

Selling By the Rules

In anything you hope to master, gaining an understanding of the fundamentals goes a long way toward nurturing excellence. Selling is no different, and while the rules may have degrees of flexibility to accommodate different industries and sectors, the core principles more or less remain the same.

Certainly people with a great deal of experience (and success) tend to disregard the rules. Sometimes they even re-write them based on their own experiences. But fundamentals are what they are because they are drawn from broad experiences and tend to apply to all or most circumstances. Tudog promotes effective sales practices by emphasizing the rules.

So here are 11 rules of selling Tudog believes will serve you well.

1. Focus on Benefits – Too often we sell our products based on what it does (its features) and not what benefits those functions deliver. Customers are not interested in features that do not deliver benefits they are seeking. By focusing on benefits you are demonstrating why your product is valuable, useful and worthy of being purchased. Features on their own do not communicate the same sense of need.

2. Sell Results – Like benefits, results drive need. Be able to show your prospect what results your product will instigate and you have the upper hand on closing the sale.

3. Do Your Homework – Not only do you need to know the company, what their needs are, and what type of deal they typically close, but you also need to remember that you are selling to a person and that you must adjust your sales techniques to meet the individual to whom you are making your presentation. People buy from people, so the converse, people sell to people, is also true.

4. Demonstrate What You Are Saying – Not only does comprehension improve when a person uses more than one sense while processing new information, but your credibility increases significantly as you demonstrate what you are saying. Come prepared to run a demonstration and you will not only get your point across better, you'll also be believed.

5. Ascertain Need and Measure Comprehension – You need to ask questions that demonstrate your desire to meet the needs of the prospect. Your questions should try to both ascertain need (at the beginning) and measure comprehension (throughout). Asking the right question at the right time also helps build a relationship and allows for an exchange of dialogue.

6. Listen Carefully – It is natural to get wrapped up in the presentation you are giving to the point that you are not listening carefully enough to the comments, questions and responses being directed your way. In each of these remarks is a clue as to what the person wants to hear from you. If you are doing all the talking and none of the listening you will miss out on these clues.

7. Be Yourself – People can tell when a salesperson is over the top, too aggressive, or too friendly, or too much like a salesperson. Be yourself. Show an interest in the person

you are meeting with, show pride in your product, show that you believe your product can help them, show that you're concerned with their satisfaction. Being natural and sincere goes a lot further than losing your credibility from the start because your audience doesn't believe you're genuine.

8. Don't Belittle Your Competition – People expect you to sell your product, they don't expect you to criticize the competition. It could seem ill spirited. You can and should demonstrate why your product is better, but that is done by saying "X is a great product, but it is somewhat limited in....", not "X is a lousy product because it doesn't even....".

9. Remember: People are not Logical - All too often you can lay before our prospective client an extremely well conceived, logical case for why they should buy your goods, only to find out that the determining factors are not logical, but emotional, or worse, political. You need to keep in mind that decisions are made for a number of different reasons. You need to try to pick up on what those reasons may be and adjust your presentation accordingly.

10. Remember: Price isn't Everything – Certainly price is an important factor in the decision to buy, but it is not the only factor. More important than price is the perception of value and what one gets for the money they are spending. Too often a salesperson will assume that if their product is the least expensive it has an automatic advantage. This is only true if everything else is equal, which, of course, it never is.

11. Be an Expert – Particularly in high technology, but true for other sectors as well, there is the need to be an expert in your product. The complexity of operations is such that companies seeking solutions need the assurance that they are purchasing the right product. You, as a salesperson, are not only the representative of your company, but also the measure by which the prospective customer will view the sophistication of your products. You need to know not only your product, but also those of your competitors, the trends in the sector and challenges real and imagined.

The rules presented in this article are the cornerstones of good sales technique – the difference between a good salesperson and a great salesperson. Insofar as how much a company makes depends on how much a company sells, a great sales team is a central component of a great company.