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business



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Tips from the top

Selling for the non-salesperson

By Erin Flynn

DOES THE THOUGHT of cold calling make you shudder? Is it difficult to hit your sales goals? If you run your own business, it's imperative to be confident in your selling ability. Here are key recommendations from some of the nation's sales pros to propel you toward success.

Allan Boress (www.allanboress.com), author of 10 books on marketing and selling professional services, including *The "I HATE Selling" Book* (Allan S. Boress & Associates, 1995).

One reason professionals and others hate to sell is that they don't understand what selling truly is. They have negative misconceptions about the sales process that turn them off to seeking out new business. Selling has developed a bad name because of the many poor sales types we have run into in our lives and the stereotypical image of the used-car salesperson.

Selling is akin to being a doctor. "Where does it hurt?" is something a doctor would think and say. Not only do we need to proactively see how we can help our clients, but there are others out there in the business world who need helping, too.

Change your mistaken perception of what selling is and you will find you are motivated to help people instead.

Paul S. Goldner, CEO of AOR™, a global sales and marketing training and consulting firm (www.redhot.sales.com) based in Katonah, New York.

In the movie *City Slickers*, with Billy Crystal as a dude-ranch guest and Jack Palance as Curly, the tough cowboy who leads Crystal on his journey to self-realization, there is a

famous scene with Curly sitting on his horse and holding up one finger. The point Curly is making is that there is one key to happiness in life. There is also one key in sales.

My mother was my mentor in sales. She was my Curly. Toward the end of her career, I asked her about "that one thing." She told me, "The customer always gives you the road map to success." So, if you don't feel particularly comfortable in your role in sales, remember my mother's advice: **Listen to your customers.** They will tell you how to make them successful and grow your business.

Warren Greshes (www.greshes.net), Costco member and author of *The Best Damn Sales Book Ever: 16 Rock-Solid Rules for Achieving Sales Success* (John Wiley & Sons, 2006).

Tell everyone you know what you do. Referrals can come from the most unlikely sources. You never want someone to say to you, "I didn't know you do that. I just bought that recently. If I had known you had it, I definitely would have bought it from you."

Go where the fish are swimming. Create a client profile. Once that's done, figure out what organizations (trade or professional associations, business or civic clubs, etc.) they belong to, join and get active. Make yourself important in that organization. The people who reap the benefits of membership give without worrying about getting something back.

““ Don't sell me a refrigerator;
sell me the solution to
keeping my food cold.””

—Bob Janet



Bob Janet (www.BobJanet.com), sales consultant/trainer, speaker and author of *Join the Profit Club* (Life Long Publishing, June 2001).

So you are not comfortable selling. Then stop selling. **People love to buy but hate to be sold.** What people like is having their problems solved. The number-one rule of selling is: The business or salesperson who solves the customer's problems, needs and wants in the easiest way will get the sale.

Customers don't want to be sold. So stop selling and start solving the customer's problems, needs and wants. Don't sell me a refrigerator; sell me the solution to keeping my food cold. Don't sell me a car; sell me a comfortable way to get from one place to another.

Make sure you are the expert about your products and services, and show your customers how purchasing your products and services will solve their problems, needs and wants.

Costco member **Brian Azar** (www.salesdoctor.com), coach, author, speaker and trainer based in Durham, North Carolina.

Most sales professionals wait to **handle objections** until prospects bring them up, but that strategy—or lack of strategy—isn't nearly as effective as eliminating objections before making your presentation.

As a “sales doctor,” your first overall step with a potential client is to perform an examination—a qualifying interview—to find out where it hurts. During the examination, you find out if the prospect has a budget. Only after the examination is well under way do you offer a prescription by making a presentation. In the interview process, you effectively diagnose and dispose of the majority of objections.

The first two steps of the interview process are pre-call planning, and bonding and establishing rapport, which means doing your homework on the person you're calling, and, once on the phone, getting that person to feel comfortable with you.

Costco member **Brigid McGrath Massie** (www.brigidmcgrathmassie.com), business consultant, professional speaker and author of *Selling for People Who Hate to Sell* (Prima Lifestyles, 1996).

We all naturally gravitate to people who talk, dress and look like us. To be successful in sales, learning to operate outside this comfort zone is a must! Specifically, it means attending events—alone—and having the discipline to circulate and hand out business cards to a minimum of five potential customers.

It means not sitting at the table purchased by your company for a community or Chamber of Commerce event, but instead to fan out and introduce yourself to otherwise inaccessible businesspeople at other tables. Don't get trapped in the “low-hanging fruit” syndrome of approaching family and friends for your first sales. Push yourself out the front door—onto the street—and **go where the customers are!**

Costco member **Terri Sjodin**, author of *New Sales Speak: The 9 Biggest Sales Presentation Mistakes and How to Avoid Them* (Wiley, 2000).

One of the most common mistakes people make when presenting is being too informative versus being persuasive.

It's very easy to deliver a presentation that's informative rather than persuasive. The reason? A decision maker or prospect doesn't

say no when you're only disseminating information. But remember, it's a teacher's job to be informative; in today's competitive market a person must also be persuasive.

Design a presentation that anticipates objections and overcomes them before they become reasons not to buy. Think like an attorney, and build arguments for why a decision maker should work with you and your company, and/or why they should do it now. **Build a presentation that creates needs** rather than just covers the standard needs analysis.

Roy Chitwood, president of Max Sacks International, an international sales training and consulting firm (www.maxsacks.com) based in Seattle.

To close more sales and have more satisfied customers, businesspeople must understand what their prospects want. They should visualize the prospect holding a sign that says, “**What will it do for me?**” Regardless of whether this question is asked, the prospect is always pondering it. Thus, it is around this question that the businessperson should build his or her presentation, describing product and service features, as well as offering information about him- or herself and the company, in order to answer it.

The greatest weakness of businesspeople today is that they are product centered, not people oriented, and they are sadly unaware of this shortcoming. A businessperson who fails to develop the skills to identify and serve the needs of his or her customers will lose those customers to the competition. ☞

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