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Training Exercises & Activities

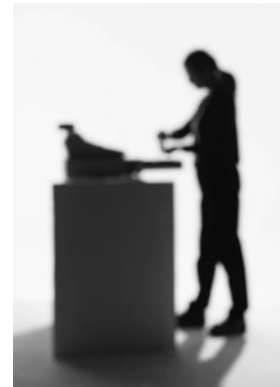
Sales Training

SUBJECT:

LISTENING FOR NEEDS

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

**(1X) COPY OF THE FOLLOWING EXERCISE
FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL**



PREPARATION:

Print or Photocopy an appropriate number of Exercise sheets for each participant.

ACTIVITY

1. Distribute the Corner Store Inventory Sheet (only)
2. READ aloud **The Story of Farmer Noble**. Participants can make notes on the Corner Inventory Sheet, prepare questions, and check items to offer immediately or order from the distributor.
3. REVIEW and discuss the results of the Corner Store Inventory Sheets with the participants. There may be a variety of responses based on individual perception and style.
4. Discuss OBSERVATIONS and review the EXTRA CREDIT Questions.
5. Distribute the REVIEW, OBSERVATIONS and EXTRA CREDIT sheets for personal reference and reflection.



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The story of Farmer Noble

You have just opened up a corner store in a rural town. This is your first week after the grand opening. You have a list of items in your inventory, and a list of items that are not in inventory but you order them from the local distributor. It takes at least 45 days for deliveries from the local distributors. In your inventory are the items that you anticipated would have the most demand. As the store sole proprietor, you need to be cautious about the items that you hold in inventory. You need to sell and rotate inventory quickly to maintain profitable return on your investment.

As you proudly turn the sign in your front door window to “OPEN”, you are excited to see a familiar face waiting patiently outside. The person waiting for you is Farmer Noble, the most respected and successful farmer in the county. The other farmers in the area keep an eye on the decisions of Farmer Noble. They emulate his planting cycles, crop rotation selection, and his buying habits. By emulating Farmer Noble, the other farmers in the area hope to have the same success. You recognize that this is a big opportunity for you.

You graciously invite Farmer Noble and his daughter into your store. Farmer Noble wipes his boots on the doormat outside the door before stepping into the new store. He whispers to his daughter to do the same.

Then Farmer Noble gives you a firm handshake and begins to tell his tale.

“I would like you to meet my daughter,” says Farmer Noble. “Welcome to our little town. I hope you do not mind if I look around your store. It is nice to have someone nearby, the other place that we went to was about two hours down the road. Of course, there is the store in Jefferson City, which is only one hour away. Unfortunately, that place in Jefferson City could never get me the items that I needed, so they were always trying to sell me something that I had could not use. As they say, a fool and his money are soon parted, and I did not get to have the biggest farm in these parts by being a fool. So we drive all the way to Lancaster, two hours away, because they know how to treat a lady. Isn’t that right Laura?”

With that, Farmer Noble pats his daughter on the head and allows her to wander down the aisles of the store.

“It has been a long, hard winter,” continues Farmer Noble. “I haven’t been able to get to the store for months. Now I am low on supplies and behind on my schedule. I need to start planting the new crops, and because of the bad weather, I only have two weeks to get it all done. To make matters worse, my tractor needs work and my plough horse is getting old, just like me. There was a time when that horse could plough my whole farm, but not any more.”

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“I do not know what I am going to do about my tractor. To tell you the truth, I never could do a thing with tractor, cars or any of that mechanical engine stuff. I got a green thumb, not a gas powered one. My son was visiting last week and told me that the tractor needs motor oil, spark plugs and new brake pads. He pointed all that stuff out and then went right back to playing with his dogs.” Farmer Noble smile and shook his head.

Farmer Noble started to wander through the store. “Those dogs had puppies, by the way. Cutest things that you ever saw, running around the yard and chasing the rabbits when the snow melted. Laura was a little afraid that his puppies might catch her rabbit, snowflake, but that rabbit was too fast for those dogs. The wild rabbits just seemed to be playing with his puppies, running them in circles until they just got too tired to chase them anymore. Once the dogs got too tired to run, those rabbits would walk right up to them and wiggle their noses. Snowflake was right there with the rest of the rabbits, just laughing at those dogs. I will have to do something about those rabbits and those dogs soon. The rabbits will try to eat my crops when they start to push through the soil. I know that my daughter loves to watch them every day, especially Snowflake, but I must do something. If those dogs chase after those rabbits into the hills, then those dogs might become an evening meal for the coyotes that live up there. Michael just loves those dogs, as much as his sister loves those rabbits. Now that he is off to school at the University, the next time that he will get to see his puppies will be about four months from now. He is going to be surprised at how much they grow in four months. When he does get back, I am going to get him to help me paint that barn, and maybe put on a new roof.”

“Well,” sighed Farmer Noble, “I hope you don’t mind that I just talked your ear off. Tell me, what can you do for me today?”

It is your turn to speak. Using your inventory list, and your list of items that you can order from the local distributor, what items are you going to offer to Farmer Noble today?



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Corner Store Inventory

Check the items that you will offer today.

Check the items that you will order from the distributor.

Offer	Item in Inventory	Order	Item from local Distributor
	Oats		Collar & Leash
	Salt Lick		Brake Pads
	Horse Shoes		Wheat Seed
	Saddle		Apple Seed
	Spark Plugs		Fence Posts
	Motor Oil		Wire Fence
	Dog Food		Post Hold Digger (Shovel)
	Cat Food		Red Paint
	Orange Seed		Dog Snacks / Treats
	Corn Seed		Horse Shoes
	Bird Seed		White Paint
	Rabbit Poison		Horse Brush
	Screws		Nails
	Hammer		Coloring Books
	Paintbrush		Rabbit Food

List follow-up questions / clarifying questions would you like to ask, and key points for consideration in offering the sale.



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REVIEW

Discuss the results with the participants. The following is the suggested result, although individual results may vary.

Offer	Item in Inventory	Order	Item from local Distributor
X	Oats	X	Collar & Leash
X	Salt Lick		Brake Pads
	Horse Shoes		Wheat Seed
	Saddle		Apple Seed
	Spark Plugs	X	Fence Posts
	Motor Oil	X	Wire Fence
X	Dog Food	X	Post Hold Digger (Shovel)
	Cat Food	X	Red Paint
	Orange Seed	X	Dog Snacks / Treats
X	Corn Seed		Horse Shoes
	Bird Seed		White Paint
	Rabbit Poison		Horse Brush
	Screws	X	Nails
X	Hammer	X	Coloring Books
X	Paintbrush	X	Rabbit Food

Farmer Noble does not want offers for items that he does not need. You should be able to justify the need for anything and everything that you offer.

- Oats and Salt Lick are valuable for feeding the plough horse. Horse Shoes may have value and it may be worth asking.
- A saddle has no value for Farmer Noble. You do not ride a plough horse.
- Spark Plugs, Motor Oil and Brake Pads have no value to Farmer Noble. He has no mechanical expertise to install these items, and his son will be away for four months (too long). Better to refer him to a mechanic.
- Dog Food, Dog Snacks, Collar and Leash are good items for the puppies.
- Hammer and Paintbrush may be useful later, for the fence and the barn. You could offer these items today, with the offer that paint and fence would arrive in 45 days from the distributor.
- Cat Food, Bird Seed and Screws have no value.
- Orange Trees and Apple Trees take too many years to grow and bear fruit, not a yearly crop. Farmer Noble rotates crops yearly.
- Corn is the only option for crops. 45 days is too long for Farmer Noble to wait for the Wheat seed to arrive.
- Rabbit Poison would also endanger Snowflake, and harm to the wild rabbits might upset Farmer Noble's daughter. Suggest a fence as an alternative. This would also require Fence Posts, Hammer, Nails, and a Post Hole Digger. Then suggest Rabbit Food to Snowflake, and perhaps enough to divert the wild rabbits from eating the crops.

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OBSERVATIONS

Sometimes it is difficult to maintain concentration, especially when the customer tells stories and seems to wander from subject to subject. However, the actions and the stories of the customer can frequently give you important insight and clues that may be critical to your ability to sell today, and your ability to develop a relationship for future sales.

EXTRA CREDIT

What was the name of Farmer Noble's daughter?	Laura
What was the name of Farmer Noble's Son?	Michael
What was the name of the rabbit?	Snowflake
How often does he rotate crops?	Yearly
How long to get supplies from the distributor?	45 days
How long does Farmer Noble have to plant crops?	Two weeks
Where is Michael?	University
How long did Farmer Noble drive before?	Two Hours
How far was the store in Jefferson City?	One Hour
Why did Farmer Noble drive so far before?	Preferred the other store

Why is this important?

Farmer Noble has informed you of the items that influence his purchasing habits. He is willing to drive farther for someone who understands his needs and who will not try to sell something that he does not need. Farmer Noble drives farther because the other store will order the items needed that are not in inventory.

Farmer Noble has also demonstrated that his family is very important to him. In addition to recognizing the needs of Farmer Noble, you should recognize the needs of those other people who influence his purchasing habits. You should be considerate of the needs of the other family members, like the items for the dogs, the coloring book for the daughter, and the concern for the rabbits as well as the concern for the crops. Farmer Noble has a need to plant quickly, but his attention and his conversation was still on his family. Listen to the customer and observe all of their needs, determine how this can impact and influence your business.