

marketer

Volume 27, Issue 1, February 2008

The Journal of the Society for Marketing Professional Services

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Let's Get Real or Let's Not Play: The Demise of Dysfunctional Selling and the Advent of Helping Clients Succeed

REVIEWED BY CRAIG PARK, FSMPS, ASSOCIATE AIA

Selling is the second oldest profession, and often confused with the first. Those of us in the building industry know that the “S” word carries so much baggage that we call it “business development.” Customers are afraid that they will be “sold” a bill of goods and sales people fear they won’t make the sale. In the quest to close the deal, we too often lose sight of the real grail: understanding and satisfying the customer’s real needs.

In *Let's Get Real*, Mahan Khalsa, a sales coach extraordinaire in the Franklin Covey organization, shows why helping clients succeed is essential to the success of any business. Following his program will teach you to become totally client focused, to break down the barriers that challenge effective business development, and to develop rewarding, productive business relationships.

Written in clear, honest, and authentic terms, Mahan Khalsa breaks through volumes of sales theory with practical direction on getting results and helping clients succeed. He shows how these fears lead to a dysfunctional situation where buyers institute policies to protect themselves from sellers and sellers wish to protect themselves from being used by buyers. His prescription is to break this “vicious, downward cycle” by being “authentic...truthful...congruent with what you value.” In short, get real.

Effective selling is based on selling value. Reading this book can set in motion a process of learning what your clients value and how to provide a solution that meets their value proposition. By using the acronym “O.R.D.E.R.” (Opportunity, Resources, Decision Process, Exact Solution, and Relationship), Khalsa takes the reader through a logical development of a truly effective consultative selling process. Khalsa also uses the metaphor of green, yellow, and red lights to explain how and when to stop and question more deeply.



***Let's Get Real or Let's Not Play:
The Demise of Dysfunctional
Selling and the Advent of Helping
Clients Succeed***

By Mahan Khalsa

242 pages; Publisher: Franklin
Covey (July 15, 1999)

Available at www.amazon.com

As the title implies, the key point is to find out early in the game if the prospect is real—otherwise, don’t play. Do they understand their problem and the impact of the solution? Do they have the right resources? Do you? Khalsa reminds us of some of the basic communication techniques for getting to the information we need, but he does so in a very readable style. Particularly useful are Khalsa’s examples of verbal exchange between sellers and buyers, which show how a seller can keep a conversation moving forward positively, without manipulating the buyer.

Khalsa clearly has the consulting industry in mind, and many of his discussions draw on experiences from that environment. This is why this is a perfect book for even the seasoned building industry veteran. I found myself taking notes and have already incorporated many of his methods in my internal business development training for our market sector leadership.

If you have ever been frustrated by the impact that qualifications-based selection has had on the industry (the ultimate example of “be careful what we wish for”), you will love this book. If you are a consultant, frustrated with limited differentiation and clients who can’t tell apples from oranges, you’ll love this book.

Rather than relying on sending another SOQ and waiting to learn if you get a 20-minute dog-and-pony “shortlist” show in front of 6 strangers, Khalsa lays out a straightforward plan to get the information you need ahead of your competition, how to present your findings ahead of your competition, and how to close a “healthy” contract, well ahead of your competition.

Laid out in an easy-to-read, almost large-print format, *Let's Get Real* includes valuable process diagrams and forms that can be applied immediately to your business development (see, I did it again), I mean sales, process. His “Start Anywhere, Go Everywhere” chart sets up the organization of dialogue that almost guarantees effective communication. He charts four key areas of customer insight.

1. Problem Evidence: “How specifically does this problem manifest?” What lets them know it is a problem? Too much, too little, or what?

2. Problem Impact: “How big?” In dollars or on a scale of 1 to 10? Implications? Worst-case scenario?

3. Results Evidence: “Measure of success?” Increase, decrease, or what?

4. Results Impact: “ROI?” Direct? Opportunity? In dollars or on a scale of 1 to 10? Implication? Best-case scenario?

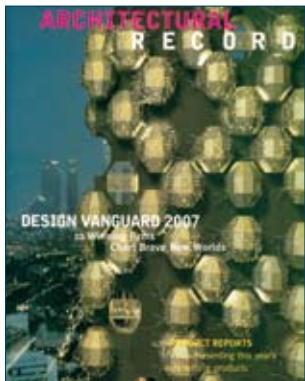
Delineated one concept at a time, *Let's Get Real* sets the stage for successful communications and professional salesmanship in an easily adapted, intuitive process. Most of Khalsa's concepts are not new. In *Let's Get Real or Let's Not Play*, Mahan Khalsa presents a well thought out and carefully explained approach to ethical selling.

About the Reviewer



Contributing Editor Craig Park, FSMPS, Associate AIA, is chief marketing officer for LEO A DALY (www.leoadaly.com). Based in Omaha, Craig is an accomplished business writer in his own right. He tries to read a business book a month and regularly recommends new reading at www.craigpark.com. The 2007 recipient of the SMPS Marketing Achievement Award and a Past National President, Craig can be reached at craig@craigpark.com.

behind the lines *(continued)*



MR: How do you respond to the perception that *Record* is too focused on the bleeding edge of design?

RI: That's easy. Our job is to try to present 100 projects in a given year. That's the total we can cover in the sections where we feature projects. Every one needs to stand on its own merits for how the design inspires us, teaches us, excites us, and shows

us the latest and best thinking in the field. We look for the most intriguing examples of architecture from around the world.

Architecture is global in scope, and to ignore that would be folly. Architects are collaborating with peers in the next city, the next state, and the next continent. *Architectural Record* sets out to collect the best examples of this new reality, to point out how the profession evolves and what we can learn from the experience.

MR: What advice do you have for our readers who are dying to be published in *Record*? Is there a secret to success in pitching the editors?

RI: Get to know us. We receive a tremendous volume of unsolicited material, so we naturally pay more attention to those whose work we know and respect. Meet with us personally. When architects come to New York, we invite them to come to our offices and meet. As a consequence, we get to know them and we get to know their clients.

Second, we receive an inordinate amount of graphic materials that clog the pipeline here for us. Choose the image that best represents the project or story, and limit the volume so the editor can quickly grasp the essence of a project.

Also, there are many other places beyond the project features and building type studies: news, our departments, building sciences and technology, and the Web site. We are limited to 3 or 4 projects in the magazine's Building Type Studies, but we'll show 14 on the Web site each month. Your readers may be interested to know that clients go to our Web site more than to the magazine for information. They look to see who is doing university work, for instance, and can quickly see a variety of work and types of firms. The Web is not a second tier from the client's perspective.

One last thing I want to mention. When you are talking to me, you are talking to the whole McGraw-Hill family of 15 publications and 16 Web sites. We share materials across the publications. A news release sent to *Record* will often make its way to other media such as *ENR*, *Constructor*, and the regional publications.

About the Interviewer



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