

# SELF-WORTH IN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND SALES

## INTRODUCTION

Having spent 20 years coaching professionals in business-development and sales, I'm frequently struck by how the way in which they value **themselves** influences every conversation they have with prospects. To cite just one example, many people go into meetings with customers with the overriding motive of being *impressive* and of *proving themselves*. While this approach may at times succeed, more often than not it hampers the development of real trust.

The purpose of this article is to give a short resumé of how a self-worth approach to marketing and sales is fundamentally different from a "proving-ourselves" approach, and brings fresh life and energy to anyone who is involved in business-development. If you would like to know more, I suggest you follow some of the Self-Worth Academy webinars, or get in touch directly.

## SALES:

Let's assume you have a meeting with a prospective customer tomorrow. How will you conduct that meeting?

The sales-professional who is driven by self-esteem (as many so often are) will naturally desire to *impress*. He or she will be rehearsing all the features and benefits of the product, or the unique aspects of the methodology or service they are offering. Perhaps there are some impressive materials or presentations being prepared today. Stories are rehearsed, statistics collected, counter-arguments prepared to deal with any objections or awkward questions that may arise tomorrow.

If motivated by self-worth, a sales-professional may still do most or all of these preparatory things. However, as they walk in through the customer's door tomorrow, their motivation is subtly different. Their focus is on having a really *useful* meeting with the customer, rather than a desire to impress. Therefore, they are thinking primarily about the *customer's* situation and issues, not about themselves and their solutions.

Is this just idealistic make-believe, far removed from the tough reality of today's marketplace? Emphatically not. Having worked for years alongside some of the world's top professionals and salespeople, I've noticed one characteristic over and over: the ability to tune in to what is of most **value** to the customer.

You simply cannot do this if you do not have self-worth. If you crave validation or approval too much, this diminishes your capacity to seek out value. Here are some of the behaviours that result:

- Talking too much, too soon;
- Telling stories that have no relevance to the customer;
- Going into one's prepared presentation or story at the earliest possible opportunity;
- Discussing prices before value (or even budget) has been established;
- Building a relationship (and writing a proposal) with the wrong person;
- Generally, behaving more as customer-servant than a customer-partner.

## PRICING:

The same pattern plays out when it comes to the question: “How much will this cost?”. The self-esteem based professional will seek to justify the price based on the quality / service / brand / track-record of the product or service been offered. The self-worth based professional has at least five advantages:

- a) They can insist on knowing a bit more, before they are in a position to quote a price or a fee. Even if pushed, they do not behave as customer-servant.
- b) Drawing on their experience of the marketplace, they can fine-tune / tweak the customer’s requirements. In this way, they build credibility – even before price gets discussed.
- c) They can map out options and budget, tailoring these to the customer’s situation, before quoting a fee or doing a proposal/quotation.
- d) When required to justify a price, they do so by reference to the benefits conferred (rather than just quality / service / time / track-record) plus the risks of inadequate investment.
- e) All the time, they use their questioning approach to make sure they are having this dialogue with the right people.

One of the joys of my business-coaching work is watching how self-worth grows via the exercise of these skills. As a professional gets fluent in value-centred selling and pricing, they come to value themselves more deeply, which in turn enhances their capacity for the next prospect meeting. It’s a virtuous circle.

## GETTING INTRODUCTIONS AND REFERRALS

So how do these prospect meetings get set up? For a larger company, there may be an entire department whose job it is to generate leads. Even here nevertheless, introductions and referrals often play a large part in lead-generation. For the SME or solo professional, personal introductions are often the foundations upon which a large part of their business is built.

Nevertheless, here lies a paradox. Even when referrals often account for over 80pc of new business leads, very few professionals *proactively* seek referrals. The majority feel awkward doing so. Some believe that a referral should happen spontaneously: that any attempt to initiate referrals will just jinx a natural process. Others feel sickened by how certain sales professionals (like the stereotypical insurance salesman) seek introductions to each of your family members, so they certainly don’t ever want to come across in that way.

With self-worth, several new avenues open up. We don’t just have to seek introductions to “sell”: we can also seek introductions to **explore** changes in the marketplace (of which there are always many), or to find new ways to be of service and bring benefit. Neither of these are *self-centred* motives, they are *value-centred* approaches firmly and genuinely anchored on an attitude of **usefulness**. With that understanding, you can seek a meeting with anybody.

Furthermore, that meeting will be more productive. Naturally, there may be some suspicion at the beginning (e.g. “What are you trying to sell me?”) so you may have to explain your motivation a little. For example, you might be...

- Doing some research about a problem you have encountered at several customer sites
- Researching your own potential change of direction, or adaptations you want to make to current

- offerings in order to be more useful
- Seeking to understand the knock-on effects of a regulation change or a quality issue
  - Trying to anticipate a future trend

Whatever approach is right for you, I notice how a sense of self-worth allows a professional to be more *proactive*. They ask questions that they never asked before. They set up meetings that they would previously not have set up. They discover niches in which their product or service is often more highly valued.

## OTHER APPROACHES TO MARKETING

So far, we have focused on just one route to market: referrals and introductions. But there are also many more – in which self-worth is a real game-changer. For example:

- Setting up worthwhile partnerships
- Getting repeat business
- Providing resources of value
- Designing a human-friendly keep-in-touch system
- Value-centred thought leadership

Across each of these, self-worth frees us from self-preoccupation and empowers us to be more creative. We bounce back more quickly from setbacks and discover the confidence that we are developing and growing. We are more productive, because we are not burning up energy day to day trying to “prove ourselves”.

## SUPPORTING OTHER PEOPLE

Business-development can become an energy-draining aspect of professional life. It is therefore valuable to have someone who can give you fresh perspective and support you to re-energise your approach to market. You may be able to find that with a partner or another experienced professional. If you would like to set up a (no-obligation) Skype or Zoom call, my email is [John@SelfWorthAcademy.com](mailto:John@SelfWorthAcademy.com)