Not interested or not qualified?

By Monika D'Agostino

The other day I got a connection request from LinkedIn. The person's profile was very scarce as the young lady had just started out in sales. The reason I accepted her request was simple... I am on a mission to elevate the reputation of sales and its practitioners, so what better opportunity than being connected with a person who is starting this difficult career?

A couple of days after I connected with her, she sent me a request through LinkedIn offering her service (what else is new?) The email contained the following phrase:

"My guess is before you retire you'll probably change jobs... which means you'll go a "recruiting process" about 100 times. It's like professional frog kissing... and there's always one slimy one."

Always be relevant

Aside from the fact that the email missed a word (through), the proposition was fairly attractive. Very politely, I wrote back (because I believe in business courtesy) that I was not interested, because of my background, which she should have researched before sending the email. "I am not a sales person, but a business owner, so the offer is not relevant to me" was my response.

At that point, the only appropriate answer to me should have been a nice "thank you for clarifying".

BUT, there was another email that landed in my inbox just the next day, stating the following:

"I understand! Thanks so much for your response, in fact 'thank you but I'm not interested' is our most common response. When you have 90 seconds, check this video."

It's not that I am not interested, I am not your target audience!

At that point I decided to write this, because there is a pattern here and readers of my articles know that I usually pick topics that showcase common mistakes or misunderstandings.

Not being interested is quite different from not being qualified
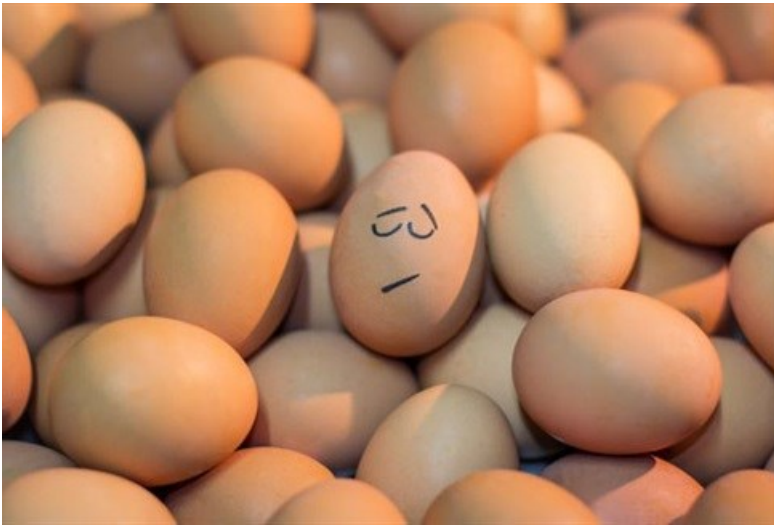
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So, what are the differences?

Sometimes, service offerings are very compelling, really suited for my business needs but I might not be interested because of budget restraints, not having enough time to look at the offering, or any other valid reason that keeps me from pursuing the offer.

It ain't me, babe!

Not being qualified for a service offering means that the person who approaches you didn't do their research. They don't know enough about you and/or your company, or you are not the decision maker for the product/service offering.

If you don't do your research as a sales person, you might end up targeting people who are not qualified to begin with.

This young lady was obviously trained to search out contacts on LinkedIn, using the keyword "sales" and not qualifying them any further, or she doesn't really understand the service that she is selling. Both possibilities are common and this example, although quite perfect when it comes to how NOT to identify qualified buyers for your offering, is not that rare. This person was young and inexperienced, so I wrote her back explaining the difference between not interested and not qualified (my way of paying forward), but it's a lesson for all sales people. Veterans and beginners alike: Research, research, research.

Develop a prospect avatar so you understand who is qualified for your service offering and determine who is not. This will not only help you prospect more effectively, it will also keep you from being a time waster to the people you target.

ABOUT MONIKA D'AGOSTINO

Chief Consultative Sales Officer at Consultative Sales Academy - I work with highly motivated individuals and organisations to create success by utilizing a consultative sales approach. Contact details: website: www.consultativesalesacademy.net | Twitter @monikadago | LinkedIn
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