Business owners often believe that the easiest way to make a sale is to have the lowest price. But that's not always or even frequently true. Research reveals that even with identical competing products, low price is the dominant factor in the buying decision only 15 percent of the time.

What actually IS important to customers? It depends on the situation, but in general a variety of different factors can be more important than price including convenience, location, brand familiarity, authority and reliability.

However, customers will often focus on price, even when it's not all that important to them. The reason is that, of all the factors influencing them, price is the most easily understandable. It's often difficult for customers to get their minds around the value of convenience or their sense of confidence.

Regardless of how your product is priced versus the competition, your most important job will be to extract your customer from focusing on the price. While there are many ways to do this, they all follow this basic pattern:

- STEP #1: Figure out what's different about your offering. Unless the competitor's product is exactly identical and available in exactly the same way, there are going to be differences, and those differences will have some effect on the buying process.
- STEP #2: Figure out which of those differences customers value. For example, one customer might value convenience; another might value familiarity, yet another might value buying from a friend, etc. In other cases, differences might be product features, support, etc.
- STEP #3: Focus the customer on value rather than price. Gently direct your customer's attention away from the immediate distraction of the price and instead towards the actual impact (financial and emotional) of buying from you.

Suppose that your customers currently view you as overpriced versus your competition. Let's say the differences between your offering and that of your competitor are that 1) your products have a marginally longer life, and 2) you (as opposed to somebody else) are selling them.

To create the perception of value using the first differentiator (that is longer life), you show the customer that the value of longer life is far higher to them than the additional cost. Buying from you could prevent a crippling downtime that might easily cost them $10,000, for instance.

To create the perception of value using the second differentiator (that is you), turn yourself into a valuable resource. Present yourself with professionalism, find opportunities to be of service, and act in a consistent manner, so they know you'll be there when they need you.

Combine the two, and you stand a good chance that the customer will no longer be focusing on price.

This method applies even when the only differentiator is a high price. As is amply evidenced by the luxury goods market, being overpriced can actually make it easier to sell to customers who automatically associate "high priced" with "better."

BNI and in particular, our chapter, can help you define the value of your business and your products or services. One of the most helpful exercises I found was during a power team meeting, having other members tell you what they find attractive and compelling about your business - what do they see as your strengths. Some of the answers may surprise you and help you to better understand your own value and greatly enhance your ability to up your game in business.

*Derivative of a Geoffrey James article*