

# IDEAS

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LESSONS LEARNED | BY GERSON ROSENBLIOM

## PUTTING PRICE TO BED

**D**espite your very best efforts in a sales presentation, do you often find that the “make it or break it” of that sale turns out to be the price negotiation that happens at the end? For decades, I trained my staff that the way to eliminate making price the ultimate pressure point is to create a friendly relationship with the client. This strategy works well, but relationships take time to develop. The question is how to diminish the importance of price in your very first encounter with a new customer.

Clearly, you should start working on that relationship right from the start. But I’ve always theorized that talk of price is often the result of a failure to establish the unequivocal suitability of the product you’re selling. Recently, I had a shopping experience where this was done better than I’ve ever seen ... and I want to share that lesson learned with you.

### THE SLEEP COMPUTER

**M**y wife and I were shopping for a new mattress. From past experience, I knew that nothing is worse than the mattress shopping experience. You



**Put the price question to bed by getting to know your customer's needs**

go from store to store, spending a minute or two at a time on mattresses that are impossible to truly test in store, especially with the overly aggressive salespeople that lurk over you, spewing sales babble, while you’re trying to find a little Zen on each block of foam and springs. They put phony, inflated prices and big discounts and incentives for “today only” on the same mat-

tresses as their competitors, but with deceiving private labeled names. In essence, they’re inviting you to be a jerk when it comes time to negotiate! And when it’s all done, you may have won the price battle, but you really have no idea if you bought the right product.

But then we visited Art Van furniture and everything changed. The congenial sales associate approached after we had already started testing some of our options. He was comfortable developing rapport, and then brought out his secret weapon, a computerized analysis which determined the best fit for us. While laying on a mattress, automated rollers and probes measured our bodies, all while the video screen told us the story about what they were doing. The key message was that it’s virtually impossible to know what bed “fits” you by just laying on it for a few minutes. The outcome was that their “Pure Sleep” system was able to recommend all the mattresses in the store that would, over the long haul, give us the best night’s rest.

Those were the magic words! In reality, we weren’t out shopping for the best price. We didn’t care that we could pay for it in 72

payments with no interest. We were there because we wanted a great night’s sleep, and that is what Art Van promised us. By focusing on my actual needs, everything else — including price — became secondary. Moreover, since this was the only place I visited where I felt certain that my goal (a good night’s sleep) would be met, this place had a huge leg up on earning my business.

What can you do in your business to create the same outcome as Art Van’s Pure Sleep computer? It starts with a genuine concern for understanding your customers’ needs. You find out by asking probing questions and seriously getting to know what matters to the buyer. Your customer will want to jump right in to shopping, because that’s what they’re trained to do. But if you take a different approach and really get to know them, they’ll appreciate what you’ve done, and may actually learn that what they thought they wanted isn’t even right for them. Get to that point, and everything your competitors may have discussed gets taken out of consideration. **MI**

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