

How to ask better questions

Question 2024.07.31

Already have a follow up call with my first customer (Holding companies that manufacture food animal products and do wholesale and retail sales distribution), which I conducted using the SPIN framework, during this call I discovered the following:

- They have worked with a specialized marketing agency in their industry, but currently they work with a freelancer that takes care mostly of their social media content, mainly in IG.
- They did 2 attempts to develop a proper e-commerce for the wholesale company, but realized they lacked the culture, process, positions, job descriptions and infrastructure to sustain the effort, understand it, internalize it and scale it with the industrial infrastructure and scale they already have in place.
- They do understand that this is a high stakes cost of opportunity and that they need help on all those fronts to be able to make it happen successfully.
- At the same time, they want to consolidate both brands, which I think would be a disservice to the organization and at the cost potentially of the retailer customer base which might provide them a scale opportunity to expand mid to long term. They understand this part and are still assessing this.

In the meantime, I tried to get familiarized with the market of the wholesaler as priority given the focused communication on brand consolidation and organizational knowledge they shared (provided me 27 job descriptions of their organization to better understand who and what role at a job description level they have, so I'm planning on mapping this too).

They provided the reference of another competitor that I wasn't able to map, which opened up the perspective of the competitive landscape.

Currently I know they have 9 business units/ markets so to speak, with 13 product lines that account for 69 SKUs (products).

I'm still pending on mapping the retailer, but from a first glance on their digital content and what they shared, they have 3 business units with 6 product lines, but currently it is unknown the number of SKUs, but I would assume it would be similar to the wholesaler.

They also shared that they have been considering contracting a call center to better provide support to their customers, to alleviate the cost of attention that the current state of their systems is taking away from their main account executives to serve the high ticket customers.

The ask after the call was to help them with:

- Improving the communications from the current state to provide a better segmented messaging from the inbound messages they are receiving to the proper corresponding level of attention for customers.
- Help them with this improvement get more sales and a smoother process to fulfill those customers.
- Take a look at the internal organization and help re-engineer based on the needs of the company to properly serve the market and compete efficiently through their digital channels
 - Helping define processes, funnels and copy
 - Providing guidance on positions to cover based on the current organizational structure and positions they have to better sustain the new processes
 - This might require them to develop their own internal marketing department, body of work and processes.
- To be able to successfully sustain an e-commerce channel that helps them bridge the gap they currently have with some competitors that are at the moment 3X to 15X bigger.

What I want to accomplish currently with them is to properly put a proposal to get started for both parties (them and I) to gain trust and confidence to bring them results based on an agile process.

Currently I have 4 different ideas on how to improve their funnels to improve their inbound communication to customers.

At the same time and based on what has been shared with me from the previous call I have multiple ideas on how to help them solve their current problem.

My question is, should I present:

- The discovery project as proposal to gain trust, based on commissions only related to the results I can help them get, and build the relationship from there
- Present a packaged solution for their problem as an ongoing consultation with options for them to opt for a flat fee + commissions based on the incremental results from their current state

- Share a proposal that falls in the middle that would help advance part of the front office, streamlining the inbound and communications, at the same time that we take care of the internal

So far, I have only worked with them on a consultative basis to help them with industry reports and training for some of their clients for a flat fee or investment pitch presentations on a commission basis for their consulting company. But I haven't worked with them with these companies and much less with their marketing materials.

My hypothesis is that if I were to have a presentation to have them realize how complex the problem they are asking to solve with a proposal taking baby steps, it would be more digestible for them to undertake this and start with a more agile mindset to get traction within their own organization based on the results we can gain the market.