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The Do's And Don'ts For Selling High End Software Using The Internet

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DO sell and communicate with prospects any way **THEY** want, not the way that is best for your company.

DO provide email, telephone, mail, online, chat and whatever else might be appropriate.

DON'T make the common mistake of limiting the method of communication to what fits best with the company, not the customer – this results in lower sales.

DO keep it simple, using the “Rule of 12”: ideally a 12 year old should be able to understand your offer and your value proposition (smart marketers actually test their offer on 12 year olds prior to making it public).

DON'T succumb to the temptation to include too much, which can complicate and muddle the offer.

DO provide one or several online demos.

DO provide white papers on the topic, establishing yourself as an expert in the field.

DON'T forget to provide PDF documents of your product or service online, since some people prefer to download and read when convenient (e.g., at lunch or traveling on a plane).

DO make sure your online communication follows the same sound principles of offline advertising, such as focusing on the benefits.

DO leverage the web to facilitate and shorten the sales cycle where appropriate (e.g., generating leads, providing information and generic demos), since your web site can be a powerful tool in the sales process.

DO recognize that enterprise applications and other high-end software usually require a different sales approach than does lower-end software: customers are more likely to request in-depth demos and direct contact with the vendor than they would for less expensive, lower risk purchases, and there may be several people involved in the purchase decision.

DON'T neglect the other aspects of the process where the web may not be as effective, however, since high-end sales still relies heavily on personal relationships.

DO keep the website 100% consistent with all other collateral materials. The site should reflect both the look (color combinations and layout) and the editorial emphasis of all other materials.

DON'T let messages conflict, or it will look as if the company is not a professionally run organization and will it send mixed messages about the products being sold.

Whenever you update collateral materials, **DO** update the web site and other collateral materials simultaneously.

DO include, on your web site, the ability for a customer or prospect to send a message seeking information to your company.

DO be sure that the message facility has an automated response facility that immediately sends the submitter an email acknowledging and documenting the request and also committing to a timeframe for a response.

Then **DO** be sure your company has all the processes in place to meet that deadline to respond.

DO consider adding a "chat" facility to you web site in which a prospect or customer can chat in real time with a technician or sales rep in order to get questions answered immediately. Such a facility is often more efficient than taking questions by phone because a single technician can simultaneously service several clients or prospects, thereby both keeping less people on the input queue and shortening the wait for those in the queue.

DO be sure that your on-line response (or telephone support) queuing system has the ability to tell the person waiting where he is in the queue, give an estimate of how long the wait will be and update status every few minutes.

DON'T upset a prospect by tossing her into a queue and not knowing if she will be there a few seconds or a few hours -- if that person hangs up, you have just lost them.

DO get an email address, always

DO check frequently to ensure the order form is working works correctly

DO provide online manuals with search engines

DO keep the order procedure simple and intuitive

DON'T go online without call center guidelines/ and setup (internal and external)

DON'T rely on selling online to the exclusion of other approaches

DON'T forget the tax procedure in online ordering (local/global)

DO offer valuable information your prospects are likely to want, then collect their email addresses as a requirement for fulfillment.

DON'T expect your Web site to do what it's not designed to do.

DO determine where your Web site best fits in your sales process (i.e. lead generation, needs analysis, solution presentation, closing; one or multiples of these) and then cover the gaps in other ways.

DO use traditional media and methods to drive prospects to your Web site; e.g. direct mail, advertising, networking, etc.