

Keys to Great Selling

Selling is like sports in that the better you become at it, the more you want to do it. For those of us who love selling, there is a certain rhythm to it that brings us great joy. There is a sense of accomplishment when you are successful in persuading someone to purchase your product, because you know there were alternatives trying to make equally persuasive arguments. You know you cut the sale because you managed to connect on a human level and develop a relationship of trust. It is not corny to suggest too, that a certain pleasure is derived from the knowledge that the product you sold will bring the person you sold it to joy or convenience or whatever it is you promised. Oh yeah, and the money is good too.

With all the benefits to selling – the warm and fuzzy feeling it gives you and the cash rewards it brings – you might think that those of us who dedicate their professional attention to sales would be well versed in the fundamentals. Alas, you would be incorrect. That is except those who will have the opportunity to read this article, for herein lies the 10 core fundamentals of great sales.

Fundamental # 1: Work Hard

This may seem like a silly thing to have to say, but lots of people go into sales because it seems like it might be an easy way to earn some money. It isn't. Hard work is a key factor to great sales because it means that the salesperson is going to make sure he/she knows the product he/she is selling, the customer he/she is selling to, and the reason why the customer should buy it. All this understanding takes research and care, and is, in the end, hard work.

Fundamental # 2: Play to Win

The irony of being a good salesperson is that while you need to be a “people person” and connect well with others, you also need to have a ruthless side to you (at least to some extent) because you will need to have the ability to point out the deficiencies and faults in competing products. You need to have the play to win attitude and approach every sales call with the intensity of someone who does not like to lose. Attitude isn't everything, but it is the edge between mediocre sales and great sales.

Fundamental # 3: Brand Yourself

There is a lot of talk these days about personal brand and how people can differentiate themselves from the crowd by developing their own “brand”. This is true for sales too. If you are just like every other salesperson your product will be perceived as being like every other product. Your brand needs to be an extension of your product, but have your own personal touch. Make sure you balance the two properly so that no inherent contradictions are apparent. Great sales rely on your personality. The more you can make yourself shine, the more sales you'll generate.

Fundamental # 4: Deliver Value

Great sales are built on relationships and relationships are constructed on value. If your product is providing significant value to your customers they will like your product. If you, as the salesperson, provide added value by demonstrating an understanding of the

needs of your customers and assisting them in maximizing all the benefits your product can deliver, then you are reinforcing the relationship you have established and transforming yourself into an asset for your clients. The more they come to see you as providing them with additional benefit, the better your sales will be.

Fundamental # 5: Talk to the Hand

Like the comedy routine that says “talk to the hand”, you too need to talk to the hand...that signs the checks. Make sure you develop your relationship and establish your perceived value with a decision maker. Great sales come from being able to penetrate the barriers companies set up to keep pesky salespeople out. You need to be in touch, and stay in touch, with the person who has the authority to authorize the purchase of whatever it is you sell.

Fundamental # 6: Get Engaged

Commitment is not always a bad thing, particularly when your customer becomes committed to your products. Make sure you allow yourself to get close enough to get engaged in the business of your customers. This does not mean that you should impose yourself in areas your presence is not requested (or desired), but rather that you let them know that you are available to become engaged to the extent they wish.

Fundamental # 7: Use Humor

Humor is the most effective method to develop relationships. Whether self-depreciative or a simple one liner, humor is a great way to reach out to people and lighten a situation. This does not mean that you need to be class clown or try so hard that your jokes are no longer funny. It does mean you should remember good jokes and wait for the appropriate time to share them. You should also remember not to take yourself so seriously that you fail to spot the humor in the situations that pop up every day.

Fundamental # 8: Be Creative

The art of being creative does not mean a license to mislead, misrepresent, or otherwise attempt to fool your customers. If you do try to fool them, it will backfire. Perhaps this won't be immediate, but sooner or later they will spot how you fooled them and will feel foolish. Nobody likes to feel foolish and most likely don't buy from those who induce this feeling. Therefore you need to channel your creativity into other, more honest ways to make the customer stand up and notice you and your product. This can sometimes be cute and funny and sometimes serious and solemn. Either way, be creative at it.

Fundamental # 9: Be a Risk Deflator

Nobody likes to take risks, especially unnecessary risks. Great sales extract all the risk from their products. The money back guarantee and satisfaction guarantee are manifestations of the desire to take the risk away. You need to find ways to minimize the risks associated with buying your products. Sometimes this means reducing the risk and sometimes this means increasing the upside. Either way the risk/reward ratio needs to lean dramatically in favor of reward.

Fundamental # 10: Use 3rd Party Validation

Nobody completely believes everything we say about ourselves while we are in the act of trying to sell something. Therefore, as much as possible, we need to gain our credibility through third parties willing to vouch for us. Certainly these third party character witnesses need to be the proud owners of fine reputations, otherwise we may in fact become associated with the shady perceptions of those we hoped would enhance our standing. Great sales are dependent on reputation. Make sure you present yours with sufficient credibility, and then strive to maintain your good name.

The fundamentals of great sales are not that difficult to follow and yet everyday someone is cutting corners believing that the rules don't apply to them. Sometimes they actually make some sales, using their "success" as proof that their system works. It may, but the question is how well and for how long? If you are looking for some sales for some time, following the rules is not crucial. If you are looking for great sales and the creation of genuine value, the rules are the only way to go. Perhaps that's why they're the rules.

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