

The Egg Chiller

Lessons from a Cookie Company

by Mark Matteson



Each of us takes action for one of two reasons, fear of loss or desire for gain. As a sales professional, we need to listen long enough to learn what that prospect really wants and the impact of that on them. —Mark Matteson



I was asked by a young professional HVAC service sales person's sales manager to go with him on a sales call. We visited a cookie company. I swore off cookies years ago. You see, my broad mind and narrow waist had traded places.

His name was Mike. This young man was going places. He was always well dressed, his funnel was almost always full, he followed up with his prospects, he made solid presentations; there was only one thing missing. He didn't listen for the implication need. What do I mean by that?

I had come along with him on a sales presentation or "Close." His prospect was a Plant Manager of this large industrial cookie company. As I listened and watched, a nugget had been dropped in his lap and he missed it. There was a strong implication need casually mentioned. He had not heard it. It had to do with response time and break down of equipment, specifically the Egg Chiller. I decided to speak up.

"What happens when that chiller you just mentioned breaks down—how much does it cost in lost production time?" Without hesitation, he said flatly "\$5000 an hour." There was a glimmer of pain and frustration in his voice. "How long does it take for your past contractor to show up once you call it in?" He paused for moment then said, "Six to eight hours—they have three techs—yeah that's about right." I nodded, glanced over at Mike and grinned. "One last question, how many times did it break down last year?" He thought for a minute and said, "Six." Now his body language changed. The wheels were turning. He wasn't happy, there was pain now.

"I was never great at math in high school, though I do remember infinity as one of larger numbers I worked with... however, $8 \times \$5000 \times 6 = \$240,000$ in lost production costs on just that chiller alone," I said with a pause, and the manager nodded yes.

I turned to Mike and asked, knowing the answer to the question before I asked it, "How many technicians do you guys have?" Mike smiled and said "27." "How many of them live right around here?" The manager leaned forward to listen, "Five, and they take their trucks home at night."

I turned back to the plant manager. "What if Mike's company could cut that response time in half, would that be something you would want?"

The deal was done. I sat back and looked over at Mike. He slid the agreement over. Some last minute buying questions were asked and answered. The prospect signed the agreement. It was the largest one Mike had sold in his young career. I had justified my client's consulting investment. It was an excellent lesson for me as well.

Each of us needs to listen long enough to understand the difference between what the client thinks they WANT and what they really NEED. Few people take the time to understand the implication of certain needs. We all need to take time to walk around in the prospect's shoes.

I had a couple of cookies to celebrate on the way out. Man, were they good! You know of course, the broken ones don't have any calories.

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