

Master Salesmanship™

The Guide to Superior Selling Techniques

“The profession of selling has become commoditized. It is crucial for sales professionals to gain as much competitive advantage as possible.”



Seven Deadly Sins Of Selling

by Drew J. Stevens, Ph.D.

The recent economic ebbs and flows critically impact selling success in the new millennium. Selling today is harder than ever. With the array of competition, customer-to-customer influences and amount of information found on the Internet, the profession of selling has become commoditized. It is crucial for sales professionals to gain as much competitive advantage as possible.

In today’s environment, it’s important to produce enough value to create long-standing relationships. Relationships are the key to future business opportunity. People want to do business with people they know and trust. Those with the best relationships are the most successful.

According to research, 92 percent of most organizations fail to provide sales education. This is unfortunate since the lack of proper processes impacts lead generation and closure rates. In addition, proper education helps sales professionals overcome uncontrollable environmental forces and competitive pressures. It is important for sales professionals to achieve some level of self-mastery. In other words, sales professionals must be more cognizant of their strengths and limitations during the sales process.

There is a noticeable difference between those sales professionals with self-mastery and those without. While many educational resources point to the good qualities of sales professionals, there are seven habits that can negatively impact sales closure rates. These factors present obstacles for any business development person. What follows is a brief description of each habit, as well as tips to help overcome the obstacles.

1. Service. According to research by HR Challey, more than 50 percent of every selling situation involves customer service. With competition increasing and the ill effects of a fledgling economy, sales professionals need to be more attentive to customer service. It is the clear differentiator in today’s marketplace.

Customer-to-customer influences grow increasingly more important in a competitive environment. Moreover, the proliferation of both the Internet and social media can instantly make or break organizational effectiveness. Ensure that customer service is at the forefront of every selling conversation. Remember, customers are the purpose of your business, not an interruption of it.

2. Communication. Two of the most important things in selling are the art of communication and the art of building a relationship. Yet, many sales training programs focus more on how to present or close rather than proper articulation methods. Consumers desire healthy conversation so they can build trust and respect. The art of communication is the pinnacle to building any long-standing, value-based relationship. Focus energy on:

- ✓ Terrific listening skills
- ✓ Agitating questions
- ✓ Decent vocabulary.

3. Follow up. Nothing is more deplorable than sales professionals who do not follow up, especially those who wait several days to follow up after receiving a voice mail, e-mail or some other communication from a client. If clients are the most important aspect of an organization’s business, then nothing is more important than returning messages. If customer service is a sales differentiator, then follow-up must be part of the process. A good practice is to return calls within 90 minutes of receipt and e-mail messages at the day’s conclusion. Stop the excuses and focus on the organization’s most important asset!

4. Preparation. The area where most sales professionals need help is in preparation. Not knowing

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...and much more!

“The role of the salesperson when dealing with new buyers is initially that of a teacher.”

Beat The Pink Slip With These Traits

The era of downsizing has changed the way sales professionals work. For many, it has brought greater opportunity: the freedom to work from home; the ability to take on greater responsibility; and the challenge of working with less direct supervision. For others, it has meant changing jobs and industries.

Today, establishing the right fit has taken on even greater importance. Following is a list of 10 characteristics managers look for in sales representatives. Answer the questions to see if you have what it takes:

1. A positive attitude about selling — Is your attitude infectious and upbeat? Do you try to see the positive in every situation?

2. Team orientation — Are you able to work well in groups? Do you follow through on commitments and promises?

3. High-charged — Are you full of energy? Are

you outgoing? Don't mope around or slack off on completing your work — even tasks that you hate must be completed.

4. Outstanding communicator — Do you bring out the best in others whether interacting over the phone or in person? Can you communicate with anyone on any topic?

5. Excellent presenter — Do you know how to combine multimedia and salesmanship to give the best possible presentation?

6. Self-motivated — Do you set and achieve goals? Do you push yourself to be the best you can be?

7. Skilled in negotiation — Are you able to negotiate courteously and mediate between parties?

8. Enjoys people — Do you love helping other people? Are you respectful of others' time and needs?

9. Believes in self — Are you confident in your own ability to sell? Do you believe in yourself?

10. Manages self effectively — Do you use time and goal management skills on a daily basis? Do you work well with minimal supervision? ■



How To Win Over A New Buyer

By Homer Smith

The salesperson who regularly calls on customers may have a problem when a stranger takes over the buying duties for an established account. Selling to this new person might be easier than selling an entirely new account, but there could still be problems.

Smart salespeople never take any account for granted, but they're particularly sensitive when there's a change in buying personnel. The key is to make life easier for the new buyer and for yourself.

Professional salespeople seem to make it a standard practice to send letters of congratulations or call the new buyer when the change is announced. Buyers appreciate the thoughtfulness. They are usually receptive to any help that will make their performance more effective in the eyes of management.

The role of the salesperson when dealing with new buyers is initially that of a teacher. After checking on the buyer's general knowledge of the product or service and the brands the salesperson has sold the company, the salesperson offers an indoctrination session.

“Educating” the buyer involves reviewing the line and

offering technical help, such as statistics and surveys. Perhaps most important, the salesperson reviews the reasons why the new buyer's predecessor bought the product or service. In selling to retailers or distributors, having a popular brand name is obviously helpful, particularly when the product has been selling well for that customer. But with a new buyer, where the product name may not be as important, it is good insurance for any salesperson to review the customer's past experience with the product or service and emphasize the reasons why it should be continued.

A new buyer may have ideas on how to conduct the business that differ from those of his or her predecessor. But, for reasons of company policy or just good judgment, the buyer waits to see how the present suppliers operate. During this interim, it's up to the salesperson to favorably impress this new buyer.

Salespeople who have weathered the change of buyers offer some good suggestions: Make more frequent calls; give more attention to the new buyer; don't assume that business will go on as usual; be honest in recommendations; the quickest way to alienate a new buyer is to overload him or her; don't act superior; don't talk down to the buyer; and treat the buyer with respect.

The buyer will probably have a feeling of importance if the reason for the change was a promotion, so, when offering help, recognize the buyer's ability and stress your wish to see him or her succeed. ■

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information about the company, industry or competition only opens the pathway for competition. With the proliferation of the Internet and the myriad of sources available, obtaining useful information is easy. Sales professionals must read business news from reputable sources, such as the *Wall Street Journal*, or subscribe to news sources that send imperative information directly to their e-mail. Sales professionals must have a voracious appetite for information, especially in a knowledge-based economy.

5. Language. If knowledge is power, then language is the key to relationships. Know what to say and when to say it! One of the best sources to build your vocabulary is dictionary.com. Your language will increase twofold in 30 days just by having new words delivered to your e-mail daily.

6. Action. Unfortunately, procrastination is inherent within 82 percent of the population. However, to get anything done in a crazy world, action is vital. Return calls when you say you're going to. Ask questions that close business. Tell clients what you want them to do. But, tell them! If you don't, they will move on to the next thing because they are too distracted. The only way to create value is to also create action.

7. Relationship. Individuals want relationships with people they know and trust. When was the last time you bought anything from someone who cold called you? In fact, when was the last time someone told you they had a phenomenal sales year from cold calling? With the increase of caller ID and federal laws, cold calling is as ancient as playing a game of pickup baseball in the neighborhood. Refrain from the number of widgets you must sell and focus on how many great relationships you build. You will instantly notice that selling will be less laborious and transactional. More importantly, your referrals will expand exponentially.

How much time do you spend wishing that you had better sales skills? It's one thing to create education and opportunities. You might even instill the advice of a peer group. What will never work, though, is simply hoping and wishing. Instead, you have to take action! You need to create activities that allow you to learn, grow, have fun and prosper in the most strenuous times. The fact that you are struggling now means that you are still trying!

If you're feeling stuck and scared and want to move beyond these seven sales habits, take a look at Business Acceleration University, a hands-on, interactive course that builds self-worth, confidence and sales skills.

Drew J. Stevens, Ph.D. (Dr. Drew), is the author of Split Second Selling, Ultimate Business Bible and six other business books on sales, customer loyalty, self-mastery and business development solutions. Stevens helps organizations dramatically accelerate revenue and outstrip the competition. He conducts more than 40 international keynotes, seminars and workshops per year. Stevens is the founder of the Sales Leadership Certificate, one of only 14 programs in the U.S. offering an accredited degree in the profession of selling, and has a top-ranked podcast called Sales Acceleration. To discover how Stevens can assist your organization, visit his marketing and sales Web site at www.drewstevensconsulting.com or call 877-391-6821. ■

Questions And Answers

Q: I heard a speaker say that it's better to avoid objections than to overcome them. How, exactly, does one avoid objections?

A: You can't avoid all objections. Actually, you should welcome some of them to help you understand what exactly is keeping the prospect from buying.

The speaker you mentioned probably meant to advise that your sales presentation should cover any possible objections so you don't waste time resolving them later.

I know professional salespeople who keep a list of the types of resistance they experience with a new product or service. Then, they work the benefits and solutions for the more common objections into their sales presentations.

For example, the product might be lighter in weight than the competition's and the salesperson knows that the prospect might question this. So the rep might say, "Lift this. Notice it's lighter than the one you're using now. It's easier to lift and handle so your workers can use it longer without getting tired. Would you agree that this could save on labor costs?"

For objections not easily covered in your presentation, you can be prepared with testimonials and cases to prove your position.

You can't eliminate every objection, but you can close sales faster and easier when you keep them to a minimum. ■

“Avoid the temptation to sell prospects more than they need or can afford, or more than your firm can deliver.”

SELLING SLANTS

Tips To Minimize Cancellations

The hardest sale to lose is one that has already been closed. It is also the most expensive kind of loss for both the salesperson and the firm. While we have to live with the inevitability of sales cancellations, there are three basic strategies for keeping them to a minimum:

1. Reduce cancellations by carefully preparing your presentation. Even professionally made sales can end up in cancellations because of factors beyond the control of the salesperson. There are, however, two major factors contributing to cancellations that the salesperson can control: underselling and overselling.

Avoid the temptation to sell prospects more than they need or can afford, or more than your firm can deliver. Many cancellations result when customers realize they were oversold.

On the other hand, failure to fully convince prospects of the benefits of ownership, otherwise known as underselling,

can cause customers to question their buying wisdom. This doubt leads to cancellations. To avoid underselling, make sure the benefits are clear and the prospect's objections have been uncovered and answered satisfactorily.

2. Treat the cancellation as a delayed objection. When a cancellation happens, contact the customer as soon as possible to show concern. Ask probing questions to get at the real objections. Don't be satisfied with the first answer you receive. Once the problem is out in the open, you can offer solutions that will help you regain the sale.

If the delayed objection technique is unsuccessful, treat the cancellation as a sale that was not completely closed. Show the benefits of continuing with the order. Show the losses that will occur if the cancellation stands. When handled professionally, you can convert many of your cancellations into re-sales.

3. Be professional. Even if, after all of your efforts, the customer still decides to cancel, you have to remember to keep your cool. As the saying goes: “Don't burn your bridges behind you.” Always leave the customer on a friendly note. ■

Capturing The Disinterested Prospect

The key to handling the “not interested” resistance is found in the principle of selling benefits instead of features. It's easy to say that you're not interested in buying a product, but it's hardly convincing to say that you don't want to save money, make a profit or feel better. Therefore, the reply to the prospect's statement of lack of interest might go something like, “You mean you're not interested in making a higher profit?”

When the prospect says he or she is not interested after listening to your presentation, you haven't reached his or her desire for the benefits. Asking about not wanting the benefits will smoke out the real objections so you can handle them. For example, a customer might say, “I didn't mean that I don't want to make a higher profit. I really meant that I'm overstuffed now.” The salesperson can

then find a solution to that problem.

If the prospect expresses lack of interest before you can make your presentation, you can assume it's just a brush-off routine. Try to spark enough interest to allow you to prove the benefits. Either way, you will uncover the real objections so you can handle them.

Another strategy for handling the “not interested” resistance is to agree with the statement, but then state the benefit. For example, the prospect says, “I'm not interested in putting in storm windows.” The salesperson agrees, “Of course not, Mr. Phillips. But you are interested in being more comfortable in summer and winter and in lowering your energy bills, aren't you?”

You can reduce the number of “not interested” hurdles by using probing questions related to the benefits before making the presentation. Such questions early in the call establish the prospect's interest in getting the benefits. After that commitment, the prospect can seldom say, “I'm not interested.” ■



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