



Jeffrey Gitomer My next guest says you always need to keep your finger on the pulse of the economy and know how the current climate impacts your customer and their customer. Joining me now is Lisa Contini, President of Synergy Sales Training. For more than 14 years she's been teaching sales professionals how to thrive under any market condition and in a wide range of industries, from Fortune 500 companies to emerging technology companies using Synergy's propriety sales methodology. Welcome, Lisa.



Lisa Contini Why, thank you.

JG So, keeping your finger on the pulse. Why is that so important about your customer's customer?

LC Jeffrey, you know as well as I do that sales people have a tendency to be eternally optimistic, and we like to ride the good ride as long as it's going. And sometimes they'll be signs that maybe things aren't going so great and sales are slipping a little bit, but we don't want to think about that. So there's this tendency to ignore signs and keep on going until all of a sudden the pipeline is dried up, and I don't have any sales, and now I'm sort of panicked. And furthermore, my customers have already gone on to look at other solutions because I haven't been responding to the fact that their needs are changing. The reason we need to pay attention to our customer's customer is because that's the leading indicator. The more I understand, not just about my own customers but what drives their businesses (which is their customers), and how the current market or economic conditions impact them, the better prepared I am as a sales person to respond appropriately to the circumstances.

JG And what's the best way for the sales person to identify those issues? Are there places they can go on the internet? Or they just need to go face to face with their customer?

LC Both things. I think the obvious thing is to pay attention to the news. The not so obvious answer or maybe the harder thing to do is to ask your customers. There are a few questions that I'm always asking my customers. One is, "What's new or changed since the last time we spoke?" Another one I ask them, "What's going on in the market that you think may impact your business over the next six to 12 or 18 months?" Or I'll ask them, "How does the current economic climate or market conditions impact your customers?" These questions probably sound sort of obvious.

JG No, they're not obvious. Listen, if they were obvious every sales person would be asking them. They are not obvious.

LC I think, Jeffrey, that they're afraid, right? Because if I asked my customer, "Hey, how's the current economic climate?" or, "How are the current market conditions impacting your customers?" the salesperson's afraid that they're going to hear the truth, which is where their customer says, "Oh man, we're worried."

JG Yes, so here's the deal—a normal salesperson will say, "How's the economy affecting you?" The better salesperson, or the smarter salesperson, says, "How's the economy affecting your customer?" So, how can a sales person gain the intestinal fortitude to go to their customer and bring that issue up?

LC It has to do with discipline—making a commitment to yourself and saying, "I'm going to ask the hard questions because I'm going to trust that by getting the customers to talk about the things that are making them nervous, that's going to change the chemistry between me as a service provider and my customer." It only takes one time of having the guts to ask the hard questions, and letting the customer talk and listening to what they say, and notice what's happening and how that relationship changes. The next time it makes it easier and easier.

JG And if the sales guy's in a transactional mode, there is no way he's going to have the guts to walk in to a customer having no relationship and ask a personal question like that.

LC Every moment's a new moment, right? There are some salespeople that may not have the greatest relationships with their customers and they may have been interacting from more of a transactional situation, but you know what? It only takes going in one time and saying, "I was thinking a lot on my way over here just about our working together over the last period of time, and I just want to apologize to you." What's the customer going to say... "For what?" "You know, I've been really focusing so much on just the transactions between us, and I've been noticing what's going on in the world, and I really would like to understand more about the impact of things on your business. And I'd like to understand more about what you're trying to do for your customers." So it's sort of a good news, bad news situation. It requires making a decision of saying, "I'm going to do it different this time." And it also requires being prepared with the questions to ask, and then being prepared to listen.