



Successful Sales

What is Sales and why is it so important? What does it mean to be successful in Sales?

Sales is the art and science of helping someone to see the value in your products and services, and helping them feel comfortable enough in you, your company, and in the certainty of getting this value that they will place an order. It is getting someone to make a buying decision in your favor.

Being successful in Sales is a matter of both the head and the heart. It requires great emotional intelligence, mental intelligence, a strong work ethic, and focused discipline. The best sales people communicate very well, and are incredibly charismatic. Some have such a powerful presence that you reach for your wallet every time they come into the room – you just want to buy something right away to give them a reason to come back and see you!

Sales can be wonderful! There is nothing like the thrill of signing a large deal at a critical account. Having someone choose to do business with you is very gratifying and encouraging. The money that comes with success is highly motivating, but it is often the thrill of the hunt of that is the most satisfying.

Sales can also be tough. Failing to close a deal can be depressing and demoralizing, but all successful Sales people have learned to bounce back quickly. They have the belief that getting a “no” can bring them one step closer to a “yes”, and they move on with renewed determination and enthusiasm.

If you are a first time business owner, you may fail to realize how critical Sales is and how difficult it can be. You may have little or no training or experience. Your vision of the sales function may be limited to the over-the-counter sales people that you deal with at restaurants and the shopping mall, which is okay - but only if you are in retail sales. Even if you are in a single-call retail sales environment, you will be more successful if you employ some science in your selling; at a minimum, you should have a sales process to guide your conversations so that they more often come to a successful conclusion.

There are many sales systems on the market today, including Service Selling, Suggestive Selling, Solution Selling, Spin Selling, Consultative Selling, Strategic Selling, Target Account Selling, Reverse Selling, Collaborative Selling, and dozens of others. Many of these systems have a step-by-step sales process. Some have just a few steps, and others may have 20 or more. Generally, the more complex the sale is, the longer the sales cycle, and the more steps there are before you can reach agreement.

We say that the critical functions and steps of sales are:

- Building Relationships of Trust,
- Lead Generation,
- Opportunity Qualification,
- Opportunity Development, and
- Gaining Agreement.

Building Relationships of Trust

Your customers have to have confidence and trust in you and your company if they are to buy from you and refer you to others. To be more specific, if you are the only one at the company they come into contact with, then *you are the company*. They need to be comfortable around you. Any concern they have about you will be transferred subconsciously to your company and your products. If they don't like you, they will have a hard time buying from you. Your poise, confidence, and self-esteem are critical, because your self-confidence sends the subconscious signal that you are very successful, and that many other customers have enjoyed doing business with you. Many will say that the most important of all communication happens at the subconscious level.

Great sales people build relationships very quickly and maintain them over long periods of time. They love to meet new people, especially those who might purchase something or are in positions of power. They are networking demons. Other people like them and trust them immediately.

Lead Generation

In retail businesses, lead generation is generally the responsibility of the Marketing Department instead of the Sales team. But even in some retail establishments, such as automobile dealerships, the sales staff is expected to generate some (if not most) of their leads.

For salesmen and saleswomen, lead generation typically occurs in one of three ways: 1) networking, 2) emails and direct mail, and 3) prospecting calls. Networking is the easiest form of lead generation for most sales people, because almost everyone is polite when you meet him or her face-to-face. Rejection generally is not immediate, or aggressive. Sending emails and direct mail pieces is anonymous, which also makes it “safe”, but it isn’t very satisfying and response rates are generally very poor, which means that it may not provide a good return on your investment. Prospecting calls (“cold calls”) are the most difficult form of lead generation. Many otherwise successful sales people have great “call reluctance”, and just hate to pick up the phone, usually because they lack confidence in the value of the products and services they sell, in the company’s ability to deliver that value, or in themselves.

Most sales people employ a combination of techniques, perhaps sending follow-up letters to those they meet at a networking function, or sending “pre-approach” letters to those they intend to call. Regardless of the way leads are acquired, they are absolutely essential – you can’t sell something unless you have someone to sell it to.

Opportunity Qualification

Qualification can be a difficult skill to acquire. When sales people are inexperienced, they are naturally nervous and are often relieved just to have someone to talk to. “Will they talk to me?” becomes their default qualification criteria. They waste a lot of time, give away valuable sales materials, and buy lunches unnecessarily.

As sales people mature, they learn the value of their time. They learn to build strong relationships and qualify prospects at the same time. They understand sales psychology and why people buy from them. They learn to ask great, probing questions, such as: “Are you the one who will make the decision?”, “Is this project funded?”, “When will you make a decision”, and “Have you already made a decision?”. If the answers aren’t encouraging, they politely move on to the next prospect instead of wasting valuable time and dollars.

Opportunity Development

Once a qualified candidate has been identified, the opportunity needs to be developed. The best way is to go through a rigorous discovery process, where the “pain” is isolated and the “fire” is investigated. Great sales people know that people buy for their own reasons, not the sales person’s reasons, and only when they are convinced that the decision is safe and will give them the value they want. Great sales people provide brochures and other forms of information, and give demonstrations only when the customer requests them – and only if they won’t slow down the sales process.

Great sales people know that if they are to be successful in gaining agreement, they have to help the prospects come to their own conclusions of value, and that takes asking a lot of questions and listening with great intent. Sometimes the questions have to be direct and tough, just to make sure that the opportunity is in play. Many prospects are too courteous to tell you to “move on” even if they have decided to purchase something else or not buy at all; they will just allow you to keep wasting your time until you figure it out for yourself.

Gaining Agreement

The final step in most sales processes is to gain agreement. If the first several steps are performed well, the agreement becomes the natural and proper conclusion: it isn't painful or problematic. There are not a lot of objections. Confidence has been achieved and maintained throughout the process, the need has been discovered and investigated, and the value is known and agreed upon. Unless you are in an industry that has an intensive legal process that follows the business agreement, then you can just complete the paperwork and cash the commission check.

Some sales training is focused on closing techniques, which can be very useful if prospects are ready for them and they aren't manipulative. Forcing the use of high-pressure closing techniques serves to communicate that you are just looking to make a deal, and that you are not that interested in bringing value to the customer. Great sales people always have a few at their disposal, but use them cautiously and appropriately, because they know that the customer will be able to tell when they are not acting in his or her best interest.

How are you performing in Sales? Do you need training or coaching? Do you have successful, efficient Sales processes in place and are you making quota?

If we can help you be successful in Sales, or any other aspect of your business growth, please give us a call or email!

Paul Hoyt

Hoyt Management Group

www.hoytgroup.com

877.For.Hoyt (877.367.4698)

paul.hoyt@hoytgroup.com