

**Hotel & Motel Management\
The Sales Clinic
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BUILD YOUR GROUP SALES VIA CONSULTATIVE SELLING

As a sales professional, if you have the experience, knowledge, and confidence, regarding your ability to be good at what you do, then you need to get into the business of consultative selling. This is not a new concept. Sales people have been providing advice to prospects every time in making a sale, but perhaps most have not considered themselves as consultants.

A consultant is someone who provides professional or technical advice. Every hospitality sales person is really a consultant, but perhaps we do not go about our business as such. Perhaps we are too intent on selling something that we forget to provide advice and counsel. One of the biggest complaints meeting planners have had over the years is that some sales people are so aggressive about making a sale that they forget to find out if the meeting planner is really a prospect. There is no point in trying to hit someone over the head with knowledge of a product unless that person is a prospect for the property.

One characteristic of a good consultant is being able to listen intelligently. Unless you know and understand the needs of the individual or group, you cannot figure out how to help them. A consultant asks specific questions to determine needs or wants, and then listens intelligently to look for clues and “hot buttons”. Next, he relates to the response by providing specific information that meets those needs or wants. When you think about it, providing professional or technical information or advice really is just sales.

Before you try to sell your lodging or meeting facility, you need to find out as much as you can about the individual or group; and it is not question of only “googling” or searching the Internet to get the information you want. You need to get more involved with the prospect, personally, if you want to provide consultative services. For example, in the case of a meeting planners looking for an appropriate location for a meeting, think about asking question that make the person analyze,

speculate and evaluate. Also, some questions that stimulate emotion will help draw out feelings from the prospect. These feelings will provide you with clues to help show the prospect the benefits of using your property.

Ask more than yes or no questions, such as: “Tell me what is most important to your group in the selection of a property”, or “Please tell me what you liked best about your last meeting”. Questions like these keep the prospect talking, gets you to listen, and keeps you from doing too much talking (a great big fault of most sales people)

The important thing about being a consultant is solving people’s problems; helping them make decisions, and getting them to feel comfortable about having you around. Building long-term relationships is very important in consultative selling. Maintaining good contact with key prospects over a long period of time, and letting them know they can call on you anytime for advice (even if they are not booking your property) makes you a better consultant.

Build your network of contacts, and be reliable, trustworthy, honest, informative, helpful and loyal. Getting into the consultative-selling process will do more for you in confirming sales than anything else.

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