

Selling IT Solutions in Verticals: The Challenges



IT Solutions selling in verticals is a challenge for any vendor who offer industry specific solutions. The concept, which is put forward, is a mix and match of traditional and modern concepts of business processes in vertical marketing

systems and solutions selling. In this article I would be focusing on key areas where the real focus has to be made during the time of selling such solutions.

Identifying the target area

The solution provider has to know fully what the region's needs are, in the various vertical options available to him. The solution, which is designed, has to be in a niche area, which can put the solution provider in the top bracket within a specified time period. A thorough research has to be done on the industrial & technological advances in the target area/region. The results then can be referred back to the R&D team and who in turn can work on making the existing software tailored to the local needs.

Getting into the Customer's Shoes

The vendor who is targeting the prospective customer has to realise that he is not the first person to approach him. The customer before him would have already seen many vendors with many of them promising everything irrespective of his needs.

The vendor who has lots of patience to listen will eventually win his way into the customer's heart. There may be instances when the vendor may be totally put off by the customer's remarks. In this scenario, the vendor has to realise that the customer will be narrating his bitter experiences with so-called "Vertical solutions". One should not immediately jump to pitch for one's product in such situations.

Listen to all his problems and difficulties and if possible "lend" your shoulder. With this approach, it will be possible to glean basic information and problems related to the present systems. This will help the vendor in finding out the best possible way to win the trust of this customer and eventually push his product.

What does my solution offer? - A honest introspection

Self-introspection is the most important aspect for any vendor. It has to be done at regular intervals to understand one's strengths and weakness in the market. Ask any typical vendor, the standard statement will be "this solution available is the best you can have with your money". This statement will sound great for the sake of selling the solution. But the vendor has to realise if he saying the right thing in solving the problem of customer? Or is he making the customer go further away from him? The unique selling point here will be the domain expertise of the experts who design the solution in a particular vertical. Based on their knowledge and experience, the reliability and robust nature of the solution can be vouched for. Highlight this expertise when selling solutions in order to give the customer a level of comfort. In short, customer realises that he is with those people who know his needs.

Educating the customer- Vendor's Responsibility?

Educating the customer/target group is the most important aspect. As product-marketing goes into the orbit of channel sales, solution-selling goes takes the orbit of concept selling. We might be having the best solution to offer, but it is of no use until and unless the customer is educated about his needs. Here the prime responsibility lies with the vendor who tries to sell this solution. He has to clearly focus on the core needs of the customer and correlate it with the available functionality of the solution on offer. This comparison will help the customer to understand what he has and what he needs. This will halve the marketing efforts. As the customer starts singing what he needs, it becomes easier to tailor a solution.

Development, after sales support and bug solving—is it good enough?

As soon as the customer's needs have been identified, the first and foremost thing, which comes into a customer's mind is "Will this software run for next 5 years without any problems?" Or "Will there be upgrades available for this software?" Or "How will be the support?"

These are some of the common concerns every prospect will have to consider before going with the best-matched solution for his company. The vendor who is trying to sell across this solution has to address these concerns step by step and should remove all fears, which linger in the mind of the customer.

Price of the solution – does it suit the pocket or it is scary?

When the needs have been identified and all the parameters of the solution are meeting customer's requirements, we have to be extra careful in giving the base price. It has to be done in such a way that it does not create a touch me not situation with the customer. By this time the vendor should be smart enough to scan mind of the customer and the (a) Price it in such a way that it clinches the order. (b) The pricing has to be competitive with those of similar solutions available in the same segment.

The above discussion is based on some of the challenges faced by small, medium and large vendors. There will be others factors also, which I am sure could be of the same significance if not more. The real essence lies in taking a grip of the situation & circumstances and molding it according to one's understanding.

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