

Change Your Mindset: Service not Sales

By Katie Bryant, CLM

The way organizations buy has dramatically changed in recent years, creating the need for a consistent, resourceful approach to business development. Nearly every ALA member is directly responsible or involved in the source selection process and having great business partnerships is critical to their firm's success. Relationships are the foundation for sustained revenue results. It's about being authentic, generous, and intentional. Your mindset as to how you develop these relationships cannot be one that comes from a desire to sell or the "get". By shifting the focus from selling to serving will give members what they need to solve their problems and build your credibility as a trusted resource and partner. But how?

1. Listen – The average ALA member is responsible for nearly 100 business partnerships for their firm, so ditch the script or traditional sales pitch. Establish and open dialogue with the goal of an authentic connections. Ask good questions and listen to the answers. Look for opportunities to offer help.
2. Seek to understand – let the member know they are being heard by becoming knowledgeable about their big picture situation (priorities, goals, and objectives). Reference other customers you have in similar situations. ALA members rate member reference as a leading reason for their source selection, so create ALA advocates among your customer base.
3. Provide solutions – if a business partner listens to a member's problems they can provide a range of possible solutions. This range may or may not include the business partner's product or service, but it might also include an introduction to another business partner or the sharing of insight that will help the member advance their goals. By embracing this type of generosity in a targeted way, it creates a positive experience, builds your reputation as resourceful and client-focused, and will lead to referrals and sales down the road
4. Plant seeds – focus on the long game. Some sourcing decisions can have 18-24-month decision-making cycles. By establishing themselves as a resource, a business partner will be able to anticipate future solutions through conversations that engage members on a deeper level. Abandon the "pain point" selling philosophy to create a quick purchasing decision. This is rarely in the member's best interest and creates those negative "vendor" stereotypes. Rather, think service instead of sales which will create an experience that focuses on generosity and providing solutions to problems that need to be solved. Become a student of ALA and learn the topics and issues our member firms are facing each day. ALAnet.org and Legal Management magazine offer opportunities to get connected through social networks and subscriptions.

Can you envision what your engagement with ALA members would look like under this different paradigm of service not sales? It's a game changer. Your generosity will develop relationships with decision-makers. You'll learn about their challenges and goals. You will build your credibility as you position yourself as a resource of information and expertise. While these acts of generosity may not lead to immediate sales, they establish you as a source of solutions and as a person invested in the member's success.

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