

Improving Sales Performance

Some people were born to sell and are so good at it they have you saying thank you as you pay the bill. Other people struggle not only with the execution, but also with the fundamentals that lead up to implementation. As the art of the sale has become more sophisticated it has, like so many things, also become more complicated. But underneath all the fancy phrases and theories lie the fundamentals. And you can never go wrong if you stick with the fundamentals.

Tudog is always monitoring the sales arena and mining the best practices for introduction and absorption by our clients. Much of what seems new is typically fundamental practices that are being reinvented or reemphasized, all too often by a newfound guru with little sales experience other than the selling of himself – which in our eyes counts. Our view remains that the fundamentals – dressed in new fancy biz-talk or dressed down in basic sales jargon – is what drives a successful sales team. And that's why we're going to review some of the basics.

Know Your Product

You need to begin with what it is you're selling. When was the last time you stopped to think about your product and how it is benefiting your clients? You need to do this every now and then because it sharpens your appreciation of the product, which in turn is visible to the people you are selling to.

Lesson: The more you appreciate your product the more others will too.

Improve Your Sales Force

Even if you have great salesmen who have been in the field for a long time and know your product like their own worn torn faces, you need to periodically reconsider their placement, training and management. The individuals in your force, as good as they are, will appreciate some refresher courses and the attention they're getting from the company.

Lesson: Training doesn't ever stop. Make sure your sales force is being given the tools and knowledge they need to succeed.

Know Your Customer

Even though your product may find favor in a wide variety of customers, you need to have the profile of those most likely to be a customer. These profiles take into consideration usage patterns, behaviors, needs, demographics and other factors, allowing you to best identify potential sales. Not knowing your customer means you are either casting too wide a net and wasting resources or you are casting too narrow a net and missing opportunities. Either way you're losing out.

Lesson: Knowing your customer means knowing your opportunities and where they are.

Price is Important

Wasn't long ago that the gurus of the moment decided that price was no longer a significant factor in the buy decision making process, and that therefore, by extension, need not be an important consideration when companies are constructing the marketing strategies. Would hogwash be an impolite thing to say?

Price is always important because it is one of the bedrocks of the value proposition and the perception of value. Price must always be consistent with how the product is positioned, and positioning is always a consideration of the market being chased.

Know what your value is in the market and price your products accordingly. Any less would be lost revenues and any more will knock you out of the box.

Lesson: Price, no matter some experts may say, is always a factor in a buyer's decision.

You Ain't Selling Enough

Unless your selling everything your company has to sell to the maximum it has the capacity to sell it, you ain't selling enough. Chances are there is a huge potential market out there for you that you are not getting to, either because you are under staffed, ill prepared, or not as ambitious as you need to be. Each of these challenges can be corrected and you need to begin making the corrections. The more you sell the more profits you make. In our beloved system, therein lies the motivation.

Lesson: Start expanding your core client base by going after clients that should be yours but aren't...yet.

There are some other factors you should look at when reviewing your sales force for areas to improve, including compensation, referral sources, customer service, expansion of sales to existing customers, and new personnel recruitment, training and integration. These issues, together with the fundamentals, serve as the core of your sales effort. Improve them and you've improved your sales performance.