

## **Selling**

### 1. People buy people

Most products and services today are commodities. It is increasingly difficult to distinguish between brands of PC's, telephone systems, motor cars, potatoes and washing powder. As similarity of product increases, so the role of the salesperson becomes more and more important. The salesperson can be the difference. The way that he or she behaves, the values they hold, the trust they inspire can make more difference than the product itself. The first job of any salesperson is therefore to make a personal connection with the potential customer.

### 2. Ask questions

Too many salespeople insist on telling the customer - about the product, about their company or about their pricing options. Until a salesperson knows something about the customer's needs, values and criteria, any sales talk risks being completely wrong. The effective salesperson asks questions, using the answers to evaluate the basis upon which the customer will buy.

### 3. Listen

The effective salesperson is a good listener. Having asked questions and encouraged the customer to talk, they listen actively, building up a mental portfolio of the customer's needs, values and criteria. They do not interrupt with sales comments. They use non-verbal sounds and movements to encourage the customer to continue talking. Only when they have a mental picture of what the customer really wants, what they want it for, what values the customer holds, will they offer a solution. Even then, they offer it in the form of questions. "Would I be correct if I said you were looking for ... ?" "Is your most important criteria therefore ... ?"

### 4. Reflect their values

Sales people too often assume that the customer will value product and price. Equally often, customers may value reliability of customer service, personal relationship or solution to a problem. Product values are only one kind of value. By analysing the customer's values, the salesperson can match them with his or her behaviour - the questions they ask, the aspects of the sale that they concentrate upon. Reflecting values is becoming the person I want to do business with. Someone who talks my language.

### 5. Selling and buying is not about facts and logic

Too often sales people assume that they must present facts in a persuasive manner. Because so few products can be differentiated in themselves, such facts are often the cause of suspicion on the part of customers. Because the facts of the case will not cause a person to buy, other aspects of human life come into play - emotional and value considerations. Some one may buy because the salesperson seemed interested in them, in their concerns and even their family. Another may buy because the salesperson seemed to understand their fears about poor after sales service while yet another may buy because the salesperson came up with some good ideas about matching the decor or re-arranging the furniture.

### 6. Selling and buying is not about features

Very few customers have a deep interest in how the product works and the intricate internal mechanisms. Some do but the majority do not. A presentation of the technical features of a product is rarely a good idea. What the customer wants to know is how the way that the product is made will actually help him or her as a person or as a company. There is a new form of bed on the market. It is

derived from the padding used in space craft. No doubt its chemical formula is long, its manufacturing method unique but what the customer wants to know is whether it will give a good night's sleep to someone suffering from arthritis. Selling (and buying) is about benefits.

#### 7. Be an expert but not a bore

Despite the fact that selling and buying is not about features, the salesperson must nonetheless be able to answer technical questions if asked. The bed referred to in the previous tip is different from a coil spring bed but then there are many types of coil spring bed, each of which has a different price tag. The ability to answer why, succinctly, clearly and in a way that the customer can understand, gives credibility. Nothing is worse than a salesperson who takes back the brochure they have just given you and leafs through trying to find the answer to a question you have posed. However, don't be a bore. Answer the question to satisfy the customer. Don't give a lecture.

#### 8. Take your time

Salespeople tend to think that they are in charge of the process and that they can control the speed of a sale. The customer is in charge. It is the customer's time span for decision making that matters. Salespeople who are impatient for a decision, and worst of all show it, tend to lose the sale. Remember, people buy people and part of what makes a customer relate to a salesperson is that they support decision making, not rush it.

#### 9. Follow up

The sale does not end when the product is delivered. The wise salesperson wants to create a satisfied customer who will buy again. The wise salesperson wants to add the customer to his or her list of people to call on for business, even if the salesperson is later working for a different company. Following up on a sale, checking to see if everything is OK, and resolving problems if it is not, is part of building the next sale.

#### 10. Keep in touch

People buy beds once every ten years, it seems. That does not mean that the bed salesperson should contact a customer only every decade. Keeping in touch is about maintaining a channel of communication so that the customer, when thinking of buying something similar (a sofa rather than another bed) will have the salesperson in mind.