

## What Advertisers Care About

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Back in my ad agency days, I learned a big lesson about what to do – and what not to do – in a sales presentation.

I was sitting in the office of the owner of a construction business, ready to show him that I was the right person to handle his advertising account. I had been referred to him by a mutual acquaintance at a much larger ad agency, an agency that was pursuing only much larger accounts.

At that point in my young advertising career, my sales presentations consisted mostly of showing samples of my work and evaluating the state of a prospect's current ads. So I opened the portfolio book of ads I had created for other clients and proceeded to describe the strategy behind each ad. After a few pages, this prospect stopped me cold in my tracks. He said, "I don't care what you've done for other people. All I care about is what you can do for me."

All of us have experienced events that were turning points. Meeting our future spouse. Finding a new job. A conversation with a favorite teacher or coach.

WII-FM has been a sales cliché for years. It's an acronym for everyone's favorite radio station: "What's in it for me?" That acronym came to life for me that day – in a comment that became a turning point in the way I conducted business presentations. Of course, he was one hundred percent correct. Why in the world should he sit there and listen to me talking about me, when all he cared about was himself and his business? Thank goodness, I was able to shift gears and ask about his business situation and his marketing goals. And thank goodness he threw caution to the wind and gave an assignment to me.

I'll always be grateful to that direct – but exceedingly wise – advertiser for teaching me an important lesson. As it turned out, the assignment was an audition. I handled his company's ad account for 24 years. Over time, I realized that he was not being intentionally rude that day. His philosophy was, "Give me the information I need to make a decision and do it quickly."

Sometimes I joke that his words should be posted in advertising departments: "I don't care what you've done for other people. All I care about is what you can do for me." That cuts right to the core of a sales presentation. It's not about the sales person or the sales person's product. It's about the customer.

There's nothing earthshakingly new about all of this. Every time a sales person prepares for an appointment, he should simply ask himself, "How can I make this presentation revolve around the prospect's needs?" And every time a sales person displays samples of ads, she should ask herself, "What's relevant about these ads? How can I relate the characteristics of these samples to the goals of this specific advertiser?"

Do these things and stay in step with your advertisers.

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