

NICKS' 5 INSIGHTS FOR SELLING MORE TECH (SMT)

The beautiful thing about tech businesses is how passionate technical founders are. I've never met a founder, or a person involved in an early stage business that doesn't have a "fire in their belly" for the journey they are on and what they are creating.

What many don't realise is that the passion and belief they have translates into 50% of the sale – in other words, you are half way there to closing a sale with such belief in your product or service. And you probably don't even realise it!

Why do I say this?

Well selling is primarily an emotional process, with a small amount of rational justification to support the emotion the buyer/audience is feeling. So, passion and belief are obvious to the audience/buyer, and something they will align to and remember BEFORE they think about the technical solution you have presented.

Where technical people generally go wrong is how they communicate their expertise and their product/service.

In fact, one of the biggest shortcomings is where technical people OVER focus on what they know and fail to connect with the buyer / audience on what they want and need.

This leads a bizarre scenario where the seller (i.e. the technical person, often the founder) thinks they have "knocked it out of the park" with an awesome technical presentation, while the audience/buyer is underwhelmed as they haven't connected what was presented to their own problems/wants and needs.

And the reality is there are simple solutions to this problem.

I am a technical founder who by default ended up selling as if my life depended on it. And while it took a while through learning by doing, I adopted simple fundamentals that ultimately turned me into a successful salesperson who sold multimillion dollar deals.

It's a pleasure to share these shortcuts with you.

SMT Insight Number 1 – "Interesting" does NOT mean "Interested"

"Wow, that's interesting!"

Often, we hear words such as "interesting", among other terms, and take those words literally. We think that the audience truly love what we have presented. So, we carry on providing more and more information on the product or service and may even hear those words mentioned again and again.

However, if we don't clarify **why** the audience finds that "interesting" we can spend time continuing down a path that is leading away from making a sale.

So, while you are comfortable talking about your technical solution, take the time to clarify what it is about your solution that the audience likes.

Simply put, regularly pause and ask for feedback. Then discuss that feedback with the audience.

Most of the time you will find you need to “pivot” or change direction on your prescribed presentation to maximise the interest shown, and that can be scary at first.

However, you know your stuff right, so you can always go back to where you were in your presentation once the conversation stops and continue from there.

This leads nicely onto the next insight, which, if delivered well, will ensure the audience is truly “interested” in buying.

SMT Insight Number 2 – HOW your Product Solves THEIR PROBLEMS

You know your stuff right!?!

How well do you know your audience’s “stuff”?

Until you can connect what the audience may want to do with what you offer, no sale is going to happen!

So, building on Insight Number 1, whenever you present, you must discuss your product or service in terms of what it will do for the audience you are talking to.

If you are unsure, one way to do this is very early in your presentation ask some questions about the audience, such as:

- Tell me about your organisation?
- What are the biggest challenges you face?
- What are the major areas / projects you are focused on?

Then, based on these responses, try tailoring what you say by relating what you do to what you have been told by the audience.

Express the value your products and services offer by using terms such as:

- **Imagine if you could “Do A” which results in “B occurring”**
- **You mentioned you had “problem”. We can help with that by “solution you can offer”**
- **By doing “X” with our product, you can solve “Y problem you mentioned.”**

You will be amazed that, when you do this, the audience will ask more and more questions about your solutions. A sure sign you are on the path to selling.

You will get so good at this, that you will apply the next insight every time you meet a new prospect.

The next insight is my favourite and I believe the most effective insight.

SMT Insight Number 3 – Clean Sheet Selling

I remember the day I went to an initial sales meeting at a major healthcare facility and arrived without my prepared presentation.

Panic set in!

Should I postpone the meeting?

No, it took long enough to get this meeting, so no turning back!

So, without a presentation, I was left with 2 choices:

- Wing a presentation and attempt to describe what I had on my presentation, without the structure and visuals, or
- Treat the meeting as a “clean sheet” and learn as much as I can about the audience, while providing information on what we offer as the conversation unfolds.

I chose the latter, and that meeting was the start of a new and more effective way of selling.

“Clean Sheet Selling” is about going in to initial sales meetings early in the sales process without a prescribed presentation and being open minded to learning about the audience you are with, while backing yourself that you know your stuff, and hence able to communicate how what you offer will help the audience.

It forces a technical person to ask questions and learn about the audience, BEFORE telling them about how we can help them.

On most occasions, you shouldn't be demoing a solution on the first meeting anyhow, as you don't know why and how that will help the audience.

In the case of the health care facility, we closed the sale, and they became one of our closest and most successful customers. They felt we took the time to understand them, rather than it being about us.

I continue to use Clean Sheet Selling early in the sales process. And it's been highly effective tool in shortening the sales process, while resulting in deeper relationships with our customers.

With increasing customers comes the need for management tools to keep you focused and organised. That's the topic of the next insight.

SMT Insight Number 4 – Use an online Sales Management Tool, for Free

Sales is a numbers game. You need a certain number of interested potential buyers always to convert some (ideally all) into paying customers.

Sales is what brings the \$ in. No sales, no business.

The more you spread your wings, the more you will need to manage your focus in terms of time and money. Because you don't have bottomless pockets, so it's important you focus in the right places.

Something you can do to keep this focus without spending any money is to sign up for a free version of a Customer Relationship Management system (CRM). To this day I continue to use a free CRM.

A CRM allows you to record, measure and access all sales activity, allowing you to answer the fundamental questions to manage sales, namely:

- How many prospects (potential customers) do we have in play?
- What stage of the sales journey is each prospect at?
- What's the potential value of the deals in play, if known?
- What's the most pressing sales priorities, based on the prospects in play?
- How effective is our selling?

Just like you manage development sprints or technical projects, a CRM provides a framework to manage sales.

And you don't need to be fancy. Like all good technology, a CRM is available free on your mobile device.

CRM or no CRM, Tech Sales is about people, which brings me to my final Insight I learned as a Tech Founder.

SMT Insight Number 5 – Because EVERY Interaction is a Sale

At its simplest level, one way or another, a person needs to sell something, and another person needs to buy it, whether it's an idea/service or an item/product.

If you think about it, every time you engage with a person there is a sale taking place – you want someone else to do something or you are being asked to do something for someone else, whether it be large or small.

On all occasions, someone needs to agree to move forward.

So why not practice selling EVERY time you communicate.

Why not try communicating with a “clean sheet”, and find out the motivations of your team, and then tailor what you want based on what you know about them?

Ask questions to understand and listen, before asking for something or telling people what you want.

Because it's Time for Techs to Sell More Tech!

So, Tech enthusiast, take that passion you have for building the best technology and apply it to building the best relationships.

Next time you have a chat at the water cooler, or a discussion around the dinner table, ask questions, listen to responses and learn how you can help.

Then take what you know and apply that to what you have just learned.

You might be surprised what results you get.

Don't be surprised when you sell more.

About Nick Burns

As an industrial engineer, Nick co-founded healthcare predictive analytics company Emendo in 2002. The company improved patient flow and operational costs in hospitals around the world. A technical person by training, Nick found himself as the sales evangelist for the company, from its first sale, multimillion dollar international deals, to a successful trade sale exit to McKesson Corporation in late 2012.

Since departing McKesson in Mid-2015, Nick has focused on helping technology companies sell more, and faster, both in New Zealand and on the international stage. He has invested in, mentors and coaches several companies and individuals, and is the chair of The Clown Doctors NZ Charitable Trust.