

Sales Coach Series

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Gaining gravitas

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The Dilemma

At my recent appraisal my boss told me that my customers perceive me as 'lightweight'. What can I do about this?

The Coaching

Common problems that can give this impression relate to 'personal power' and technical knowledge.

- Technical knowledge

How well do you understand your products? And your competitors'? What are the market / technology trends affecting your industry? If your customers can answer these questions better than you, then what value are you adding?

Some salespeople compensate for a lack of technical knowledge or market awareness by relying heavily on interpersonal skills. This is OK up to a point but, ultimately, the customer needs suppliers who contribute to their business success.

Make sure you read the industry press - and really get to know your own and your competitors' products. Talk to colleagues, form opinions. Make sure you are at least as well informed as your customers about your market sector.

- Personal power

This means being able to get things done. The customer expects you to represent their needs within your organisation. If colleagues always seem to have priority in the battle for resources ask yourself if the business warrants this or do they simply have more 'clout'.

Consider how you perceive yourself and are perceived by others. Do you carry yourself with confidence, are you assertive without being arrogant, are you able to clearly communicate customers' needs internally, do clients treat you with respect, as a peer?

Show your client that you can make things happen. Learn how to communicate your clients' needs objectively, gain your colleagues' trust and respect and show you're in control! More on this next month.