

Customer-centric science of selling

Tank Utility and Impact GTM improve top of funnel and deal size

Challenge – Increasing Deal Size

Tank Utility had been growing 100+ percent year over year since its inception in 2014 as business had always been strong in the propane fuel market. Staying attuned to every element of his business, in 2019, CEO Amos Epstein, was aware that the market had become increasingly competitive over the past 18 months. As a result, there were two key factors that Amos wanted to focus on and knew he would need outside support to help create that change.

To stay competitive the Tank Utility team would need to showcase their key differentiators during prospect engagement so they would not need to compete on price. The sales team was only closing one-third of their new business proposals and didn't want to compete like a commodity or impact Tank Utility's growth momentum.

Amos learned that customers and prospects were starting to show signs of readiness for large deals and there was opportunity to increase the size of their deals. The sales team's previous strategy was to sign a small deal then work on growing the contract. But that kept business smaller up front which he wanted to change.

Solution – Customer-Focused Discovery

There is perception with investors and stakeholders that there is a weakness within the organization if you need to bring in a consultant. Investors believe that a startup's Go-To-Market strategy must be better than others and must be 95 percent focused on growing the business.

Amos explains, "With a start-up, the amount of value that we expect from each team member is extremely high and by bringing in an outside consultant, one of the risks is the use of team members' time. We needed someone that provided value from the start."

The Tank Utility team has a lot of expertise in development, deployment and service and needed someone with enterprise sales experience as well as software sales expertise. Enter Mark Maragni, principal of Impact GTM who was brought on to optimize a Go-To-Market strategy.

Mark was able to draw on 30 years of experience with growth stage companies where he implemented and advised on enterprise B2B go-to-market, with a focus on sales optimization.

Mark met the team at a 2019 Heat tradeshow and listened to exchanges between the sales team and prospective customers.

“Mark listened to several sales calls and coached the team from the day we brought him on. He rolled up his sleeves and jumped right in,” confirmed Colin Sullivan, Business Development and Partnerships Manager, Tank Utility.

The sales team was impressed with Mark’s approach and after working with Mark, began asking customer-focused questions that improved their ability to correctly identify issues. Questions included:

- What is the nature of their business (lifestyle, growth, profitability etc.)?
- How many tanks does the ideal customer have? What is the maximum and minimum size of the tanks needed to engage?
- What is their back-office ERP system?
- What is the business trying to accomplish in terms of growth and problem mitigation?
- Are they new to monitoring/use monitoring?
- Who is the recommender and who makes the purchasing decision?

These discovery questions made the initial engagement less of a high-pressure push which immediately started generating more qualified leads.

Results – Customer-Focused Engagement

Mark worked with the business development managers to develop a more effective engagement process that enabled differentiation and value in a crowded, sensor-based market.

Tank Utility now has three new tools improving their effectiveness:

- 1) **Presentations** that focus on customer issues and resolutions.
- 2) **A presales process** that was built upon the existing method but delivered more effectively. Now the results are visually pleasing and displayed in a pertinent way for prospects.
- 3) **Customer-focused proposal** that demonstrates Tank's deep understanding of the prospect's business and how they are uniquely qualified to engage.

Ultimately, the sales approach has become more customer-centric approach asking prospects where their problem lies and connecting the dots rather than pitching a solution. The key overall results include:

- Change in Tank Utility's go-to-market approach.
- More productive engagements with Enterprise accounts.
- Discovering customer requirements instead of talking about the Tank Utility features.
- Getting in front of the right people.
- Making sure every discussion is applicable to each of the contacts they meet with.

About Tank Utility

It all started with a ski house weekend for Enernoc employees. Upon entering the house, they went to turn on the heat only to find that the propane tank was empty! After a long weekend of wearing layers and dealing with frozen pipes, the founders and team drove back to Boston with an idea to ensure this doesn't happen to other propane customers.

And Tank Utility was born.

While Tank Utility's offering has changed over the years (especially expanding our offerings to a solution for fuel marketers), the tenets for how we started have remained consistent. We aim to provide transparency to both fuel marketers and propane homeowners in order to greatly enhance the delivered fuel experience.