- B. To use your focus to win most of your sales battles.**
- C. To use your focus to win every sales battle.**
- D. To use your focus to avoid sales battles.**

You can meet a hundred objections and overcome them to win sales.

This doesn't make you a great sales person.

You want to win sales without raising a single objection.

This is your highest goal.

From The Art of Sales

Answer:

- D. To use your focus to avoid sales battles.

Sun Tzu challenges our preconceptions about competition. Competition is not about conflict. Indeed, in Sun Tzu's method, conflict is the *failure* of successful sales strategy. Conflict is dangerous and destructive. We focus our efforts to avoid conflict, to prevent objections. Yes, focus can help us overcome objections, but that should not be our goal.

So, in planning our territory, we want to present our proposals in a way that objections are not created. Ideally, we want to get sales prospects agreeing with us. We don't want them feel that they are in a contest to prove us wrong.

Of course, most sales people make the mistake of talking too much, telling the prospect how they think. By saying too much, they invite disagreement and conflict. This form of selling is never productive.

A good sales person plan to present his or her proposals by asking questions and soliciting ideas. To do this successful, we have to start by being seriously curious about the people in our territory and their thinking. This ties to our sales philosophy.

Question Four:

What is the best strategy for finding prospects to sell?

- A. Find prospects who have not yet started shopping.**
- B. Find prospects through referrals.**
- C. Find prospects who will see the value of your product.**
- D. Find prospects who have made poor past decisions.**

It's best to sell before the prospect starts shopping.

The next best is to sell through referrals.

The next best is to show better value than the alternatives.

The worst is to attack a customer's past decisions.

From The Art of Sales

Answer:

- A. Sell before the prospect starts shopping.

Speed is a fundamental rule in Sun Tzu's method. We want to contact prospects before they start shopping for our type of product. Getting to prospects first allows us to work with them to define the basis for making a decision. By catching them early in the process, we can bring out the important considerations in making a decision and guide them in prioritizing them. By doing this, we not only learn about the prospect, but actually define the framework for decision-making. Every other form of selling is less desirable than this preemptive strike. This type of selling allows us to win without having to fight for the sale.

Some want to sell to prospects who have already shopped around because this seems to shorten the sales cycle. Why not have them get to know the market before we start spending time with them? This strategy actually lengthens sales cycles by creating conflict. If we don't create the decision-framework, our competitors will.

If we cannot get the prospect early in the decision-cycle, the next best prospect is one who is referred by another customer. Remember that strength comes from unity and focus. Uniting your customers is a powerful strategy.

Question Five:

If worse comes to worse and you must change a customer's mind, how do you do it?

- A. You must take the time to build your position.**
- B. You must be persistent in your arguments.**
- C. You must pressure prospects to agree.**
- D. You must never try to change a prospect's mind.**

What happens when you try to change customers' minds?
You create resistance that works against you.
First, you must prepare arguments against their decisions.
You need to find leverage to change their thinking.
This can take months.
You must be persistent enough to turn them around.
After months of talking, most prospects will still not agree.
When you can't get agreement, you become frustrated.
You try to pressure customers into agreement.
You waste your limited time trying to persuade them.
The result is that you fail to win sales.
This type of selling is a disaster.

From The Art of Sales

Answer:

- D. You must never try to change a prospect's mind.

The biggest reason that Sun Tzu preached against battling "entrenched positions" was that it was too time-consuming. It is easier to find another prospect than to try to convert one that is firmly in the competition's camp.

If we have no other prospects, we must realize that we cannot change anyone's minds. We can only work with their minds the way they are. We must focus on understanding their minds instead of changing them. Too many sales people spend too much time trying to make their poor prospects see the world the way that they do. We can't force anyone to see the world the way that we do. We can, however, quickly learn how they see the world and use our understanding to help them build on what they already know.

Question Six:

How then can you beat your competitors if you can't change customer's minds against them?

- A. You must not go after competitors; you must simply avoid them.**
- B. You must first praise your competitors and then turn against them.**
- C. You must setup a series of small competitive tests that you can win.**
- D. You must keep your competition hidden from your prospects.**

Make good use of your time.

You can win new customers.

You can do it without a single disagreement.

You can win customers away from their current suppliers.

You don't have to attack their past decisions directly.

You must focus your efforts on avoiding resistance.

You must find ways to win customers quickly.

From The Art of Sales

Answer:

- C. You must setup a series of small competitive tests that you can win.

Don't mistakenly think that Sun Tzu preaches non-competition. He wants us to confront and beat the competition. However, we must pick the time and place for that competition. Temporarily, we may build up our position with prospect before the competition arrives, but we cannot actually beat our competitors in the customer's mind until we confront them. The secret is doing this only in situations where we are certain to win.

We must prepare a series of competitive "tests" that the prospect can use to make a decision. These small tests allow the prospect to prove to him or herself the relative value of our products. Winning these little battles will give us the sale.

Question Seven:

What attitude should you have about winning the sale?

- A. You must want to win the sales you need to make quota.**
- B. You must be totally dedicated to winning the sale.**
- C. You must want to win quick sales.**
- D. You must bide your time, protect your customers, and be patient in winning sales.**

In sales, you commit everything to winning customers.
Never stop selling when you are with prospects.
You can gain the advantage if you focus.
To do this, you must plan your sales strategy.

From The Art of Sales

Answer:

- B. You must be totally dedicated to winning the sale.**

We want to avoid direct confrontations with prospects, but we are still fanatically dedicated to winning the sale. We must hate losing and love winning. We must always be looking for ways and places in which we can win a sale. Sun Tzu advises patience in the sense that we must await our opportunities, but he also wants us to love the act of competition, to revel in it, and to lust after it.

We can appear too aggressive to prospects, but we can never be too aggressive as sales people. We must aim our aggressiveness and competitiveness at the competition, not the prospect that to whom we are talking and with whom we are working. The prospect should see our energy and focus, but we should be so dedicated to making the sale that it would scare them to see it.

Our dedication to winning the sale should show up in the amount of work we are willing to do. Most sales are won because one sales person “out learns” his competitors. We must work to know what is important to the customer. We must then work to know more to find out what else the customer needs to know. We must work to make the decision for our product or service a “no-brainer” for our prospects.

Question Eight:

What information is the basis of your “sales strategy?”

- A. Your knowledge of the relative value of your product.**
- B. Your knowledge of your prospect’s goals and plans.**
- C. Your knowledge of the psychology of your prospect.**
- D. Your knowledge of the local marketplace.**

The rules for winning customers are:

If your product is ten times better, just take orders.

If your product is five times better, assume the sale.

If your product is twice as good, pick better prospects.

If your product is equal, sell only to the best prospects.

If your product is weaker, sell where competition cannot.

If your product is much weaker, find market niches.

From *The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- A. Your knowledge of the relative value of your product.

Value is not the basis of sales strength, but it is the basis of competitive selling strategy. We can target and beat much larger competitors, but we must have the right strategy. In each case, the strategy is designed to minimize conflict with prospects and create a situation where we can win sales.

Relative value is situational. An unknown product can offer tens times more value than a well known one. Our strategy must be to discover situations where our product has the dominant value. Products that are much weaker on the broad market can be much stronger in a narrow niche market. If we work in small company with an unknown product, we can still demonstrate overwhelming value.

We always have to be conscious of how we use our time. Sun Tzu’s rules of sales strategy are meant to maximize our use of time. In a situation where the value is overwhelming, just take orders. When the value is very convincing, we should assume the sale. In all other situations, we should narrow our focus in looking for prospects.

Question Nine:

Can't you win sales competition simply by working with a large well-known company?

- A. This should be your basic sales strategy.**
- B. Large companies have more competition with them.**
- C. Both large and small companies have strengths and weaknesses.**
- D. Small companies are more responsive to customer needs.**

Small companies cannot sell broad markets.
However, large companies cannot satisfy niche markets.

From The Art of Sales

Answer:

- C. Both large and small companies have strengths and weaknesses.**

Size cuts both ways. Large companies have more resources, but they also can't move or change as quickly and easily. They tailor their products and services for broad markets. They are not usually as successful responding to the individuals needs of any given customer. Small companies are closer to their customers and quicker to respond to changes in the market, but they are not as broadly known and have fewer resources.

The difference is the basis of all competition. The power of the large counters the swiftness of the small. Philosophically, Sun Tzu clearly prefers the agility of speed against power of size. Large companies, in general, are costly to support and have to charge more for their products. With agility, small companies can create situations where they have the necessary superiority in a given sale although their total resources are smaller.

The fact is that small businesses dominate most markets. Since the early sixties, the Fortune 500 have accounted for less and less of the total market and today employ less the 16% of the nation's work force. Speed is becoming increasingly important.

Question Ten:

When planning your territory, how should you think about your relationship with the territory?

- A. You should get the most out of it as soon as you can.**
- B. You should see it as a stepping stone to a better territory.**
- C. You control your territory and it supports you.**
- D. You support your territory and it controls you.**

As a sales person, you control your territory.
Your territory must support you.

From *The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- C. You control your territory and it supports you.

You have total control over your territory. A sales territory isn't geography. It is people. It is more than people. It is your relationships with people. Buying is simply the result of those relationships. There is no inherent characteristic that make a good territory or a bad one. People in our sales territory may start with a better or worse relationship with our company, but that relationship was built on what has happened in the past. The minute we take over, we begin to reshape that history for better or worse.

The other side of this equation is just as important. Our territories must support us. They must pay for our time and our efforts. If we are faithful in working to develop our territory, that territory must support us. If we know how to sell competitively and still cannot find a way to make a territory pay, we have chosen the wrong company or product. People can and do sell refrigerators to Eskimos, but is that the most productive use of our time?

Our relationship with our territory is a very personal thing. It is like a marriage, but it is a marriage with a dominant partner. As the sales person, we are always the one in control. A prospect can refuse to order, but we can sell someone or somewhere else.

Question Eleven:

How does your management of your territory affect your sales position?

- A. Good sales people are notoriously poor managers.**
- B. When your territory is well managed, you have a strong sales position.**
- C. Your job is to sell. It is your manager's job to manage the territory.**
- D. Management is in many ways easier than selling.**

Your position is strong when your territory is well managed.
Your position is weak when the territory is poorly managed.

From The Art of Sales

Answer:

- B. When your territory is well managed, you have a strong sales position.

Every sales person must also be a manager. We make most of the important decisions that affect our success. Our sales managers make very few of those decisions for us. We decide how and where we spend our time. We must set aside time for territory planning and management.

This is very difficult for many sales people to do. Many go into sales because they want freedom. Unfortunately, these people are never going to be among the most successful in sales.

A well managed territory puts us in a position of strength. Customers sense it when we know our priorities and where we have to be next. They are more comfortable buying from us when we know what we are doing and why.

A big part of territory management is reliability. Customers need to know that they can depend on us. Successful people are well organized and have clear priorities. If we behave like successful people, our customers will want to share in our success.

Question Twelve:

What common mistakes do sales people make in planning their territories?

- A. They are too optimistic about who will buy from them.**
- B. They are too pessimistic in thinking no one will buy from them.**
- C. They want new and different customers and products.**
- D. They are at once too optimistic, too pessimistic, and frustrated with existing prospects and products.**

Poor territory management creates problems for sales people in three ways.

Ignorant of which prospect are good, you try to sell to everyone.

Ignorant of which prospects are bad, you are discouraged from selling anyone.

You tie yourself up in knots.

Ignorant of sales management, you want different prospects.

You think you are in the wrong market.

This undermines the effectiveness of your efforts.

From The Art of Sales

Answer:

D. They are at once too optimistic, too pessimistic, and frustrated with existing prospects and products.

Selling is an emotional job. Sales people tend to be more emotional than methodical. What happened in the last ten minutes is often more important to our state of mind than what has been happening over the last six months. This confusion makes it very difficult for us to sell successfully day in and day out.

Our plan on calling on people can not depend on our emotional state. We must methodically plan it out and methodically execute out plan. We must evaluate our performance over longer spans of time. We have to be careful of our time, consistent in our behavior and methodical in following our sales process.

Question Twelve:

What does controlling your territory mean?

- A. It means that sales people have control of their time.**
- B. It means that you are free sell who and when you want.**
- C. It means that you can set the correct priorities.**
- D. It means that you can control your customers.**

**You must understand your priorities in selling.
You cannot sell whoever and whenever you feel like it.
This creates weak customer relationships.**

From The Art of Sales

Answer:

- C. It means that you can set the correct priorities.

We control our territories by prioritizing how we spend our time. We have very limited freedom to sell who and when we want. The “who we sell” is determined by who is most likely to buy our products with the smallest investment in time. The “when” is all the time.

Too many sales people abuse their freedom and the control of their territories. They gravitate toward the friendly prospects, the prospects that are easily accessed, and the obvious prospects. They really want to find the “easy” prospects, but they aren’t willing to do the hard work necessary to win the truly easy prospects. In the real world, it takes us a lot of hard work to make selling easy.

Sales people are known as “greedy,” but often they are not greedy enough. Greed keeps us focused on winning sales. Winning sales is the only true measure of our success. Too many sales people are just as motivated by ego, their desire to be liked, or, in too many cases, simple laziness.

If we know our priorities, our customers and prospects can understand them. Their understanding of our priorities (and ours of theirs) creates strong, productive relationships.

Question thirteen:

What is the worst result of disorganization in the way you service your territory?

- A. You will gradually develop better habits.**
- B. Your competition will get more sales.**
- C. Your customers will complain about you.**
- D. Your sales manager will replace you.**

You confuse your prospects and create distrust.
This invites the competition to win away your customers.
A disorganized territory destroys your chances of success.

From The Art of Sales

Answer:

- B. Your competition will get more sales.**

Some sales people are strong enough to get by for years with poor organization and planning skills. They do well enough to keep their jobs. Their customers like them well enough. It is just that they never are as successful as they might have been. They have to deal with more than their share of problems. The reason is that they have created stronger competition for themselves.

Sun Tzu saw that we are all in a daily battle with our competitors. We may never see those competitors. We never debate them in a sales presentation. We may never hear about them. We may not even know whom the real competition for a customer's buying dollar is. Still, they are always there. They are always active. They are working every minute to take those customer dollars away from us.

Sun Tzu's method for succeeding is distinctive because of its competitive focus. We may suffer, our company may suffer, and even our customer suffer if we poorly manage our territories, but, more importantly, our competition benefits. Our competition grows stronger. Over the weeks, months and years we spend in competition, building up our competitors leads only to our eventual failure. Our actions must weaken our competition over time, ~~not~~ strengthen it.

Question Fifteen:

With which of the five key elements discussed in chapter one is this chapter primarily concerned?

- A. The qualities of a leader.**
- B. The nature of the marketplace.**
- C. Your sales attitude.**
- D. Your sales philosophy.**

You must know five things to win customers.

You must know which prospects to sell and which prospects to avoid.

You must know when to sell big and when to sell small.

You must know how to share your customers' goals.

You must know how to turn problems into opportunities.

You must know when to work your customers and when to leave them alone.

Master these five categories of knowledge.

You then know the philosophy of winning sales.

From The Art of Sales

Answer:

- D. Your sales philosophy.

Remember that Sun Tzu's view of a sales philosophy is sharing your customer's goals and success. We don't plan our territories for our interests. We plan them to help our customers.

We started this chapter talking about the advantages of focus. Focus comes from our philosophy. We ended the chapter putting that focus into practice by prioritizing and planning the management of our territory. This makes our philosophy concrete. We visit certain prospects at certain times because they need us. We are dependable because it makes prospects comfortable buying. We are more organized than the competition because it is a key way in which we beat them.

We must never forget that sales is a service business. We serve our territories by being good caretakers and managers.

Question Eighteen:

What is the basis for Sun Tzu's theory about how to plan your territory?

- A. It is a theory of strength and focus.**
- B. It is a theory of control.**
- C. It is a theory of management and speed.**
- D. It is a theory of knowledge.**

Pay attention:

Know your products and your prospects.

If you do, you can win sales in any situation.

You may know your products, but not know your prospects.

Then, for every sale you make, you will lose another.

You may know neither your products nor your prospects.

Then, you will lose every sale.

From The Art of Sales

Answer:

- C. It is a theory of knowledge.

Although we have been talking about focus, strength, speed, management, and control, Sun Tzu reminds us at the close that this is all really about knowledge. We have to know our focus, our shared goal. We have to know our products and their value. We have to know our prospects and customers. We have to know the right tactics to use relative to the competition. We have to know how to prioritize our actions.

Our job in selling is to bring two types of knowledge together. We must know our products, their value compared with the competition, and the ways in which our products can meet customer needs. We must also know our customers, who they are, where they are, and what their needs are. Our job is to bring together these two forms of knowledge together. Our knowledge of customers must make us more effective in communicating our knowledge of products.