SMARTer Entrepreneurs

FREE QUICK CARD

SALES I QUICK CARD SA-01

Before you write the proposal

Ten minutes, one question plan, and the questions a good coach would ask you.



The practice

There is a moment in many first meetings when the client describes a problem and you, recognising it at once, start explaining how you would solve it. It feels helpful. It is often the moment the sale starts to slip.

The practice: before you propose anything, the client has said in their own words what the problem is, what it costs them, and what fixing it is worth. An agency that sent 20 proposals a year and won one in four started asking "what does that lead to?" first; it sent 16 and won two in five.

Your question plan

Ask about	Your question
The facts (keep these few): "How is the team set up at the moment?"	
What is not working: "Where does work get stuck?"	
What that leads to: "What happens to renewals when projects run late?"	
What fixing it is worth: "If projects ran to time, what would that do?"	

One question in each row, for your next first meeting. No proposal until the client has said what the problem costs.

Try this this week

In your next conversation with a prospective client, ask two "what does that lead to?" questions before you say anything about how you would help. Notice what changes.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CARD

Coach yourself

Fill in the front first. Then take fifteen minutes with these, in writing.

1. Read your questions back. Which of them are about the client's world, and which are about you?
2. Of your last five proposals that went nowhere, how many clients had told you what the problem was costing them?
3. At what point in a first meeting do you usually start explaining what you would do?
4. Count last year's proposals: sent, won, lost, "went quiet". Which line is biggest?
5. What is the question you most wish you had asked in a meeting you lost?
6. Who else in the business has first conversations, and do they know the rule?

If you catch yourself saying...

You hear yourself say	Try asking instead
"I'm not a salesperson"	What do you do when a client asks for advice? How is that different?
"They just went quiet"	What would you say to them if you were not worried about the answer?
"The proposal took me all weekend"	What would it look like if the client had already told you what to write?

ONE HARDER QUESTION

If you did not send a proposal until the client had said what the problem costs, how many of last year's would you have written?

Keep it going

Decide who keeps the proposal record and which monthly meeting reads it. Put three dates in the diary: 3, 6 and 12 months from today. If it slips, keep the one rule.

When to get help

Contract terms, liability clauses and unusual procurement documents are for a solicitor. If you dread every sales conversation, talk that through with someone first.

What a coach adds

This card gives you the questions. What it cannot do is notice which one you avoided. It is one of the SMARTer practice cards, covering the ten key areas of a business that sells expertise.

> Talk yours through with your SMARTer coach and mentor: book a Discovery Call at smarterentrepreneurs.co.uk

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