

Welcome to the distance learning programme from Paul Bangs. I hope that you get as much out of the material as others who have attended one of my training courses or motivational talks. If you would like to know more about the programmes or would like to discuss your training or mentoring needs, please email or phone with your enquiry.

Key Selling Skills

This programme provides you with the keys to selling; how to make bigger sales and gain repeat business and many more recommendations. When considering selling, we should also consider giving outstanding customer service. (See the programme on Customer Service) the two skills go hand in hand together.

Great salesmen are not born great salesmen, they achieve their success by doing the right things, all of the time and they do them more often. It is often thought that to be a great salesperson you have to be very outgoing, a great talker and very persuasive. Some are but the majority are just the opposite; they are excellent listeners, very caring and are willing to serve their clients or customers. The greatest life assurance salesman in the world was a man who was very reserved and analytical but who cared for his clients more than he cared for his own reputation or rewards. The reputation and rewards came because he was the man he was.

Key Selling Attitudes

We will start with the sales person and their attitudes and will then move onto the key selling skills. The attitudes will include:

- First impressions count
- Value added service
- Enthusiasm
- Owners mentality
- Be truthful
- Building strong relationships
- Comfort zones

The keys skills will include:

- Initial approach
- Telephone approach
- Retail selling
- Sales representatives/agents
- Pre-approach letters
- Fact finding
- The presentation
- The close
- Closing the sale
- Things you should never do
- Overcoming objections
- Confirming the order
- The next sale

- The sale after the sale
- Selling is an art
- Internal customers

We will start with the first three key attitudes

First impressions Count

How You:

- * Look – dress appropriately to the clients/customers you are selling to
- * Present yourself – be confident, look your client/customer in the eye
- * Present your product or services – if you don't value your product/company then don't expect others to.
- * Present your company and do it with pride.
- * What you say in those opening moments – work on different scripts until you find one you are comfortable with and works for you
- * The quality of your presentation and samples – scruffy samples speaks of not caring for your company
- * Your smile – a warm smile will melt many a hard heart.

These are all vital areas. First impression also includes your attitude. To be a success, act and look like you are a success. You will not sell Bentley cars turning up in a clapped out old banger.

Value added service

Don't tell me how good you or your company is; prove it by what you do.

- * Do more than is expected of you for your customers
- * Do more than is expected of you for your employers
- * Be to other people what you would like them to be to you
- * Give an outstanding service, every time
- * Look to be different; what will make you stand out from your competitors.

Ask each day *"What more can I do to help my customers?"*

Selling is about finding out your customers needs and moving heaven and earth to meet those needs.

Enthusiasm

- * Customers and employers love enthusiastic sales people
- * Enthusiasm helps overcome many problems
- * Enthusiasm makes your presentation come alive
- * The opposite of enthusiasm is being negative which means to be less than zero.
- * Enthusiasm means to be passionate, positive, and eager.
- * Enthusiasm is infectious, people will move towards you

Our attitude should be ***"I am going to be enthusiastic today, I am going to infect every body I meet with my positive attitude"***

Now it is time to take stock. Where you are right now as far as your attitude is concerned? Do you and does your business make a good first impression? This includes how the phones are answered by all members of staff, the quality of all written material, how quickly queries are answered, the reception area, how clean are the visitors toilets and a number of other areas. Take time out and take a fresh look at your company; ask yourself and ask others, especially customers, how do we look to the outside world, would you want to do business with you?

How good is the service you are offering, is it a token service or do you really care for your customers more than you care for yourself. The most successful leaders in industry are those that put their customers first, followed by their staff and then their own needs. If you treat your customers' right they will come back to you and bring others with them. If you treat your staff right then they will treat your customers' right.

How enthusiastic are you and your staff? All too often, enthusiasm reduces; both you and your employees become lethargic and lethargy is contagious; it will spread throughout the company and then to your customers. Another trait of successful leaders is they are passionate about their business and that passion rubs off on employees and customers. We believe and appreciate people with passion, who are enthusiastic.

We will now consider the next four attributes of great sales people.

Owners mentality

I have employed many salespeople over the years and one of the questions I would always ask myself is "would I buy from this person?" I would ask my secretary how she felt about each person who came for an interview as women are often better judges of character than men. It is possible to get to a stage when you are desperate to employ a salesperson and so you choose the best of a bad bunch rather than wait for the right person to come through the door. This is a grave mistake and one which will cause you a great deal of expense and potential anguish and will likely upset your customers and other members of staff.

When I was employing staff I wanted to employ people who had an owner's mentality and not an employee's mentality. An "Owners mentality" states that "*I own this company, it is my money that is at risk, it is my future that is at risk*" I want to employ people who have the attitude that the company's success depends on them, they are ready to buy into the future of the company and make it their own. To attract such staff, I have to ensure that the rewards are right and that I treat them with the respect they deserve. Their future success is my future success. It is crazy that all too often we spend a great deal of money and time interviewing and selecting sales people on the basis that we will try them out and if it doesn't work out then we do it all over again. It is costly in our time and in the meantime they can do a great deal of damage to our reputation

If you own the company, you will do all that you can to make your company a success.

As a salesperson you should:

- * Have pride in yourself
- * Have pride in your products or service
- * Have pride in your company

- * Do more than you are paid to do
- * You are a unique person, act in a unique way

Ask yourself each day, “*If I were employing me, would I give myself a pay cheque this week?*”

Some of the greatest people in history were ordinary until they did something *extraordinary*. Become an extraordinary sales person today

Be truthful

“*A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who speaks lies will not escape*”

Too many people believe that to be successful, it is OK to lie. Those that always tell the truth, will stand out, and will profit from it.

If you do not know the answer to a customer’s question, admit it and then offer to get the answer. Owners of companies; never ask employees to lie **for** you, if you do, then they will lie **too** you. “*What you sow you will reap*”

Truthful people stand out and are rewarded for:

- * Not exaggerating
- * Understating
- * Not telling little white lies

Stand out in this world of lies, dare to be different and profit from it.

Selling is about building strong relationships with people or if you only ever have one opportunity to sell, ensuring that the customer knows that their needs are more important to you than the sale. To gain their trust they need to know that you mean what you say and you do not lie or exaggerate.

Building strong relationships with people

- * Listen properly, without interrupting. Clients are not interested in your opinions – they are interested in their needs being met.
- * Make sure you understand their needs- ***people buy for their reasons and not yours***. You must know what your customers needs/wants are and then move heaven and earth to provide for those needs.
- * Do what you say you are going to do
- * Do not run down competitors, if you do, you are also running down the person who made the decision to deal with them
- * Show that you care for your customers. ***People do not want to know how much you know – they want to know how much you care***

- * Give added value service, it costs little but adds great value to your reputation
- * Admit mistakes and put them right quickly. We all make mistakes, the people who really stand out are the ones who admit it and then rectify the mistake
- * Show respect for the other person
- * Do not argue, you might win the argument but you will then lose the sale
- * Remember, you can not win every sale, it is OK to fail – the law of averages will show you that the more you fail the more you will win; the more people who say no to me brings me nearer to the people who will say yes.
- * Be yourself – people like real people but if you have habits or attitudes that are not attractive then resolve to change
- * Know your products and services – as mentioned before, customers don't want to know what you know, they want to know that you care but they do want to know that you know it, that you know your subject/product details
- * Be polite at all times
- * Be well prepared – better preparation leads to bigger sales
- * Move to other persons comfort zone.

The golden rule is “**Be to others what you would want them to be to you**”

Comfort Zones

We all have different personalities; we each have a way of working and living that is comfortable to us, but will be less comfortable for others.

Some people like to ask before deciding on a course of action, they like to reflect or ask more questions before they make up their mind Other people prefer to tell; they like to state their opinions in a more forceful or demanding way. The second type of person is more assertive. Some people are more responsive to other people and others are less emotive. Those that are very responsive show their emotions such as joy, anger, hurt without attempting to hide their emotions. Those that are less responsive, control their emotions.

Four styles of people

People, who like to reflect more and are less emotional, are **Analytical**, They like to ask questions and be in control. They will not be assertive, but will feel comfortable gathering facts and can be very good technical specialists.

Those that like to control their feelings and like to be assertive are called **Drivers**. They are task-orientated people who like to get their own way without showing their emotions. They are control specialist.

People who like to ask questions and gather facts but are also emotive and express their feeling openly, we call **Amiable**. They will be less forceful, more agreeable and like to build relationships, and are very good support specialist.

Finally, we have people who are emotive and like to tell others what to do, they are **Expressive**. Like the driver, they are assertive but like the amiable, they also like to build relationships with people. They are reactive and impulsive and are known as social specialist.

In every company of a reasonable size, it is good to have a mixture of each style of people as it gives balance. When you are selling, your customers will be a mixture of personalities.

If you are an **expressive** person selling to an **analytical** person, you need to come out of your highly emotive and assertive style, which is where you are most comfortable, and move into the comfort zone of your customer. Your customer will need more information than you normally like to give and will want to think more about your proposition before ordering. Do not rush them, waste time with small talk. Get right to the point with plenty of facts and figures. Make sure all questions are answered.

If you are selling to a **driver** style of person, they will not want to know all the details, they will not want to spend much time on building relationships, but will want to know what profit is in the business deal for them and if satisfied, give the order quickly and get onto the next thing on his agenda. Be concise and businesslike. Do not waste time with small talk; get to the point quickly and solve problems fast.

The **amiable** customer will want time to think about it, will want details and will want to build a relationship with you, feel that they can trust you. Earn their trust, use facts and figures, take it slowly and answer all their questions.

If you are selling to the **expressive** customer, do not give them too much detail, just the main points. Share new ideas with them and be very sociable. Follow up and build a friendship with them.

Move to the other person's comfort zone; be to them, as you would like them to be to you.

Before we move on, take a look at what we have been discussing in this session.

- Do you take pride in yourself and if you do, how do you show that?
- How about taking pride in you company and products and or services?
- If you were employing yourself would you give yourself a cheque at the end of each week?
- Are you tempted to exaggerate, tell little white lies, how do you feel when others do it to you?
- What about building relationships with others, do you adapt to their styles and move out of your comfort zones into theirs?

- How would you score yourself on a scale of 1 – 10 (1 being low) when looking at the list of attributes above when building relationships starting with listening properly?

Key Selling Steps

Initial Approach

This is the time when we are setting the scene. It is a vital step in the sales process, get it wrong and we may not get any further.

If you are product selling, talk about the features and benefits not the product details. Look for the customers needs, the solution to their problem or needs. Ask questions then match their needs to their answers. Ask “why” or “what”. Why are you thinking of changing your car, what do you like most about...?

Always show you are interested in the client and not what you can sell the client. Keep your tone interesting watch the language you use, speak at a sensible speed, understand and relate to their needs, build a relationship.

Telephone Approach

The telephone is used to make appointments, to take or confirm orders, to answer questions or to keep in touch with people.

The telephone is a wonderful tool if used properly and can help us open many doors and build our business. If we are using it as a sales tool, then we must very well prepared before making the call. Before you make the call, decide on your objective, is it to sell on the phone to give information or to make an appointment?

Prepare properly, research the company you are calling, do you know what they do, what they want and do you have the relevant information available?

Getting past the “Gate Keeper”

The gate keeper is there to protect the MD or buyer or manager from unwanted calls. If you send an email or letter prior to phoning saying you are calling, then you can explain that the call is expected.

Respect the gate keeper; get them on your side. If they tell you the person you want is busy ask when is the best time to call?

- * Know who you are calling. Speak to the right person
- * Use the customers name, give your own name
- * Know why you are calling.
- * Have a script until you are well practiced. The first 30 seconds is vital. Be enthusiastic but not domineering.
- * Practice your speaking voice. Be clear, convincing, lower the voice.

- * Tell your story. What is it about your product/service that gives you an edge?
- * Work from a list of prospects
- * Sit in an upright manner or stand
- * Be friendly but to the point. Smile, be sincere, act naturally, the body language comes across on the phone
- * Know your product, keep relevant information on your desk
- * Your presentation should overcome possible objections before the objections arise.
- * Have answers to objections not covered in your presentation
- * Do not worry about the people who say no to your approach. They are not rejecting you personally.
- * The more calls you make, the more appointments you will make
- * Keep good records, people you need to call back, questions you need to answer.
- * Once you have finished the call, get onto the next one
- * Always be polite and calm. Never answer abuse with abuse

The telephone can be a powerful selling tool, but it will never replace face-to-face selling, especially when the customer has never seen the product. If you are employing telephone sales people, make sure they are well trained and once trained, ask yourself the question, would you buy from them or would your wife?

Retail Selling

As with all selling, preparation is vital. Is your shop or place of business looking as good as it should do? The first impression is very important; your business should be attractive and inviting to your customers.

How about your staff, do they look good, do they greet your customers with a smile and give a warm welcome? Are your products displayed well and in a way that is easy for your customers to look at what you are selling?

When your customers ask questions, do your staff do all they can to help the customer? Does your business have a policy of making sure that it provides the best possible service to **all** customers?

Shopping is not just about buying something; it is also about having an experience, which should give customers a good feeling. Ask yourself the question, “*Do my customers have a good experience when they come to my place of business?*” Why is your customer going to buy from you, do you provide something your competitors do not provide?

As with all selling, getting customers to buy from you the first time is the most difficult and the most expensive sale you will make. If you give a superior service, then you will attract them back to you again and again.

We have more to fear from inside inefficiency than we do from outside competition.

Selling is about having the right products at the right prices and sold to the right people. In retail selling position is vitally important. Whenever possible, we should make sure that our business is in the right place to attract as many people as possible, but prime selling positions are more expensive. If we cannot afford them, then we can still build a significant business by providing outstanding service. The following are a few keys to building bigger sales.

- * Be in the best position you can afford but be very careful not to over commit yourself buy signing long term leases at high rental costs
- * Make your shop an attractive and inviting place to visit
- * Display your stock so that it looks good, often less is more especially in window displays. A good eye for design is helpful and if you haven't got a good eye, find someone who has.
- * Be as competitive as you can afford to be
- * Give outstanding service
- * Make it easy for your customers to exchange goods if they are not satisfied
- * Guarantee your products or services but only guarantee what you can deliver
- * Train your staff to have the right attitude
- * Give staff incentives to sell more
- * Look at what your competitors are doing, especially the big multiples
- * Be different, be inventive and original

Remember, selling is about finding out what the customer wants and moving heaven and earth to get it.

This might be a good place to stop and reflect on what we have discussed so far. It does not matter what type of selling we are involved in, telephone, retail, as an agent or representative or just plain selling our own services, the same rules apply. We need to be able to use the telephone well, we need to have the right attitudes; we need to be well prepared. Go back

through this section and ask yourself, “am I doing all I can to make the right “first impression” and am I creating the right atmosphere to sell myself, my products/services or my company? If not, what do I need to change and how will I go about it?”

Sales Representative or Agent

All basic selling skills are the same, in shops, garages, selling to factories or to offices. Selling is about building relationships with customers and meeting their needs. It is about attitude, enthusiasm, looking right and being well prepared. It is about being professional and warm and friendly and about knowing our product or service.

The vital keys are as follows;

- * Be very well prepared
- * Look good and make sure your presentation material and samples are of a high standard
- * Know your products and services and know what you need to say.
- * Ask questions, find out what your customer needs are
- * Listen carefully to what your customer is saying
- * Know all you can about your competitors, what gives you an advantage over them? Never ever criticise them
- * Take as much time as you need to ensure that you have all the information on your customers needs
- * Move to your customers comfort zone
- * Be very polite and friendly at all times
- * Build relationships as far as your customer will allow
- * Give outstanding service
- * Be on time

Attitude is vital. The more people we see to sell to the more we will sell. Too many sales people do not do that extra call. We will not sell to everybody we see. To increase our success rate we need to increase our failure rate. The more no's we get; the more yeses we will get. It is the law of averages.

People do not want to buy products from you; **they want to buy what the products will do for them**. It is not the product that is important; it is the result it will produce. You do not buy a drill because you want a drill; you buy a drill because you want a hole. You do not buy insurance because you want insurance; you buy it to protect someone or something.

A woman will buy a dress because of how she feels in it. Men will choose a car because of how they feel in it. As sales people, we need to find out what our customer wants, how they may feel once they have got it, and then make sure our product or service meets those needs.

It is our knowledge of our customer and his or her needs that will give us an advantage over our competitors. ***People buy for their reasons, not ours.*** We must make sure we know what it is our customer reason is.

Finally, be enthusiastic. Customers love to buy from a professional, enthusiastic person who genuinely cares for their customers.

Pre-Approach Letter

Direct mail is now very big business but it can also be expensive if we do not get it right. A good pre-approach letter can help open doors to new customers or sell more to existing customers; like the telephone, it will never take the place of face to face selling. The following basic rules will help us be more successful

- * If possible, hand write the envelope using the persons name
- * Be brief, the key message must be in the first two paragraphs.
- * Ask questions, "If I could show you a way of..." Questions are more effective than sales points
- * If possible, provide a special offer. "Apply by 21st August and get 5% off"
- * Be clear who you are writing to and why
- * Try a survey with a short letter asking for help and a survey on the reverse. A well prepared survey will tell you a lot about your customer and give you a reason for getting back to them
- * Be polite, to the point, never criticise your competitors
- * Try humour if appropriate.
- * The opening statement and how you finish the letter are key
- * Sign the letter personally
- * Time your letters to arrive at the best possible time

If you are mass mailing, you will not normally get a high percentage replying and you will not be able to be very personal in your approach. With small mailing, you can be very specific who you write to and be more personable.

With mass mailing, repetition is very important. You can mail 30,000 people and a small percentage will reply. You can mail the same 30,000 people the next month, and a different small percentage will reply. It can take up to seven mailings for people to get the message.

Fact Finding

Fact-finding is the most important step in the sales process. It is when we identify our client's needs and wants. It is when we find out what will motivate them to buy.

The depth of fact-find will depend on what we are selling. If we are selling clothes or food, direct to the public, then we will need very little information. But if we are selling insurance or cars or engineering products, then we need to know a great deal more about our customers. There is no point in trying to sell them a £20,000 product if their budget is only £10,000. The bigger the decision, the more information we need.

There are two types of facts. **Hard facts** and **Soft facts**. Hard facts are the details of what the customer wants. The make of car, the type of machine, the amount of insurance. The soft facts deal with the feelings behind the hard facts. Why are they changing their car, why are they looking for insurance? The hard facts deal with the needs, the soft facts with the wants, and the emotions behind the decision to buy.

When we are building a relationship with our customers, we must ensure that we know all we can about their needs and wishes, and then we can find the best product or solution to meet their needs. It will make the buying decision much easier and will help overcome any possible objections.

When collecting facts, look for buying signals. As you ask questions, your customer will start to show more interest and will start to ask questions like "when can you deliver it?" We can quickly establish when they would like to receive it and we are then close to taking the order.

Also in the fact-finding process, we should try to get a budget decision. As mentioned before, there is no point in presenting a solution that is twice as expensive as they can afford

The art of selling is not being the best talker and making slick presentations, but being a good listener and asking the right questions, finding out all the facts and the motivation behind the facts. Customers will not buy because you are a slick salesperson but because you understand their needs and are prepared to all you can to meet their needs.

- * Ask open questions
- * Listen without interrupting
- * Show genuine interest
- * Build relationships, relax your customer
- * Establish and stay focussed on the vital areas
- * Get a commitment on needs and price
- * Find out any potential objections
- * Take time, do not hurry the process

- * Show that you care more about your customer than you do the sale

We have reached the stage with our customer or client when we have prepared well, made sure that we look good and our attitude is right and we have now built a relationship with our client and have discovered their needs and wants, we are now entering the time when we are presenting our solutions to their needs. But before we move on, let us reflect on the lessons we have been covering. Go back through the subject just covered, how would you score yourself on the vital keys and then on the basic rules? How good are you with the key selling skill of fact finding? Never ever go on to the presentation without getting the steps already covered right; there can not be any shortcuts; learn these basic skills first and then the presentation and closing the sale steps become easier and more effective.

Key Selling Steps

The Presentation

If we have done a good fact-find and established the customer's needs and wants, their budget and any possible objections, then the presentation of our products or solutions become much easier. The presentation is made up of three key areas.

1. The **recap**; this is when we go back over the facts we have established to make sure we have understood the customer's needs.
2. The **presentation** when we present our answers to their needs
3. The **close** when we agree that the sale is made and we take the order

A sale is made by a series of agreements leading to the final agreement when the customer says yes. The process of agreements starts as we recap what the customer has said they want. It shows that we have listened and understand their needs, and we have an opportunity of confirming that we have answered those needs.

Assuming everything is right, then the presentation will be easy and we will be in the best possible position to take the order. During the presentation, we need to not only tell our customer about the product or solution we are recommending, but also the **features** and **added benefits**, these are vitally important.

The added benefits might include a guarantee or a discount on their next purchase or the back up service you might offer. It is the features and benefits that might give you the advantage over your competitors. It is what can make a standard product more exciting.

Selling should never be rushed, but we should be ready to close the sale when the customer is ready. It is possible to over present, to say too much and take the customer through the time when they are ready to order and to a place when they then decide they want to go away and think about it. We can say too much and put the customer off.

As we present, we should keep checking to make sure that the customer is happy about each aspect of the features and benefits we are presenting. The more we get them to agree that they are happy, the more chance there is of them saying yes when we ask for the order. Also please remember the different styles of people you are selling to; some will need more facts than

others and some will need to take their time whilst there will be those who just want to know what's in it for them and get on with the purchase.

It does not matter what we are selling, the process is the same. Good marketing to put us in front of the right customers, extensive fact-finding, good preparation and a well constructed, well paced presentation checking each point and gaining agreement as we go through.

The Close

If the presentation has gone well then the close will follow naturally. As long as we have done everything else right, then the close should be a simple step in the sales process.

The only reason customers will not order from us is if we have chosen the wrong product or service for them, or we have not understood their needs or have not taken into account their budget constraints or the features and benefits they were looking for.

There are no magic closing techniques, there is only one way to sell our products or services, make sure you know the clients needs or wants through good fact finding, good preparation, well constructed presentation overcoming the possible objections as you go along, selling the features and benefits and checking with the customer as you present, then the sale will follow. Just get everything right before asking for the order.

There are some people who genuinely do want to think about it and need time. This will be natural where they are spending a lot of money. They may also need to get other quotes, if this is the case, try to be the last company to make a presentation. If you have made the best presentation and your benefits and features give you an advantage and your price is competitive, then your customer is more likely to order at the end of your presentation.

There are times when people, especially if there are more than one who are making the decision, need space to talk about it before ordering. If you sense this is the case, make your excuse for leaving them for a couple of minutes so that they can reach their decision without pressure.

Closing the Sale

Closing the sale should never be difficult and yet it is when many salesmen fail, they do not like to ask for the order. Closing the sale should be the most natural part of the sales process.

If we marketed to the right people, built a relationship with our customer, found out all their needs, made sure our solution to their needs is right and that they can afford it, then the order should follow as day follows night.

Closing sales statements might include;

- * I cannot think of any good reason why we should not go ahead, can you?
- * When would you like delivery
- * Can we get the paper work out of the way?

- * How would you like to pay for this, cheque or credit card?
- * Would you like it gift-wrapped?

If you know you have done every thing right up to this point, then assume the sale is agreed and deal with the delivery, paper work or payments

There are times when the sale can not be completed, if a decision has to be made at board level or credit checks have to be made, if this is the case, then try to make sure the final presentation is made to the ultimate decision maker.

Throughout the presentation, ask questions like, "Do you understand that?" "Does this meet your requirements?" "Are there any other points I need to cover?" As they agree with each of the points then when we ask the final question "I can't think of any good reason why we can not go ahead with this, can you?" they will continue to agree.

Keep it simple and natural, but make sure you do ask for the order. Too many sales people are nervous of asking for the order in case the customer says "No" Very few will if we have done our job properly

Alternative Close.

This is a way of giving your customer an alternative to help them decide what is best for them. "When would you like it delivered, on Tuesday or would Wednesday be better?" "What colour would you like, the blue or the yellow?" You have assumed the customer is going to buy, so you are now offering them an alternative.

At this stage we can ask them how they intend to pay, by cash, cheque, credit and then close with a sentence like, "All we need to do is fill in the paper work and get you your receipt and guarantee"

We have assumed that you are talking to the person who has the authority to place an order. In larger companies, the directors might make the final decision at board level. There is little you can do to control this other than make sure you have done all you can in the process leading up to the decision making. If the order is placed based on quotations, then make sure your quotation has all the necessary information, is well presented, and meets all of the customer's specifications.

Things you should never do

- * Make a promise you can not fulfil, if they ask for delivery in one week and you know you can not do that, do not say that you can just to get the order.
- * Take an order you are not capable of fulfilling.
- * Take an order that will not make you a profit. Turnover is vanity, profit is sanity.

- * Show you are desperate for a sale
- * Criticise your competitors; just do the best job you can in presenting your company. Be professional at all times
- * Take an order that will delay or jeopardise an order you already have with another customer.
- * Take on an order that is too big for your company. There is as much danger from over trading as there is from under trading.

At all times you must make sure that you have the skills and the finance to take an order. If in doubt, let it go; there will always be another chance. It is better to grow a company steadily and profitably rather than go for big growth that you cannot sustain.

Finally, when presenting, make sure the conditions are right. If there are too many interruptions or you discover you are presenting to the wrong person, then stop the process and make another appointment. We should do all that we can to make the selling process as enjoyable as we can for our customers.

Overcoming Objections

If all the other stages of the sales process have been right, then we should not get too many objections. We must also understand that an objection is just a question; the customer is seeking more information or seeking assurance that they are making the right decision. There are four basic objections.

1. Can I afford it?
2. Do I need it?
3. Do I want it?
4. Will I or my company or someone else benefit from it?

We should know all the answers to those questions prior to making the presentation if we have done our job properly.

If there are any outstanding questions the customer has then we should welcome them and not see them as objections. The questions give us an opportunity to show that we are presenting the right product or service and that the customer is making the right choice.

There will be times when the customer asks a question and we may not know the answer, when this happens, we should admit we do not know but that we will get the answer. It is better to delay the sale rather than be caught out by a lie.

- * Do not take objections personally
- * Plan to overcome objections before they arise
- * Make sure you know **ALL** your customers needs before you present, that they want it and can afford it and will benefit from it, then you will have few objections

- * Never argue with your customer
- * Know your products and your services
- * Put your customers needs before your own
- * Desperate selling never works

This is a great time to stop and reflect. Go back over the subjects covered and check out your selling skills. As you look at these keys, ask yourself the question “am I doing all I can to prepare properly and then sell and present properly? If not, what changes do I need to make, what skills do I need to learn?”

Selling is a learnt skill; we can all sell if we do the right things every time.

Key Selling Steps

We now come to the end of the sales process but for many, this is the most important stage. All too often, the sales process stops once the order has been taken but there three other vital stages to go through before you can say, “I’ve finished and I have done the best possible job that I could do

Confirming the Order

Be professional at all times and give value added service. Confirming the order, details of the product or service, the price the delivery date, the guarantees you are giving and any special features or changes to the order all confirm that you are professional. This is also a good time to thank the customer for the order.

Only confirm those details you can deliver on and if after you have taken and confirmed the order, you discover that there will have to be changes, then let the customer know, keep them informed at all times. Too many salesmen are very poor when dealing with the details and ensuring the order is delivered correctly or that the after service is of a high standard.

By giving outstanding after sales service then it is more likely that your customer will come back to you and will recommend you to others. This makes future selling easier. If you are not good at the after sales process, then delegate to someone who is. Giving good after sales service also means there will be less cancelled orders.

Ensure there are systems in your company to give outstanding service, look at what your best competitor does and see if you can better their service. The sale is not completed until it has been delivered to the customer’s full satisfaction and paid for.

The Next Sale

The most difficult sale is the first one with a new customer. If we have done every thing right and if there are to be future sales then we must make sure that we get future orders. The first sale is also the most expensive sale as we will have had to do more to get it including all of the marketing costs. Repeat orders are always more profitable, and that is why we should treat the customer with the same care and respect; never take your customer for granted.

Many salesmen also fail to sell other products to their customer. If you sell Photo Copiers, do you also make sure you get the order for the toner or paper? It is the ongoing business that adds real profit to your company. When I was selling financial services I visited one of my insurance and pension clients and he told me he was moving house. I asked him what arrangements he was making for his mortgage and he told me it was already done. When I asked why he had not considered me for mortgage advice he explained that he did not know I was in the mortgage market. I had not told him and that is often the problem, customers and clients get used to using us for one type of service and don't realise that we also provide other services.

The main reason that customers leave to deal with a competitor is because of poor service or the product or service did not perform. The main reason that customers stay with you and do more and more business with you is because you do what you say you will do, give outstanding service, remain competitive and prove to your customer that you care more about them than you do about you. Put as much effort into the after sales process as you do the initial process

There is more to fear from inside inefficiency than there ever is from outside competition

The sale after the sale

If you have done everything right and have given outstanding service, then you have the right to make one further sale, and that is to ask for recommendations to other potential customers. We do not have the right to ask, if we have given bad service or sold poor value products.

The lifeblood of any business is a new good quality customer. Marketing for new customers can be expensive but the least costly marketing and the most effective is referrals. It should be a natural part of our sales process.

We will never get recommendations unless we ask for them. We can offer incentives to our customers to recommend us to their friends. Be specific about the sort of person you want to be recommended to, paint a picture of the type of people you can be of most help to. Our customers are often the best source of new business.

Give as much attention to asking for recommendations as you do your presentation. Test different ways of asking until you and your customer feel comfortable about you asking. The most effective marketing we can do is being so good at what we do that we automatically get recommendations.

Profile your customers.

There are certain types of customers who are easy to do business with and who give us the most pleasure and profit. As you build your business you will begin to get a picture of what makes an ideal customer or client. What do they look like, what makes them ideal for you? Whatever profile you come up with you will find that those customers know others like them as people mix with people like them.

Selling is an art

Selling is an art, but most people can learn the process. Every person on earth can learn to care for other people and give good service. It is said that you cannot make a good salesman. I

believe that you can teach most people to present their case, and if their attitude is right, they can present an idea or a product.

Every employee should see themselves as a representative of your company, and with a little training and the right incentives, you could find your business increasing at a rapid rate.

Internal customers

You should also consider the people you work with to be your customers. They deserve the same care and attention as you would give your external customers. You are all working for the same company with the same needs for giving and receiving good service. All too often we can be at our best with our customers and at our worst with our colleagues.

Remember, ***“What you sow is what you reap”***, if you sow disharmony then you will reap disharmony. If you sow mistrust you will reap mistrust. If you sow dishonesty you will reap dishonesty. If you sow indifference you will reap indifference.

We should always ***“Treat others as we would like to be treated”*** We only have one chance to make a first good impression and that is as true in the work place as it is out with the customers. If you treat your staff and or colleagues right then they will treat your customers' right.

As already mentioned, ***“We have more to fear from inside inefficiency than outside competition”***

Let me finish with a couple of stories to illustrate some of the lessons we have been learning about. A friend of mine has a very successful business in Northern Ireland and they have number of company cars. One day Jim gets a call from a garage and the salesman, who has obviously done his homework and knows they have a small fleet, asks if they can quote for servicing their cars. Jim explains that they already have a service garage and mentions their name. The salesman immediately praises the competition and says that he realises they are very good but would Jim consider having one of their cars serviced to see how good they are. Jim agrees that as his car is due for a service he will let them have his. On the day of the service he arrives at the garage, hands his car over and picks up a courtesy car which his other garage would also have provided. When he went back in the evening, not only had the car been serviced but it had been washed and cleaned on the inside and on the passenger's seat in a cover, was a free copy of the evening newspaper with the garages compliments; incidentally, the car was well serviced.

This garage gained the companies business because they were that little bit different. They did the basics right but they went on and gave a value added service; they created a great experience and made it easy for the company to want to deal with them again.

My second story is of a company in America which is a manufacturing company who sell products all over America. Salesmen are in the main lazy, they are great at taking orders but lousy at cold calling. There are two types of salespeople, firstly the hunter who will go after new business and then there is the farmer who is good at farming the business that is already there; an order taker.

The company had not increased its business for over three years as the salesmen were just farming, there was no incentive for them to go hunting; they did not earn any more dollars. A business adviser was brought into the company and after making some investigations

suggested to the directors that they give all of the profits they made to the salesmen on the first order they took when opening a new account. The directors were horrified as they would not be making any money until it was pointed out to them by the adviser that his investigations had uncovered the following facts. On average each customer ordered ten times a year and an average order size was \$1,000 and they stayed with the company for 8.5 years. The total amount of business each new client did in the lifetime of a client was \$85,000. Therefore they could afford to give their salesmen all of the profit on the first sale which amounted to \$400. The next year the business grew 25%

The moral of this story is, understand the value of a long term client or customer. If you have a good client, look after them very well indeed and if you are employing salespeople make sure that they have the incentive to go hunting but make sure that they look after the farming as well. By keeping good records of clients and their sales record, you can soon find out where your business is coming from and the value of a client. In the main, 80% of your business will come from 20% of your customers; make sure that you look after those 20% very well indeed but then, by profiling them, seek more customers like them.

Love the selling process, remember if you don't have any customers you don't have any business. Your marketing and selling are the keys to building a significant business.

One of the services I offer companies is a personalised "Strategic Planning" programme where I work with management and key people to create the right strategy and to help make it happen. Part of this service is helping both individuals and the company to look at their business, how they are perceived by customers and staff and the level of service offered. The service also includes training management and staff on customer service and sales techniques and how to build more business without increasing costs of marketing. If you feel that you might benefit from this service, phone or email me and we can arrange an initial meeting to discuss your needs.

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