



Challenges in System Selling

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The Multimedia Industry in South East Asian is matured and is hosts to many products, manufacturers, solutions, sellers and buyers. Modern buyers are generally informed of available products and are also willing to accept pragmatic solutions. Already, many solution seekers are able to broadly define the products they need and how these products are to be implemented. The process of evaluation & selection, for products are initiated by the buyer with the assistance of specialist advisory team which shall be collectively refer to as the “project committee”. Thereafter tender bids are received, the project committee, assumes the role of “tender evaluation committee. Throughout the planning & subsequent evaluation phases, frequent shift in power center within the committee members are not uncommon. Also, different types of information will be sought by members of the committee and are usually needed on an urgent basis. These are examples of conditions that challenge the system sales persons, who must maintain vigilance and keep up with demand exerted by the changing scenarios throughout the selling process.

In the management of product portfolios, companies apply different strategies to differentiate from competitions. In a system based market, over-reliance on one-way communication platform can reduce optimum impact in encouraging market adoption of products & services. Non-interactive media is inadequate as a communication channel to facilitate product evaluation. Interactive platforms that facilitate dialogues between buyers & sellers are what are needed; these should include workshops, seminars & participations at exhibition, just to name a few. All of which can improve product marketing efforts but are still limited to just communicating brief messages. Through personal selling marketing messages can be delivered more concisely & in a timely fashion to match the requirements arising from every stage of the project planning & evaluation cycles.

Selling is not more important than other roles in a commercial enterprise, but as a front line activity, it can contribute significantly to the success of a company. Sales persons are often the first contact between buyers and selling company before a potential deal is set up. For a systems company, the selling is that front line operation that's entrusted to seek out opportunities and to sell turnkey solutions. Typically a system-based solution can include hardware products, software products and also value-add technical services. The final assembly in a turnkey system is likely to include solutions derived from various technological domains. Increasingly, many large scale multimedia implementations are based on design that converge functional value-add that are derived from technologies employed for broadcasting, telecommunication, entertainment, information, security and building-services automation.

The importance of knowing one's own products & specifications need no emphasizing. The system sales person must learn about third parties' products and application; especially essential components or building block for completing system design. In addition to excelling in sales administration, the system sales person will also have to be familiar with basic principles of electrical & electronics engineering, optics & light, sound & acoustics, video & audio processing, protocols & controls, networks & computing, mechanics & hydraulics, display & imaging; etc. In addition, previous experiences in system designing and field installation are good foundations for pragmatism that will add to greater competence.

It is no wonder; many successful companies strive to maintain competent sales operation, by instilling a culture of continuous trainings that ensure keeping up to date, product knowledge & applications as well as currency in sales approaches. Sometimes it is the competence sales people that build strong company. Positive intentions coupled with a strong desire to succeed plus the ability to look & plan ahead are desirable attributes. Besides building on existing market, the sales person should be able to spot signs of looming opportunities and are willing to pursue potential growth areas relentlessly. This includes an ability to recognize new need to diversification into new markets and/or expanding product lines, and have ability to influence the actual deployment of resources to preempt market against impending competitions.

System selling is a complex process that involves juggling many tasks simultaneously. While pursuing target projects, the system sales person has to compete for internal resources to support his endeavors. Support is needed in matters such as system design, finance, logistics, legal & project management. For every project prospect, he will also have to develop strategy to connect the hierarchy of decision makers in the project committee & subsequently the tender evaluation committee. Memberships in both committees include representatives from project developer, event organizer, venue architect, interior designer, electrical consultant, audio-visual consultant and other specialized service consultants as appropriate. Being involved in planning phases greatly benefits the sales person ensuring that accuracy of understanding project requirements. All of which will better enabled him to strategize an optimal tender bid. From here onwards, it's initiating design solutions & presenting of concept plans, and negotiating over numerous meetings. A period of design re-adjustments follows until the proposal eventually meets consensus appeal as well as expectations of the project committee. After which, system contracts, system requirements, specifications & bills of submission are compiled for tender bid. The system sales person that endeavored support to the project in its development and system design stages, has positioned himself & the selling company for favorable consideration before the tender evaluation committee.

Conclusions: System selling in the multimedia industry is a highly intellectual endeavor, requiring the practitioner to be well acquainted with the market norms & system selling processes while stay abreast specialized yet evolving knowledge. A history of involvements in system design & installation will add support to visualization when constructing solutions. Persevering & resourceful, vigilance & adaptable are personality traits worth cultivating in project-based selling. From the perspective of the buyers, the competence of a system sales person is measured by the quality of his interaction with the project committee & with tender evaluation committee. Getting recognition for contribution to project design & specifications during early design developmental stages will be greatly appreciated & reciprocated by those involved. Hence, the sales person that aspires to become an expert in the industry and strives to establish himself as a reliable source for system solutions will better succeed in system selling. END