

## DAILY REPORT

## LAW INC

A firm seeking to represent a retailer in a corporate acquisition should propose a plan, raising the issues that would have to be solved before the deal could be closed.



**JOEY ASHER** is president of Speechworks, a selling and communication skills coaching company in Atlanta. He has worked with hundreds of lawyers and with dozens of firms helping them grow their business and connect with clients. He is the author of "Selling & Communication Skills for Lawyers" and "Even a Geek Can Speak." He can be reached at (404) 266-0888 or joeyasher@speechworks.net. His website is www.speechworks.net.

## Topping the Cutco sales pitch

GREAT SALES PRESENTATIONS should focus on solutions, not capabilities

ONE OF OUR NEIGHBORS, a college freshman, is spending the summer selling Cutco knives door to door. We heard her pitch, and she did great. The knives are impressive. We bought several.

But it struck me that most new business pitches are no more sophisticated than my neighbor's Cutco pitch.

Like the Cutco pitch, many new business presentations are little more than "capabilities presentations." They give a sense of credentials but don't speak to client needs. If you want to give a good sales pitch, you must give more than a "capabilities presentation." You must present a solution.

Here's how the Cutco pitch went. Sitting on my porch, my neighbor told us about the history of Cutco, brought out the knives, talked about them and did a demonstration. She showed that, unlike my knives, a Cutco knife can cut heavy rope.

Finally, she produced an order form and asked if we wanted to buy some knives.

### Capabilities presentations don't present solutions

While it was a fine pitch, the problem was that we don't cut rope in our kitchen. We cut steak. We carve chickens. We dice onions. And our vegetable peeler is broken. She didn't ask about our cooking practices. She didn't go through our kitchen and help diagnose problems where the knives could help. She left it to us to decide which wares would solve our needs.

Her approach was fine for a door-to-door knife pitch. She did great. She probably won't get rich selling knives. But she will get a nice sales experience.

But this capabilities approach is not fine for a firm that sells complex business services. Companies hire lawyers for one reason: to solve business problems. And if your pitch doesn't propose a solution, you're screwing up.

I reviewed a presentation given by a firm

after it had lost its bid to represent a national retailer in a business acquisition. The pitch began with a short history of the law firm, then detailed its areas of expertise, then talked about the experience of the partners.

That was it! I wouldn't have been surprised if it ended with one of the partners taking out an order form and saying, "so how many lawyers would you like to hire?" It was pathetic.

### Great pitches present detailed, valuable solutions

Great sales presentations focus on only one thing: a solution to the problem faced by the prospect. "We're looking for people who understand our business and can help us achieve our goals," one general counsel told me. I've heard the same from many others.

A firm seeking to represent a retailer in a corporate acquisition should propose a plan, raising the business and legal issues that need to be solved before the deal could be closed.

I know one firm that was asked to give a presentation for the chance to manage a large technology company's patent portfolio. Their presentation detailed a plan for maximizing the value of the firm's intellectual property. Sure they talked about capabilities, but only in the context of showing how they had accomplished similar plans with other clients.

Preparation took weeks. A loss would have meant they'd given away costly legal work. But their prospect was impressed. They were hired. The lawyers understood that a great pitch is a detailed solution to a business problem.

They avoided giving a Cutco knife pitch.

By the way, we were so impressed by the Cutco knives that we bought the small chef's knife, the kitchen shears, the vegetable peeler and the bread knife. The total cost was \$344. Cutco knives aren't cheap. But they have a life-time guarantee, never need sharpening and can cut heavy rope. ☎