

COB Review for 11/13 by Julie Johnson

Title "The Solution Selling Fieldbook"

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Copyright: 2005

Publisher: McGraw-Hill

ISBN: 0-07-145608-2

Price: \$39.95

Length: 325 pages

Reading time: 5 - 6 hours

Reading rating: 5 (1 = very difficult; 10 = very easy)

Overall Rating = 4 (1 = average; 4 = outstanding)

"The Solution Selling Fieldbook" is the perfect compliment to Keith Eades 2004 book, "The New Solution Selling." "The New Solution Selling" is an excellent book destined to become a sales classic. However, in sales, having a great theory doesn't necessarily translate into becoming a great salesperson. "The Solution Selling Fieldbook" provides tools to effectively implement the sales process and sales strategies discussed in The New Solution Selling. The CD-ROM included in the back of the book makes it easy for the salesperson to personalize all of the worksheets and templates to his or her own territory.

Eades formula for sales success in "The New Solution Selling" is: Pain x Power x Vision x Value x Control = Sale. The authors of the fieldbook maintain that a successful sales call is a result of effective planning and research. Fortunately, the fieldbook provides all of the tools to effectively plan the sales call.

The fieldbook begins by helping salespeople identify areas of pain in their accounts. As the book points out, "no pain, no change." Discovering the pain is the most important step in the process because it influences everything else that happens in the sales call. The worksheets and examples in the fieldbook help the salesperson identify the "pain" in his or her accounts. An important issue to understand is that pain varies depending upon the key player's job responsibilities. Too often, salespeople focus on one player in the buying center and ignore the others. By providing a systematic format, the fieldbook helps the salesperson make sure that the key players in an account have been identified. While each key player has unique pain areas, the effects of the pain are felt at the company level. The fieldbook helps the salesperson create a pain checklist to illustrate how each key player's pain aggregates at the organizational level.

Of course, planning does no good unless the salesperson is able to talk with the key players in a prospective client's firm. Consequently, the fieldbook moves on to stimulating interest and provides many examples for how to do that in the initial call to a prospect. It also provides letter templates in the event that the initial contact is made by mail. Once contact is established, there is no guarantee that the key player(s) will realize his or her pain. As every good salesperson knows, just because s/he can identify the pain doesn't mean that the prospect willing to do something about it. The fieldbook provides job aids to help the salesperson get the prospect to acknowledge the pain.

Finding and developing the prospect's pain is important so that the salesperson can help create a vision for the solution. Value must be an integral part of this vision. The salesperson needs to lead the sales call with value propositions to stimulate interest. By getting the right kind of information during the sales call, the salesperson can verify and justify the value of the solution. Value justification should be stated in terms of benefits expected (increased profits, increased revenue, or decreased costs). And, as always, "The Solution Selling Fieldbook" provides templates and exercises to help the salesperson accomplish this difficult task.

In summary, "The Solution Selling Fieldbook" is an excellent "how to" book for implementing the contents of "The New Solution Selling." Salespeople who use this fieldbook diligently should see an increase in overall sales.

Dr. Julie Johnson is an Associate Professor of Marketing at Western Carolina University. She spent 7 years in sales and marketing with AT&T prior to joining the faculty. Dr. Johnson teaches introduction to professional selling and consultative selling at WCU. For previously reviewed books, visit our Web site at www.wcu.edu/cob/.