

You're Not Losing on Price — You're Losing on Process

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I love hockey. I watch a ton of it, I coach my kids, and I've been playing the game since I was 10 years old. You could say I know just about everything there is to know about hockey.

And yet, as a player, I'm not that good at it. I play in an old men's league about once a week and never practice anymore. Whatever competencies I once had with hockey are fading, as being a dad, husband, and business owner have taken priority over honing my shooting, skating, passing, and stickhandling skills.

Just because I know it doesn't mean I'm any good at it.

That is the difference between knowledge and competencies. Competencies are a set of skills and knowledge that, combined, enable people to perform in a role.

Successful construction industry salespeople must hone certain competencies if they're going to win more target projects and win more often without being the low bid. Following is a list of them, along with brief descriptions:

Creating comfort: Can you read the room and create a positive vibe so that people enjoy your presence?

Situational awareness, the ability to notice and translate verbal/non-verbal communication cues, is a must, as is self-awareness, the ability to accurately see yourself through the eyes of others and adapt your behavior to create the right dynamic.



Questioning, listening, and challenging: Can you get to the truth efficiently without offending people?

You must know what questions will get you the information you need to devise a differentiating value proposition. Perhaps more importantly, you must know how to ask those questions without crossing the line and listen closely for what the client is really telling you with their answers.

Business acumen: Can you utilize the information you gather to develop a sales strategy for a project?

This is where years of experience and knowing your stuff pays off if you have the skills to communicate about what you know with ease. Understanding how projects are funded, contractors selected, and projects like these are built puts you in an

excellent position to shine, but you must put that knowledge to use in a sales context both in conversation and in your bid.

Presenting with impact: Can you inspire your audience with a compelling message about your company?

Charisma helps immensely as a skill but is significantly more challenging to train than most other skills. However, even mild-mannered people can present with impact if they're polished speakers with conviction in their message.

Securing commitments: Can you get commitments that stick from your clients throughout the sales process, including the ultimate commitment... the sale?

Confidence meets courage with a sprinkling of artful communication to create the ability to close for commitments. You must know what you're closing for at every stage in the process.

For example, you're probably not closing for the sale when you receive the bid invite. You're closing for a meeting to discuss the project. But when the time comes, you're closing for the project award.

Practice: Sell as a team and lean into your strengths, but whatever position you're playing in your sales process, commit to honing your skills.

How? Practice.

Saquon practices. Mahomes practices. Gretsky practiced. Skill doesn't develop itself.

Naturally good at some of these things? Congratulations! You have talent. Natural talents can be honed into elite skills with practice. You have a head start.

Bottom line: If your sales process is just "bid low and pray," you're leaving a lot of money on the table. And if your only skill development plan is reading articles like mine? Well... at least you're making progress. But seriously, go practice. 🖋️



About the Author

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