

Bottom Line Selling

Tudog has, in these pages, visited and revisited sales and the processes that drive high volume selling because we recognize that if marketing is the engine of a company, sales is the destination. It makes little sense to have a high powered engine if you have no place to go – or worse don't know how to get there. Therefore we focus on sales and best sales practices so that, combined with the marketing and general business know-how we share, we are able to power your company and get you to where you want to go – higher revenues and greater profitability.

This article is about a set of activities (7 steps in all) that, when undertaken successfully, will enable you company to secure orders and establish lasting relationships with your customers. The 7 steps are presented in order and should be engaged in a progressive manner. Approached in this way, they should serve to create sales opportunities, close deals, and establish the relationship for future sales. The 7 steps are:

1. Generate Leads

Lead generation is all about identifying prospective customers by establishing a list of characteristics, needs, and behaviors that render a company or individual a likely buyer of the product or service you are selling. Ways to generate leads include:

- Profiling – matching up companies from a variety of sources (indexes, association lists, etc.) against a profile you set up that includes company sector, size, operational methods and more.
- Data Mining – using the data stored in your database (or other databases you have legal access to) for information that suggests they could be a customer.
- Monitoring – by monitoring industry publications, websites, the press, and other sources of information you will be made aware of activities in the market and companies that may need what you sell.
- Networking – leveraging the people you know to bring contacts to you.
- Canvassing – the cold calling upon companies to measure their possible interest.
- Promotions – organizing and implementing certain events or promotions to raise awareness of your offer so that you attract parties that you can follow up on.
- Prospect Instigated – at times a prospect will find out about your company and submit a request for additional information.

2. Qualify the Leads

Having a huge pile of business cards may feel like you have a huge base from which to draw your sales. But after you weed away the leads that are actually not prospective clients because they lack the financial resources, were not serious about their initial interest, already bought from a competitor, or simply refuse to call you back, you will find you have a much (much) smaller stack of business cards, but a more concentrated list of genuinely interested prospects.

3. Prepare for the Sales Call

Before you make that sales call make sure that you have done your homework and know everything you need to know about the prospect. Among the things you should make certain you know is (a) who the decision maker is and how close to that decision

maker your contact person is, (b) what the organizational structure of the company you are approaching and what is the path your proposal will take once it is submitted, and (c) what products the company has purchased recently that would indicate that they should want to buy yours as well.

4. Execute a Great Meeting

Once you have gained sufficient access and are invited to meet the prospect, you need to make sure that you have the ability to sufficiently impress them so that you move closer to the sale. Some elements you want to keep in mind include:

- Come Prepared – make sure you have a proper presentation to demonstrate your commitment, tell your story, and show how professional you are.
- Make it All About Them – make sure your presentation tells your story from their perspective, that you are telling them what you do from the viewpoint of how it helps them.
- Answer Their Questions – while your presentation should answer most of their questions because you anticipated what their questions would be, they will nonetheless have some questions and how you answer them will show them whether you are a sleazy salesperson or someone they can trust to help them meet their goals.
- Present Your Offer – don't come to the meeting unprepared or unwilling to tell them how much all the great benefits you are promising will cost them. Pulling the old "let me go back and talk to my boss" routine is unacceptable. The only time you can wait on presenting the price is if the meeting was more a needs assessment gathering than a sales presentation. Under this scenario you can tell them that, now that you better understand their needs, you will construct a custom proposal. Make sure you give them the timetable for your proposal submission – and make sure you get it to them on time.

5. Neutralize Resistance

There is no need to view resistance as a brush off. If anything, the very fact that the prospect is expressing their reservations (as opposed to simply saying no, or disappearing without saying anything at all) means that they are willing (perhaps even interested) in being persuaded. Their resistance is natural and the fact that they are not rushing into buying your product/service does not mean that they aren't serious. Make sure you listen carefully to their resistance and provide responses that are satisfactory and persuasive.

6. Close the Sale

After you have satisfied the prospect's need to understand your offer, feel comfortable with your product, feel comfortable with you and your company, and understand your replies to their objections, you should, without making them feel manipulated, request the close. You are entitled to ask for the sale once you have met all of their buy criteria and asking for it will show that you are serious and eager to be of service. If you do not ask for the sale you will either be inviting a more prolonged process or leave the process un-ended.

7. Manage & Maintain

As you have been told many times, the sale doesn't end when you close the sale or receive payment. This is just the beginning. The follow-up includes calls regarding satisfaction with your product, calls inquiring as to how you can be of further help, drop-bys to make sure that everything is okay, and finally visits when you have something else to sell. By placing your follow-up on a schedule and making sure you maintain contact and continue your role as concerned advisor, you will not seem opportunistic when you show up to sell something new. Instead, your new sales effort will seem natural and be greeted with a great deal of receptiveness and credibility.

The sales process does not have any secrets or magic potions that make it easier to succeed. All it takes is the ability to stick to and properly execute a process that requires that you know what you're selling, know what your customer needs, and come off as genuine and believable when you make the connection between the two.

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