

Positioning Value in the IT Solutions Industry

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There was a time not too long ago when the term “IT Solutions” was synonymous with “value.” After all, corporate America has always looked to IT Solution providers to be a strategic partner to their organization.

Now, in light of increasing competition clouding the difference between service providers, many IT Solution companies are dealing with:

- ◆ More RFP-based bidding than ever before.
- ◆ Being invited much later to the buying process, as customers exert more control over how they make purchases.
- ◆ Longer and more complex decision processes– with a greater number of people to manage and bring to consensus.
- ◆ Needing to sell value at the highest level of a customer’s organization at the same time you are negotiating price with purchasing and procurement.
- ◆ Or, decisions being relegated to low level purchasers or buying committees.

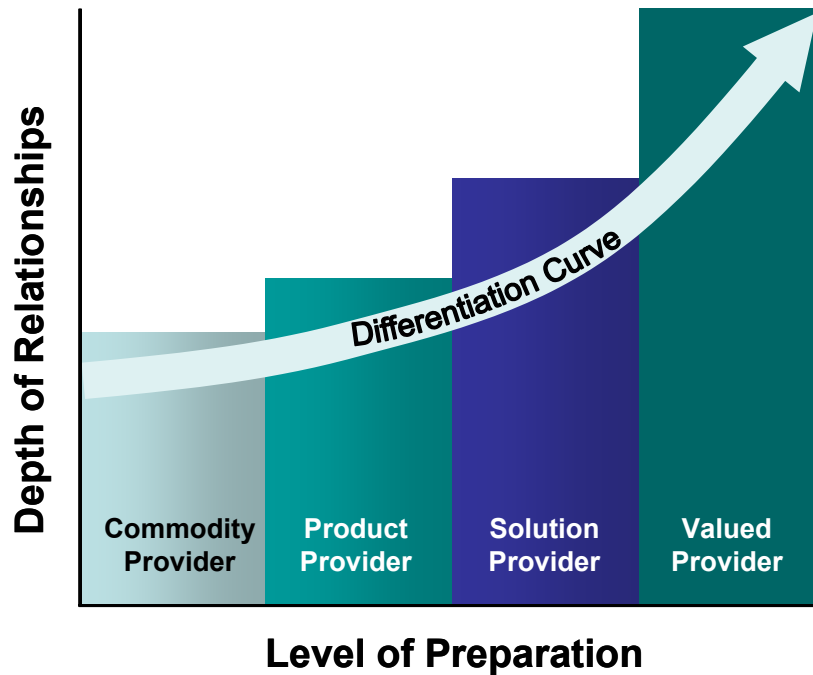
Diamond Performance Group has helped IT Solution companies address these issues by deploying leading edge strategies designed to drive up the talent level of the sales and account management teams.

The result of their work with clients focuses on increasing Sales and Account Management Professionals:

- ◆ ability to apply key selling techniques that help make price secondary;
- ◆ confidence and skill to elevate decisions to senior-level executives;
- ◆ patience and understanding to properly diagnose a selling situation and know how to win;
- ◆ Recognition of the key role attributes play in skills development.

On the following pages is a brief explanation of how Diamond Performance Group accomplishes this.

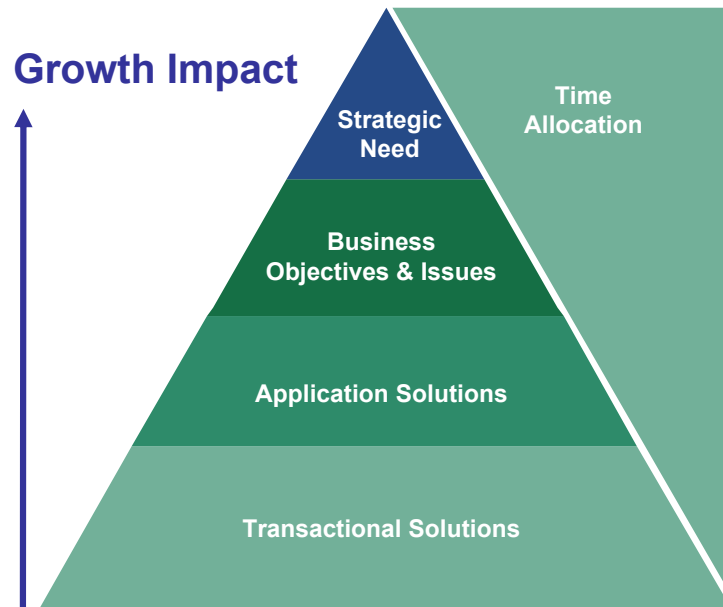
How Are You Perceived By Your Customer?



As you review the graph above, consider how your customers perceive *you*. Are you a “Commodity Provider,” a “Solution Provider,” or have you reached the status of “Valued Provider?” Chances are you have experienced all of these perceptions over time. The next question might be, “Have we given our salespeople a roadmap to help them understand how to focus on those activities that will truly effect customer perception?”

Two of these activities are described on the x and y axis of the graph. The first, “Level of Preparation” gets to the essence of how well prepared you are when you show up. And, not just how prepared you are to talk about your services, but more importantly, how well do you understand the customer’s business and the business issue that may be at the heart of why you are sitting in front of them in the first place. The second activity, “Depth of Relationships,” is all about selling effectively at all levels of the organization. It asks the questions: Have we developed coaches who want us to win? Do we have a plan for dealing with those who want to derail our selling efforts? And, do we know what role senior-level executives will play in the decision?

How Do You Interact With Your Customers?

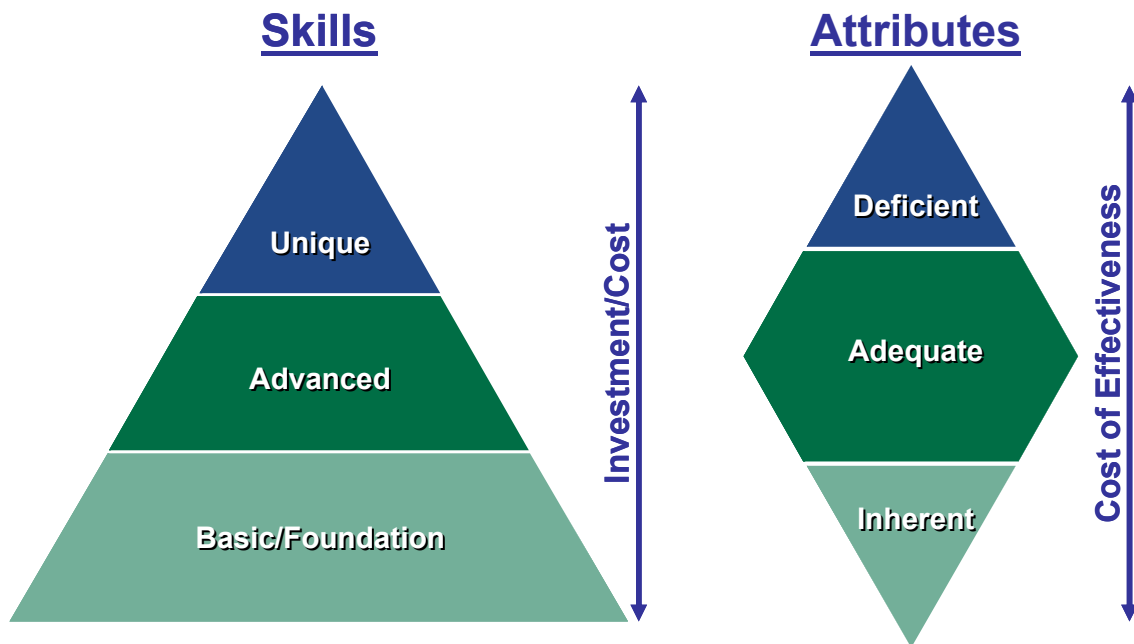


If you follow the logic of the graph above, you will see that the greater the growth impact of the customer, the more time we should be spending understanding their “strategic need” for our services. Unfortunately, the reality is that many sales and account managers end up inverting the triangle on the right. They spend most of their time focusing on the tactical and transactional aspects of the relationship and neglect the strategic.

Diamond Performance Group has developed leading edge training that equips sales and account management professionals with the tools and tactics to be strategic. Along with addressing the skill aspect of being more strategic, emphasis is placed on breaking down comfort zones that may impede progress (e.g., calling on senior-level executives, going around a contact, etc.)

Now that we’ve discussed the key skills that can differentiate today’s IT Solutions Representative, let’s look at what it takes to truly change behavior.

True Cost of Effectiveness



The visual above paints a picture of the true cost of developing an effective salesforce. The pyramid on the left shows three skill levels: basic, advanced and unique. In today's IT Solutions world a sales professional must possess unique skills in order to differentiate their services from competition. Unfortunately, most companies don't consider the right side of this picture before they throw money at trying to develop these unique skills in their salespeople.

For example, if a salesperson has deficient attributes (i.e., not motivated, bad attitude) the cost of their effectiveness is extremely high. Why? Because their ability to internalize the skills-based training you are providing is weakened by their insufficient attributes. At Diamond Performance Group we take a three-dimensional approach to developing the IT Solutions salesforce by pinpointing key skills and behaviors that drive performance, and by assessing and developing the attributes that enable development to occur.

If you would like to learn more about Diamond Performance Group's experience helping IT Solution companies increase the effectiveness of the sales and account management teams, you can contact us at (952) 233-5200 or at www.diamondpg.com.