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Both Sides Now: Vendors and Librarians--What Happens AFTER the Library Buys the Product?

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Both Sides Now: Vendors and Librarians — What Happens AFTER the Library Buys the Product?

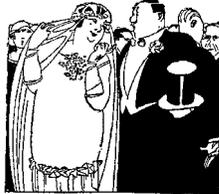
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In the world of sales, it is often said that “it’s easier to close the initial sale than in actuality, keeping it closed.” What that means is that salespeople all over the world are tasked with the job of selling a product or service to a defined market. In many cases, once the sale is made, the salesperson goes on to selling the same product to a new group of prospects. It’s the old, “one and done” mentality for those salespeople. That’s good for people who sell products/services that don’t have to renew.

In selling products/services to the library market however, these sales reps are selling their wares in an annuity business. That means that if Pete, the regional salesperson for an aggregator sells Database “A” to the library in June of 2015, he will most assuredly be back to renew that product in early 2016. “One and done” doesn’t work in our business.

Companies that provide database services to libraries in the information industry place significant emphasis on their salespeople to be renewing products sold in the previous years. That’s because the revenue derived from those renewals is a crucial part of the company’s financial health. Therefore, much attention is paid to making sure that salespeople sell a healthy mix of new and at the same, make sure that the majority of the renewals in their respective territories are secured.

Given this fact, information providers invest huge sums of money in CRMs for their customer-facing staff. This is the acronym for “Customer Relationship Management.” It represents an approach to managing a company’s interaction with current and future customers. It often involves using technology to organize, automate, and synchronize sales, marketing, customer service, and technical support.



By using the company’s internal CRM, the salesperson knows well in advance when the current subscription(s) are up for renewal, current price of those subscriptions in relation to last year’s price, how many times the customer has been contacted, if there were any unresolved problems associated with the customer, etc. In short, the good, the bad, and the ugly about all aspects of the customer appears on the screen.

The reality, however is that the CRM can only guide because ultimately, the salesperson and the librarian must interact with one another to achieve their mutual goals. So, once the sale is made, all efforts on the part of the sales rep will be to prepare for the renewal discussion, while at the same time figuring out new products that would fit for the customer’s portfolio. Because both the company and a smart sales rep keenly understand that “No customer is a customer until they renew.”

So, once the paperwork for a new business sale has been approved by both sides, and a date for the subscription to begin has been determined, what happens next? Here’s what it should look like for the mutual success of both parties as they pursue a path leading up to the next year’s renewal:

- ✓ July 1, 2015 – New database subscription for the Seymour J. Monkfish Memorial Public Library begins. The aggregator is supplying the library with their latest database on Trout Fishing to be accessed by 20 libraries throughout the state. Pete the salesperson who sold the database will either call or appear at the library to personally thank the information professional for the order. He will make sure the customer is satisfied and then, make an

appointment to visit the library for another meeting in 90 days which will be on October 1, 2015.

- ✓ October 1, 2015 – Pete, in preparation for this meeting has noticed that the database is getting heavy use by ten of the libraries. In looking at the map, he realizes that those libraries are located near bodies of water which would explain the usage. Pete is concerned that the other ten libraries are showing minimal use. He needs to come to the meeting with a plan to get more usage out of the other ten or possibly risk a cancellation when this comes up for renewal in nine months. In advance of this meeting, Pete will contact the librarian to ascertain if there are any other issues that need to be discussed at their October 1st meeting.

Similarly, the information professional needs to prepare for the meeting with Pete. Now that the “Trout Fishing” database has been in the library for three months, how’s it doing? Here are some questions for the info pro to ponder:

- Is the information contained on the database as advertised? Is it really complete and up-to-date?
- Is training for library staffs still needed and if so, can Pete set that up?
- How’s it being used? We know the people who like to fish for trout are the target audience, but could there be others who do not fish for trout that may have use for the database and why?
- What do the usage statistics tell us?
- Have there been any technology issues?
- What have the users been saying about it to the library staff? Do they like it or not?

Pete meets with the librarian on October 1st, they have a productive session and both have agreed to follow-up on their “to do” items as a result of this meeting. They plan to email each other with the answers to the issues presented and both expect resolution within 30 days. Pete dutifully makes an appointment to get together again in 90 days. Since 90 days represents New Year’s Day and neither Pete nor the info pro expects to be working that day, they settle on the next meeting to be on January 3, 2016.

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such as the fact that **Project Muse** is a stable platform where titles do not change and also that the books are DRM free. **Katherine** also emphasized something about the bibliographic record she felt was important for the user, and that is to have one record for print and electronic. It was a packed room and the speakers had to move on quickly, because of the limited time, but it was a great opening to a discussion that is very



important, and I would expect these speakers to be back with more granular data next year. 🐼

*That’s all the reports we have room for in this issue. Watch for the final reports from the 2014 Charleston Conference in the Dec15-Jan16 issue of **Against the Grain**. Presentation material (PowerPoint slides, handouts) and taped session links from many of the 2014 sessions are available online. Visit the **Conference Website** at www.charlestonlibraryconference.com. — KS*

- ✓ January 3, 2016 – For the last 90 days, Pete has closely monitored usage. Arranged and presented by the company's training department, they have conducted a WEBEX in support of the database for all the libraries. They decide to call the WEBEX "Best Tips for Trout Fishing & Easy Recipes to Prepare after the Fish Are Caught." As a result of this WEBEX, usage has gone up considerably and the ten libraries that were previously showing no activity are now showing some. Furthermore, Pete has sent all the libraries some visual aids describing the contents of the database along with five easy-to-prepare recipes for preparing freshly caught fish. And all the "to do" items from the last meeting have been resolved. The next meeting is set for March 1st.
- ✓ March 1, 2016 – Two events will occur on this day. Pete will show up at the Monkfish Library and the librarian will receive the renewal notice of this database by email since most companies in the information business send renewals out at least 90 days or more prior to lapse of the subscription.

Pete's goal for this meeting is to ascertain whether the library is happy with the current service, if all previous issues have been resolved and what the status is for the renewal that is due by June 30th.

The goal of the information professional is to alert Pete to any new issues, confirm that all previous issues have been resolved, whether there are any new issues to deal with, and inform him of the intent of the library to either renew the service or not.

- ✓ July 1, 2016 – If all goes well, the renewed subscription for "Trout Fishing" will enter its' second year as a resource at the library. And the cycle repeats itself to ensure that the library is getting the appropriate information, the company has secured the renewal revenue and both Pete and the librarian have properly done their jobs.

In summary, satisfaction can only be achieved when both the sales rep and the information professional are in communication. That communication will be a result of scheduled visits, phone calls, and emails between the two. All of which makes the post-sale relationship between the two parties just as important, if not more so, than the relationship that led to the initial sale.

Two songs, neither of which have any connection to renewing database subscriptions, occurred to me that describe the feelings of the salesperson as the information professional

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best outlets for their work.

determines whether or not to renew. I can think of no better song title to reference when the renewal is secured than "I Thank You" written by **David Porter** and **Isaac Hayes** originally recorded by **Sam & Dave**. Conversely, if the subscription is cancelled, then, the title of the **Hall & Oates** song, "She's Gone" written by **Daryl Hall & John Oates** truly describes the feeling of the lost renewal. 🐟

*Mike is currently the President of **Gruenberg Consulting, LLC**, a firm he founded in January 2012 after a successful career as a senior sales executive in the information*

industry. His firm is devoted to provide clients with sales staff analysis, market research, executive coaching, trade show preparedness, product placement and best practices advice for improving negotiation skills for librarians and salespeople. His book, "Buying and Selling Information: A Guide for Information Professionals and Salespeople to Build Mutual Success" is available on Amazon, Information Today in print and eBook, Amazon Kindle, B&N Nook, Kobo, Apple iBooks, OverDrive, 3M Cloud Library, Gale (GVRL), MyiLibrary, ebrary, EBSCO, Blio, and Chegg. www.gruenbergconsulting.com