Management of Field Sales
Prof. Jayanta Chatterjee
Department of Industrial & Management Engineering
Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur

Lecture – 11
Approaching the Customer with Adaptive Selling

Hello, welcome to the beginning of the 3rd week of our sessions on Management of Field Sales. Last week we looked at the various steps in the sales process and how we manage at each stage in that sales process to keep our flow and control. And then we looked at the steps in the buying process and during the last session we also saw the sales process and the buying process side by side to understand that how they can be harmonized, how they can be respond, how they can respond to each other. Now, we are getting into the next stage; that means, the preparatory stage in the sales process has happened and the buying process has matured.

And now we are in the actual sales encounter, we are face to face with the buyer. And so, in the next two sessions today's session and tomorrows I am going to discuss this whole process of adaptive selling and adaptive presentation. By presentation I mean the entire orchestration that happens before during and after in the face to face meeting with the intending buyer. So, today's topic will be that how we are approaching the customer, what happens and what should happen?

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So, the presentation strategy therefore, is kind of a well orchestrated plan it has some preparatory stages, it has some stages and processes during the encounter and then something that should happen afterwards. Obviously, it should start with some objective that what is exactly what we want to achieve in the sales presentation stage. Therefore, the presale presentation plan happens by way of deep enquiry by way of deep study and research about the customers need customers problems and so on as we have already discussed. And we have to always remember that the customer is not looking for a product or service the customer is actually looking for a resolution of a pain solution to a problem.

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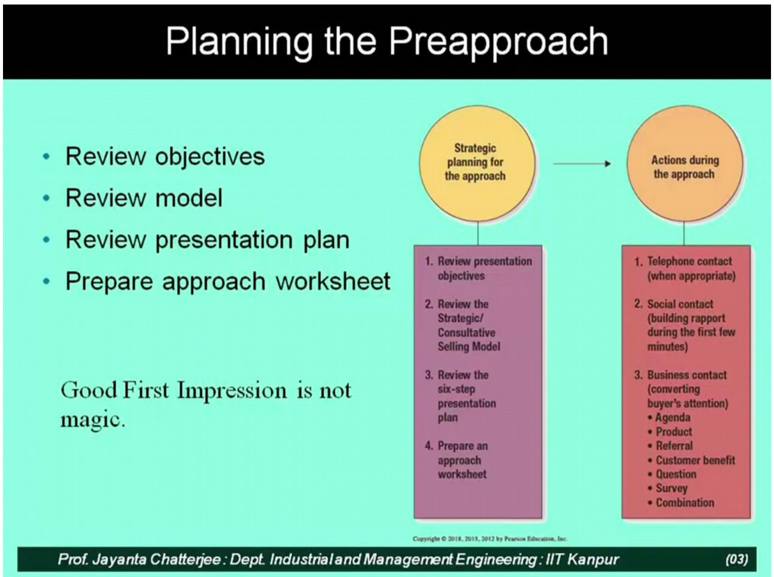

And that should guide all our presentation. So, if you look at this strategic plan for the approach and our actions during the approach side by side as you see in this slide then you will understand that how we are synchronizing the objectives and the process. Remember that the good first impression everybody says that the first impression in a sales encountered is very important the customer almost mixed up his or her mind in the first encounter.

Now this first encounter is not exactly magic it is not that it just happens as and DPT, it is actually most often a good encounter first encounter is the result of good pre planning and prior research. So, if you actually look at the left block which shows the strategic plan for the approach. Then you see there are 4 sort of stages there review the presentation objective be clear about the consultative selling model and review the 6 step presentation plan prepare and approach worksheet.

So, as you see it basically says the do prior research and do good rehearsal before you actually get into the encounter which happens on the right block. Obviously, there should be some kind of prior apart appointment that can happen through a telephone or call or that can happen through some kind of social referral. The social contact within the sales encounter is very important because that kind of bills helps to build the rapport helps to is the person to person interaction and less some foundation for a trust and relationship building.

So, the business contact during this time converting the buyers attention can be guided through these steps that is shown their agenda, product, the referral issues, customer benefit, questions, survey and combination. Now this questioning I will have a separate session and how to use strategically questions during the sales encounter.

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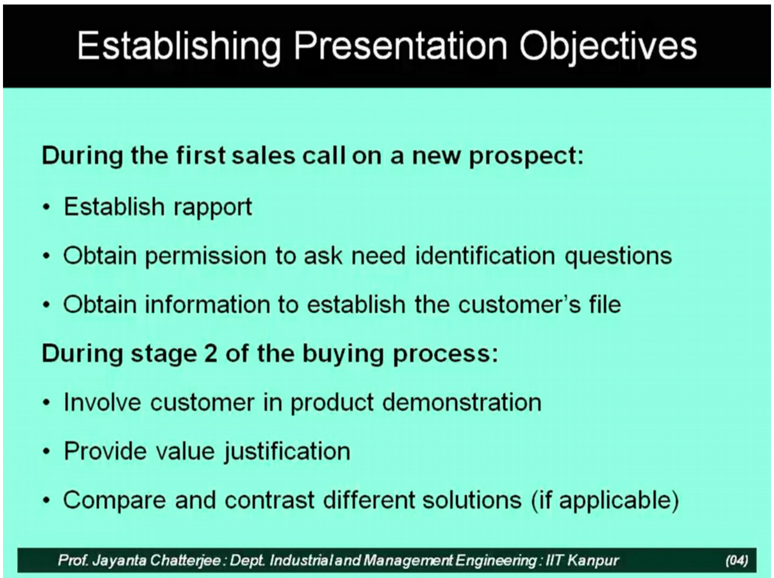

But today as an introduction you look at this issues the objectives that should actually guide your sales call establishing rapport and obviously, that will happen not by magic as I said just now, but through prior research you will should be able to establish that rapport including use of some social contact prior to the actual encounter.

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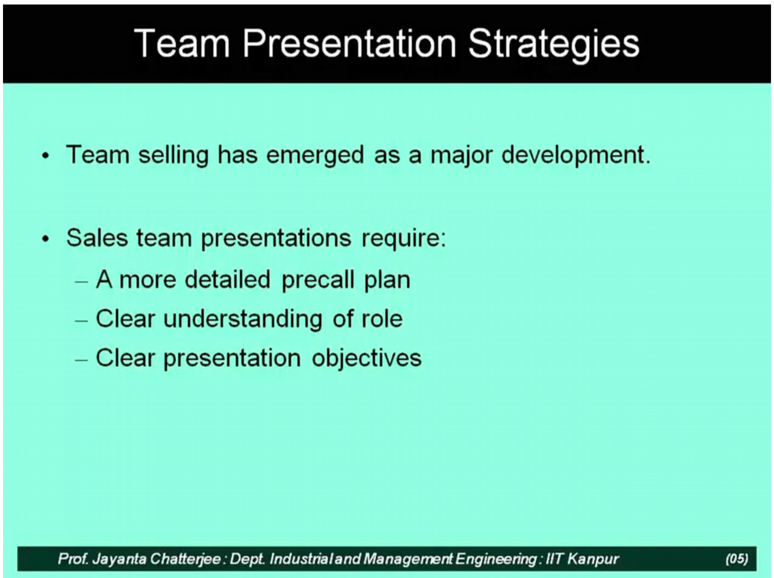

And the product demonstration etcetera or the response to questions and objections all those things happen at a later stage do not get into that usually in the opening part of the encounter. A brief reference to team selling these days particularly in business to business and even for large consumer durable sale, we have number of participants in the sales process. Just is from the sales side often there may be 2 or 3 persons responding to the buyers team which we also consist of 2 3 persons.

So, it is actually a group process rather than an individual one to one process. The one to one process is there in the central characters in the drama the key buyer and the key sales person, but there will be other characters in this particular encounter that happens there will be people from the sales side coming with different kinds of expertise.

So, in a B2B there will be some kind of a technical specialist in the sales team , there will be an account management person in the sales team , there will be some finance person sometimes in the sales team and on the other side there will be similarly people from the indenting side or the technical person, there will be some purchase person, some finance person. So, it is actually of course, it is very important that different characters particularly on the sale side they know each other's role clearly and they do not sort of clash or contradict or go counter purpose in front of the customer.

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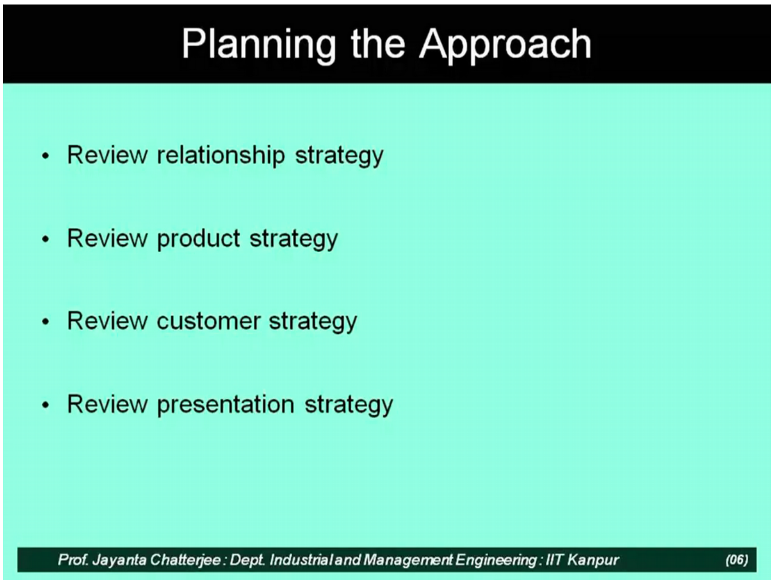

So, this things actually have to be well rehearsed and not that everything will go according to the rehears script, but at least some prior planning and some if then analysis that if the customer ask this; then who will be the person who will be responding, what will be the line of response all these things should be based on this relationship strategy, product strategy and the overall presentation strategy.

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The Six-Step presentation plan that I just now mentioned basically has these six steps approach, need discovery, a presentation, negotiation, close, servicing the sale. In a way you can see that this is a derived out of the sales process I mean that we discussed earlier.

So, fundamentally there is a preparatory stage, there is actual presentation and negotiation stage and there is an aftermath the closing and subsequent after sale service and so on. These six steps will normally happen sequentially, but at the stage 3 at the stage 4, there maybe some you know overlap it can happen in somewhat simultaneously maybe with a little offset in time, but then of course, the closing stage it becomes again a linear process.

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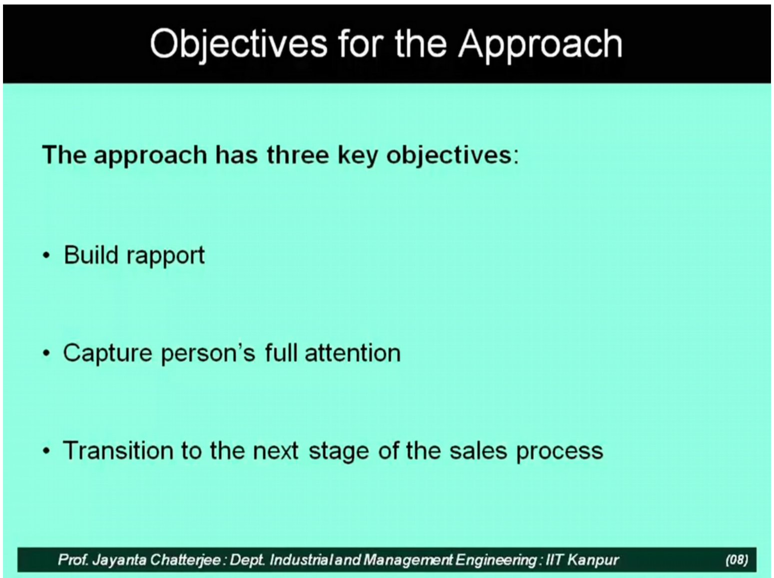

And the servicing of the sale of course is a very very important point that we are again and again emphasizing and this particular sessions, that what happens after sales will often create the long term relationship and how you handle customers queries and cry for help will actually create the bond.

And so, a customer who complains, a customer who contacts you with a problem after the sale is a very good candidate for a long term relationship based customer creation. So, objectives of the approach or a simple that you know build rapport, it have to capture the persons attention and transition to the next stage of the sales process. These are the objectives.

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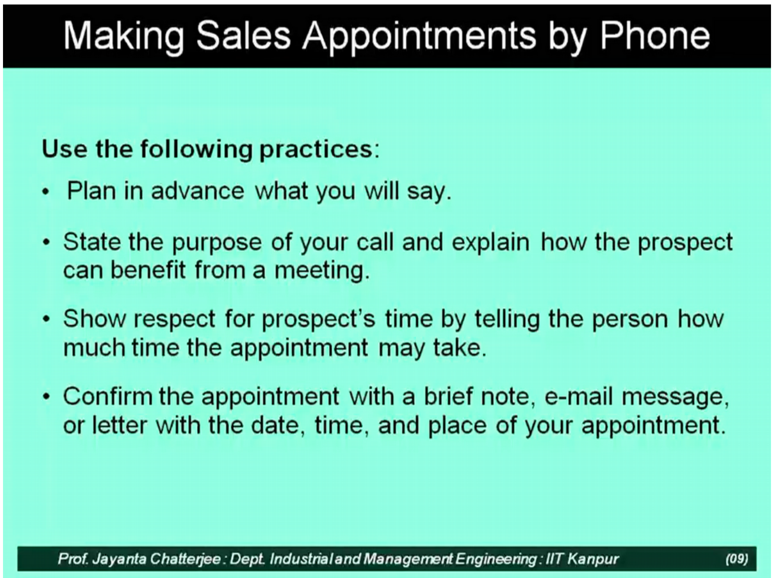

And there are some etiquettes to be followed during this approach stage, for example, in setting up the appointment even that is actually an encounter.

So, do not ignore or delegate to a totally untrained person or a person who really does not have the clue to what is happening in the sales process, but do not delegate it to an person who is not totally synchronized and well informed about your sales. So, ideally speaking the appointment should be the telephone encounter should be made by the sales person or his or her associate well clued into the current stage and the current status of the sales process. They established the objective of the call, the plan and all of that and obviously, you know you have to have the common sense of mutual adjustment for time you know do not intrude take the appointment where you can have quality time.

If it is actually the sales process that maybe some other time which you are trying to break into for some initial door opening, but I am talking about the actual sales process. So, here getting an appointment where you will have good attention from the customer is very very important. Even actually, some customers used as a strategy buying strategy you know deliberately they have some chaotic environment created during the sales process, but as a sales person you should know that even there if the person is orchestrating some kind of a you know lot of objections and lot of different types of people asking different types of questions.

Even if that orchestrated sort of attack happens to the sales team that also is actually in a way you are getting quality time because the buyers team might have prepared that how they are going to sort of destabilize your flow and so, you have to be therefore, prepared for such customers or such a encounters with some prior plan.

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Now, I was mentioning about some prior social contact which actually warms of the call, it actually creates a opportunity for some kind of bonding, as a if it is a referral then; obviously, it plays a good foundation for relationship building. And even if there are you know good referrals your encounter should also start with a warm social process.

So, you know make comments which are general environmental issues related comments you know it could be weather, it could be something that is happening in the city , it could be something that is happening in that particular industry. it could be related to the seasonal styles in case of b to c all of these things should be made there should be a definite genuine interest in the buyer expressed through compliments through not just you know random compliments, but well studied compliments go a long way to create some kind of a social rapport.

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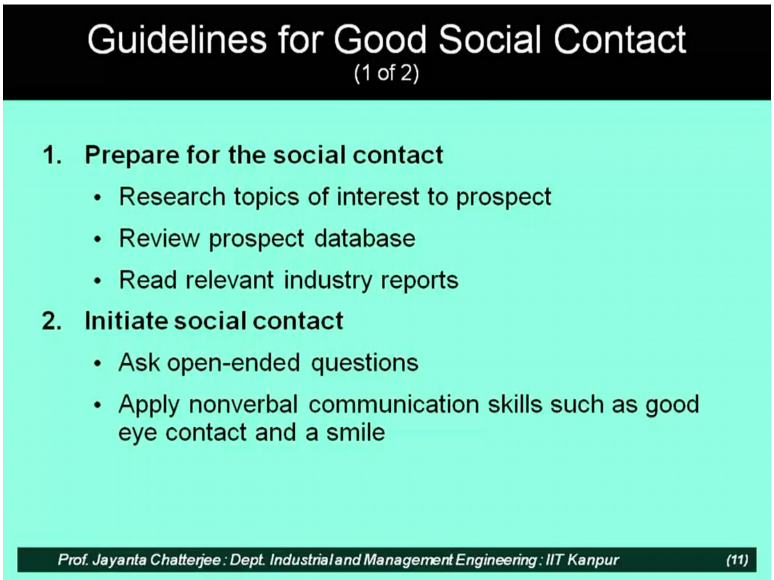

And also social referrals are very interesting a common known persons can create that bonding prospect. So, in the social contact process you should already be knowing that what are the topics of interest of the person. So, cricket or some other game golf, football all of these can be good opening gambits. It could be certain in some cases it is better to avoid direct topics in politics, but it is quite possible to discuss certain industry issues certain issues relating to the economics economic condition in the country and so on. And the social contact actually should have some open ended questions so, that it can lead to some insight into the persons mind.

So, so remember that and also very carefully use your nonverbal communication skills in your body language as well as in observing and quickly analyzing in your mind the nonverbal clues coming from the customer's body language and selection of words and gestures and so on.

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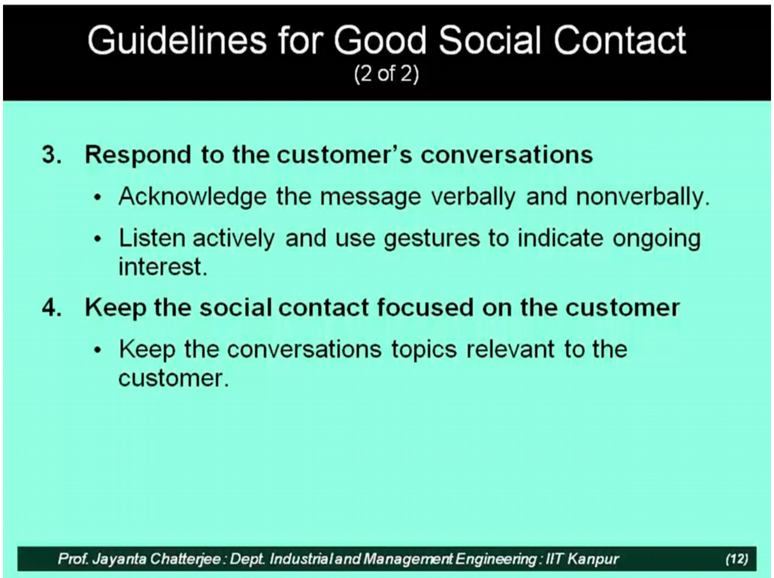

The conversation should be the flow in the conversation is definitely the sellers responsibility to keep the flow easy, warm, a friendly. And even when the customer is maybe offensive or rude there is absolutely; obviously, no point in responding to that situation with rudeness you should have that control in your conversational skill to create an even keel, even if the initial part is little you know aggressive from the customer side.

And always keep the conversation focused on the customer his or her industry organization their needs, their problems all and all obviously, when you are talking about customers problems or a challenges in their industry do it in a way which is does not offend the person on the other side.

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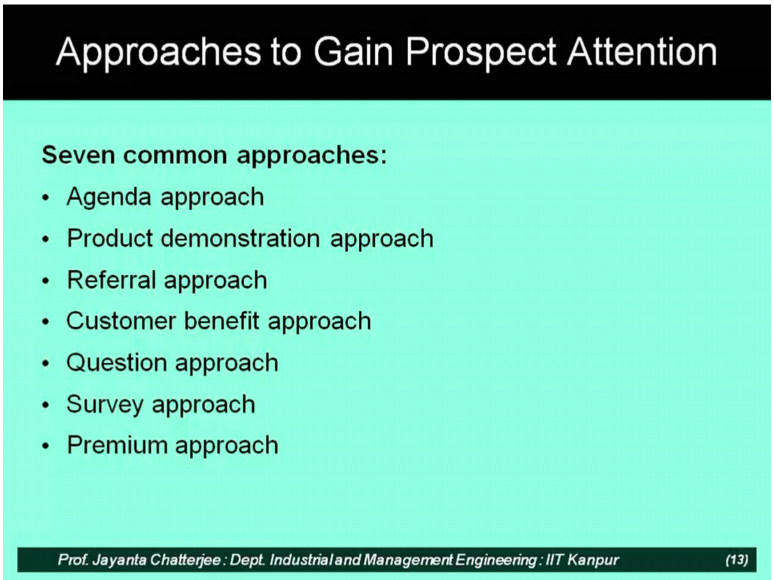

And the approaches that you should have this flow as you see here agenda, product demonstration approach, referral approach, a customer I think I mentioned all of these already.

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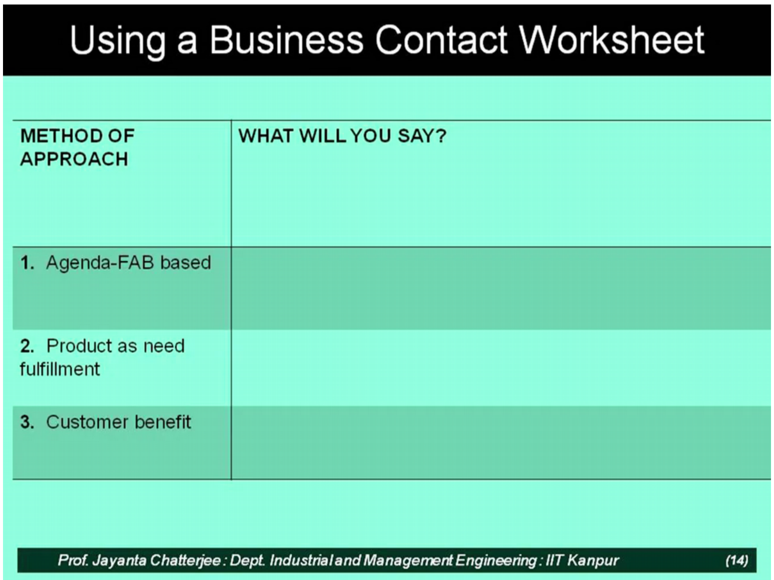

So, a good idea is and today's session with the, this couple of charts is to create a sort of a game plan for the encounter using this kind of a columns. That on one side you have for example, the agenda the agenda should obviously, be based on the fab principles that we discuss that is features should be presented through the discussions on advantages and benefits for the customer not the other way round; that means, not start with the bells and whistles of the product of the features in the product and then say we have these features which will help you with this advantage and this benefits you will accrue.

Rather than that you discuss about the challenges faced by the customer in his or her requirement and then look at the kind of advantages that should be aimed that the benefits one should try to derive from the product or service that is under negotiation and in that way you bring out the competitive features of your offering. So, that is how actually you set the agenda key points in the agenda and highlighting again product as neat fulfillment so, match the advantages and benefits with the features.

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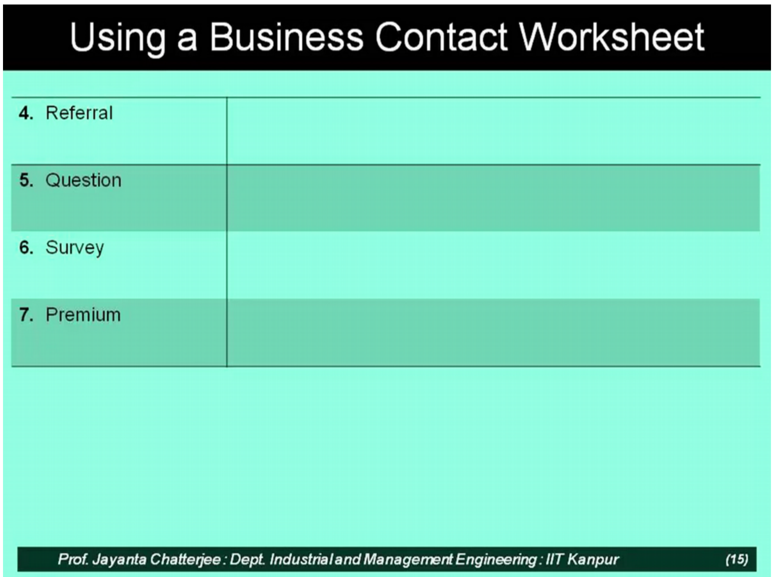

The customer benefits and then of course, this referrals and how you will use the referral what referral you will use in the opening part, what referral you will use when objections are raised, what referral you will use at the later stage? All these referrals mean here something that you have already done or some person who is a common acquaintance or somebody who has expressed opinion about your goods or service. So, it could be some testimonials, it could be some pictures of some installation cells where, it could be some story from the press about a particular installation elsewhere this can be different kinds of referrals which can be used skillfully as the sales process progresses.

Sometimes, even telephone calls can be used skillfully while the sales process is going on. If you do have some customers strongly supporting your case for a new sale in another organization and the customer may be willing to come to bat for you. So, that can be used in some cases when the stake is very high.

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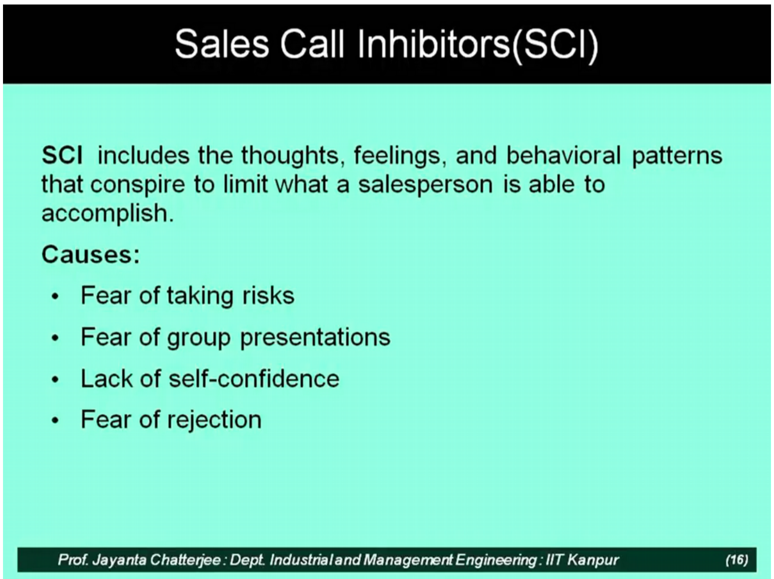

And with this kind of flow remember all these chart making preparation will not work, if you actually suffer from some inhibition within yourself. If you remember in the very 1st week we discussed that how important it is for a good salesperson to have self mastery; self management is the beginning step in sales management and.

So, some of the things that inhibit a good call are fear of taking risks. So, this different kinds of risk analysis that if the customer asks you to you know reduce your price by 35 percent , what is the level of risk and how you are going to handle it? It is better to address those beforehand anticipate those fear creating situations beforehand and do that risk mitigation analysis. So, that you are not of balance during the sales process.

Again I mention all these are about self management which is the first step for good sales management. Sometimes you know if you are a salesperson and you are very good at one to one interaction and you are you kind of become nervous when you are making a public presentation or a group presentation then do not hesitate to take help from one of your colleagues who may be more adept at group presentation.

So, understand your strength and weaknesses and accordingly manage the flow and fear of rejection is something that is sales person lives with all the time and there is no magic solution to it you have to just manage it. It will be there will be objections there will be sometimes rejection approaches used by the buyer is a strategy you should know how to handle all of that ok. So, these are some common sense general indicators. In the next session I will take up a little bit more structural issues with respect to the sales call.

Thank you.