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Something about the sales funnel

by [Mark L. Vincent](#)

Any qualification I have to say something about the sales funnel rests on three legs (yes, three-legged stools can wobble, but that makes them useful where flexibility is required, such as tilting forward to milk a cow).

Leg one: I am the son of a multi-time million dollar round table insurance salesman and I learned at his knee.

Leg two: I've helped build several organizations from something into something

more, or from nothing into something. This means repeatedly figuring out specific marketplaces and how to reach them.

Leg three: I know enough about traditional and inbound forms of marketing to be dangerous, enough to capture your attention enough to get this far in the article!

Central to building sales is moving people from disinterested to interested, from interested to becoming a client or

customer, and from customer to becoming an advocate for others to participate. This is working the funnel.

Each product or service offering targeted to a specific marketplace will have a different shape and size to its funnel. Your organization might have other names for it: pipeline, canal, snake, pyramid, or moves management. It doesn't matter the name, it is a staged way to take



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measure of the relationship and a set of efforts to move people from one place to the other.

A great friend of mine, [Carlos Romero](#), helped me learn the difference between product and process as one works with the funnel. He taught me this years ago while he was working on his MBA and we were only newly acquainted.

If I am product centered I focus on selling to a customer. If they aren't interested, I move on to the next prospect. Hitting a sales goal is the goal, rather than building a satisfied client base.

If I am process centered, however, I focus on assisting the customer to meet their goal. I find out what they are interested in and find a way to help them achieve it if they will let me. My goal is a satisfied client base that somehow produces an ever

larger book of business, and an ever greater number of referrals almost incidentally. When one is process-centered the funnel seems to build itself.

Carlos taught me three levels of relationship. Only the third is client-centered, person-centered, process-centered.

- 1. We can't see each other.**
- 2. You see what I might do for you, but I only see what I want from you.**
- 3. I see you and you see me. Together we make something happen.**

Let's say I sell cars. At Level One you aren't interested in the models I have and you don't fit the customer profile I have in mind. We can't even get a conversation started.

At Level Two, you have an idea about what you want but I can't hear it because I'm too busy with my scripted pitch. If I sell you anything at all, it will be a disappointment to you.

At Level Three, you experience me as a deep and curious listener who reflects back what I hear you saying you want. I might even ask you to give me a moment to do some research in how we might help you meet your goals before showing you specific models. The goal is for you to be so pleased over my efforts on your behalf that you return again, and send your children, and your neighbor, and your co-workers.

If I pursue relationships as a Level Three, Level One pretty much disappears. My genuine interest in people helps me see folks I might otherwise never have had the chance to serve. Level Two relationships are switched around, becoming a place where I can still serve you (I see what I might do for you, but only if you let me). Level Three becomes the zone of moving people efficiently and productively through the funnel, not because I forced or manipulated anything, but because I played my part in making it possible.

Thanks Carlos! Your wisdom has enriched my life and the service Design Group International offers to its clients.

