

## Transcript – GET to YES Podcast

### E3: B2B Expos: How Are You Going to Get People to Talk to You?

Hi, Neil here from The SALES CATALYST. In this episode, we're going to discuss the biggest problem exhibitors have – that's how to establish engagement, with the many people who move past your stand.

Specifically, I'd like to chat with you about four key subjects:

- Who is your AVATAR – you know, your ideal client?
- My experiences with qualifying delegates
- Key questions you can use to gain attention and engagement
- And finally, the different ways you need to communicate when you're talking with large client's v's the smaller clients (Mastering this point really changed my success at trade shows!)

I want to go deep on how to get people to talk to you, when you're working on your stand at your next expo. Most times, I see people on stands trying to stop delegates as they pass by. They try to gain their attention by offering them a flyer or brochure, and even trying to engage with them using statements, like 'We are...' 'You know...' 'We are xyz', 'We do blah, blah'. For some salespeople, this is a very frustrating process.

But why do they receive lots of rejections? The reason is that their engagement strategy is back to front. What I mean by that, is that traditionally sales people believe it's their job to engage with the potential customer. Instead, I believe that my job is to conduct myself in a way where people want to engage with me – there's a BIG DIFFERENCE. Secondly, I don't sell until I'm asked to.

So, what are the basics here to be successful:

- Firstly, be clear in your mind who your ideal client is
- Secondly know what you're going to ask them

Standing there and making statements about WHAT YOU DO is *not* going to attract clients. However, I've discovered that asking a couple of good questions, creates a totally different situation. This is where the GOLD is. Let's jump in, there are a few layers to unpack.

Before you even head off to the expo, you need to get clear who is your ideal client... you know, your AVATAR.

So, who is your AVATAR? The best way to reach clarity around this is to have a close look at your existing clients, especially the good ones. What attributes do they have in common?

- What locations are they in?
- Do they carry several brands, or do they commit themselves to a single company partnership?
- How many staff do they have?
- What's their pricing structure?
- What areas do they specialise in?

Once you've established these factors, it offers the sales team greater clarity around who your ideal client is. The more you have these types of conversations, the more you'll notice that your teams' qualifying conversations improve.

Now you've established that, you need to consider what you're going to do when you see or experience a client who's possibly a good fit. To be successful, you need to turn the traditional 'telling' approach on its head. Rather than trying to attract clients by making statements and hoping to engage them, you turn it around and instead, ask them questions.

Let me share two good examples. One is from a Hair Expo...

I noticed this beautiful stand, for a company I'd never seen before. As I approached, I noticed their stand design was very minimalistic, which really allowed the product and its unique packaging design to stand out.

Anyway, as I entered the stand I noticed that the product was from Asia – Korea to be exact. I was approached by someone who was from their head office and home country.

(I must share though... generally, when I approach a stand I don't tell people that I'm an industry sales trainer. Instead, I pretend I'm a salon owner because I want to listen and experience their approach and learn about their product or their company.)

However, this person really nailed me with her first question. It was a qualifying question and it was a beauty. Her question was simple "How do you fit into the industry?" I paused and rather than answering, I complimented her on her question, hoping she would continue and start her company spiel. However, she didn't, she went back to her opening question and went on to explain that she needed to know where I fitted in so that in turn, she'd know what she needed to explain.

She wanted to know was I:

- A potential distributor for their brand
- A sales person working in the industry
- A salon owner or staff member
- From the industry media
- Etc

Needless to say, we ended up having an amazing conversation and I learnt a lot about their brand, which BTW was truly amazing.

As I walked away with a smile, I reflected on some of my other experiences that day, where other reps had just made statements at me and tried to give me a brochure or sample bag. WOW what a difference. That stand and the way the lady handled my curiosity was amazing, an experience I still clearly remember. How's that for an expo experience... let alone creating everlasting brand impact!

The second example I have, was at a Beauty Expo... again a very professional company and a well organised stand. Their product was digital displays to help salons lift their image – by removing and replacing old dog eared and faded posters, with beautiful high-quality images. My experience was again with a sales person, and as I approached their stand he noticed that I was looking at the amazing light boxes.

With that he looked at me, gained eye contact and then blurted out... "What do you think? Better than posters" I responded.... "Yeah maybe." So, was I convinced? Well no, not really. Hmm... what could he have done differently to convince me right there and then? The solution is rather simple... rather than

making a statement “Better than a poster” he could have rephrased it into a question. Because for he who speaks it, it is the truth. What I mean by that is... if he could have got me to say that his lightbox was better than a poster, it would have been more convincing and persuasive, than him telling me.

You know, that I’ve discussed before, Telling is not Selling. But in this case, I broke my own rule and told him that I was an industry sales trainer, we had a laugh and exchanged a few comments. I then asked him if he would be open to trying a different approach, an approach that would significantly improve his expo sales. He said yeah, why not. With that... two ladies were walking towards the stand. I stepped out and asked them a question.

“May I ask for your opinion about something please?” Their response, as they looked at each other, was “Yeah why not.” So, I asked, “how do you think these light boxes compare to the old traditional posters you see in salons?” They responded, “they look great, bright lights and a good-looking image, much better than posters.” And with that, they started asking a few other questions. What we’d done, was get them to say a few of the things that the sales person normally would have tried to get out. Now... who’s convincing who? WOW what a difference a question can make.

At an expo, you need to consider how you’re going to attract your ideal client or more importantly, how you’re going to stop and engage them as they pass your stand. So.... What question can you ask?

You also need to acknowledge that different types of clients have different needs and different areas of interest. For example, a large business may be interested in a higher-level business conversation, whereas a smaller clinic may be more interested in the treatments process and the space required to deliver the treatment.

As a guide, let’s divide clients into four groups, or gradings. To keep it simplistic, we’ll refer the first group as A-grade salons or clinics, then there’s B-grade, C-grade and D-grade salons. By way of example, an A-grade salon may have 6 or more permanent staff, B-grade salons may have 4-5 staff, C-grade salons could have 2-3 full time staff and D-grade salons are a single owner-operator. BTW, many company’s I work with often have some very strong, loyal clients in this D-category.

As mentioned, I’ve discovered that you need to adjust your conversation and the words used for each of these groups. Business owners quite often view sales people as ‘Change Agents.’ Why? Because you want them to change from what their using, to what you’re selling. Hmm, so you need to proceed with caution and think about things from a business owner’s point-of-view.

- A-grade businesses are already successful. They’re clear on their area of speciality, their pricing structures and how they like to WOW their clients. They already have a strong business, so having a conversation around what you can offer them, just won’t cut it here. What A-grade businesses are interested in, is new CONCEPTS. Concepts that they can add-on to their existing business and offer to their existing clientele... to increase their turnover.
- B-grade salons are still building. They’re working hard with the view of becoming an A-grade salon soon. They need SUPPORT – that is, a company that’s going to support their planned growth and who already has a variety of support programs in place. Those programs may be an established education program, regular in-salon promotional concepts, on-line marketing concepts or a reliable product delivery system.

- C-grade salons are still heavily committed to working on the floor and are busy working 'in' their business, versus working 'on' their business. C-grade salons look for IDEAS – ideas that are simplistic and that can be implemented easily and quickly.
- Finally, generally speaking, D grade salons need HELP. However, be aware that there are an increasing number of people who have consciously decided to be a D-salon, so it doesn't automatically mean they are inexperienced or not savvy about the industry.

As you discover more about the owners you're talking and listening to, start to adjust the ways you suggest Concept's, Support, or Ideas and you'll find a much better connection with those prospective clients.

Let me ask, what are your take-ways from this episode?

Was it:

- Getting clarity around your idea clients – your avatar
- Different ways we can qualify
- Developing your skill of asking questions
- Or was it developing the ability of adjusting your conversation to the size or style of business that your talking to?

Until next time... ENJOY YOUR DAY

