

Muse Rant: Open Letter to Sales People

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In the immortal words of John Cleese "And now for something completely different." Please note that this post is intended to be funny. As a geek with a sort of geek sense of humor I have to say that up front or some folks may miss it. The Muse does not typically castigate sales people over the phone unless they are calling from a NY boiler room (the stock kind - I actually have an affinity for maintenance people). I'm generally nice with the goal of getting off the phone as quickly as possible. But I suppose some of these things are bubbling along inside of me all the same. If this gives you a laugh then I'm pleased, but I am not setting out to offend anyone. If you are trying to make a living calling folks to sell them something you might want to stop here unless you have a thick skin. I know you are just trying to make a living and I wish you success (but don't call me... please don't call me!!). And now....

Ok I admit it. The Muse really has a terrible attitude toward sales and marketing people. It's strange I know. One of my best friends is my own director of sales Curt Lovegren, who is an extraordinary salesman and a great human being. But he never tries to sell *me* anything so he gets a pass. This attitude about marketing is almost a phobia with me. If I sense even a hint of a "pitch" I assume the worse and automatically disbelieve the speaker. In my heart I suppose I'm convinced that if everyone was a skeptic, then marketing would progress to something more like good information instead of hype. I think I would like commercials if they were like the ones from that Ricky Gervais movie - "The Invention of Lying". I vaguely remember the Coke Ad. "I'm bob the spokesman for Coke. We changed the can and added a Polar bear for the kids, but the ingredients are the same. Please don't stop buying Coke. Thank you." Now that's an ad I can live with. I don't think anyone has ever sold me anything over the phone, but plenty of people have made me vow to never buy their product over the phone.

I wonder how many other folks feel this way? The last time I bought a car I was ready to buy one brand of vehicle but the salesman kept responding to all of my questions (yes - via email to eliminate time in the showroom) by constantly touting the virtues of the car I was interested in. I had asked him to limit his information to specific answers to my questions. "I'm perfectly capable of researching the vehicle without your help," I told him, "I just want to know about certain options - that's it." Still, every answer included a new pitch. I gave him 3 chances and finally told him I would be buying the other brand solely due to the responses of his emails. So I guess I'm driving my second choice of vehicle due to this internal struggle of mine.

To all those lovely people out there who have a pitch and want to sell something to me. Avoid the pitch. Start by letting me know you are selling something and what it is. Don't talk to me about opportunities, partnerships, synergy, collaboration or any other pitchy buzz-word. And here are some other Muse-approved tips.

- The phone is last on my list of favorite communication devices. I like Email, Text, Tweets, Skype and *then* phone. You will frankly have a better shot at me if you work your way down the list. I reserve phone time for people I know. I don't have time to take your survey, engage in small-talk or ask you to repeat yourself (I'm speaking to you Peggy).
- Yes it is actually true that I'm *not* interested in saving money with your product. I

might be interested in saving money in general but on principle I'm more interested in saving time than money, and you are costing me time at the moment.

- I know I'm not on the first page of Google and yes I *am* interested in getting on the first page. Unfortunately I would prefer to do it without you in spite of your guarantee.
- I'm sure your company does terrific work in .NET, Java, ColdFusion, PHP, Ruby, Groovy, Cloture, Lisp, Cleft, Pallet, C++, Fortran, Cobol, Smalltalk, Foxpro, Visual Basic and even QBasic. Unfortunately you *still* don't have the language skills I'm looking for. Sorry.
- If you have a stock to sell me that is a fantastic opportunity I am *definitely interested*. But you should know that most of my cash is tied up in other investments. I will, however, trade you for some land east of Miami I happen to own.
- I already have a janitorial service. I'm not always happy with them, but I'd rather be poked in the eye that negotiate another one of those contracts.
- I use online resources to purchase all my hardware and pretty much everything else. I do not want to have to "call for a quote" and listen to you prattle on about your warranty, the benefits of solid state over traditional drives, the new line of virtualized servers, and your cloud managed backup. If you haven't adequately marketed your services online and made it possible for me to buy and manage my purchases on line then you have already lost my business. Your voice on the other end of the phone is causing my assistant to frantically scour my office for sharp objects to remove from sight.
- I'm not going to share information about my business with you. If you want to know it's size and scope do a little research (and no, asking me questions is not research).
- Yes it is sometimes cold and snowy in Nebraska - and that's 15 more seconds of my life I'll never get back.
- I appreciate your interest in the size of... er... of eh... my whatsit, but I'm over 45. I understand the younger generation is more comfortable with these sort of things and would probably send you pictures (or links to them on facebook). But I still keep these sort of things to myself.
- I am aware there are other phone providers in the world. I can find them if I want to - I just don't want to.
- I'm aware that Saving money on Insurance occupies the time of most of the free world, but I'm simply not interested - although the little gecko is darn cute.
- I already work from home enough. But if this internet thing doesn't work out from me I'll give you a call.

Finally, let me just say in the interest of fairness that there is one marketing approach that works for me. You must have a product that I *am already looking for* and everything I need to know should be available *online* without the need to interact with you. If I have a question I will likely reach out via email or possibly online chat. Respond to the question I actually ask without a talking point or launching a pitch. The more precise you are the more likely I will buy. The more pitchy you are the more likely I will be mixing cool-aid in the break room.

Wow... I don't usually do ranting, but I'm really tired of being inundated with marketing messages all day. Maybe watching the super bowl commercials brought out the worst in me. For all of my devoted readers who are scratching their heads

wondering where the useful ColdFusion stuff is, let me assure you I have a 3 part series on web sockets and a socket gateway that I'm building. It's just around the corner so stay tuned. Now I shall turn back to the better angels of my nature.