

## The Complete Salesperson

When seeking to hire a salesperson companies typically hire without an understanding of the core competencies necessary to excel in sales. It isn't infrequent that the skills of the salesperson are underrated. This underestimation occurs because sales are perceived as an "any person" skill, meaning that just about anyone can be a good salesperson. This misunderstanding is not diminished when management witnesses some people performing well in sales and others performing poorly. Rather than realizing that the par in performance is based on skills, they explain it away with theories on motivation and commitment. While motivation and commitment help a good salesperson become great, they are not the cornerstones of a complete salesperson. This article explores the fundamentals of the complete salesperson. By identifying them and hiring in accordance with them, companies can cease hiring the wrong people for sales and focus on those candidates with the skills that will enable him/her to sell.

There are four cornerstones to excellent sales skills, each with their own components. Together they constitute the complete salesperson. These 4 essentials are:

### 1. Attitude

The attitude of the salesperson is the beginning of good sales skills, because he/she must have the personality and traits necessary to interact in the sales arena in an effective manner. The key elements of Attitude include:

- a) Belief – the capacity to believe in what is being sold, how it performs, and the benefits it delivers. The belief is also personal, as in the ability to believe in one's ability to close the sale.
- b) Commitment – the staying power to follow the sales process and stick with it until the delivery of results.
- c) Desire – the temperament and social skills that allow someone to enjoy selling and make them want to be engaging in sales. Without the desire, sales is a very difficult profession.
- d) Ability to Fail – the ability to bounce back from failing and the confidence to watch a sales effort fail without internalizing the failure.
- e) Persistence – the willingness to keep going even as efforts become more difficult.
- f) Self-Motivated – the ability to be a self-starter and remain motivated even when the sales aren't rolling in.
- g) Enthusiastic – the capacity to generate excitement about the product/service being sold.
- h) Confidence – the confidence and ability to communicate confidence in the product, and his /her ability to sell the product.
- i) Creativity – the ability to be creative within the context of the sales process by providing distinctive approaches to customers and potential customers.
- j) Empathy – the ability to relay to customers a genuine concern for their challenges and a true interest in assisting in addressing and resolving them.
- k) Organization – the ability to monitor and maintain multiple leads simultaneously even when different prospects are at different stages of the same process.

### 2. People Skills

Sales is a people related occupation and the complete salesperson needs to have a number of traits that enhance his/her abilities to interact well with people. In addition to being a good listener and being able to read body language, a great salesperson must also have the following:

- a) Friendliness – a genuine fondness for interacting with other people and a friendliness that does not come off as contrived or forced.
- b) Sincerity - an innate honesty that people can pick up on and that induces trust from others.
- c) Humor - the ability to make people laugh. The right joke at the right time makes people feel comfortable and relaxed and serves to bring a situation from formal to more casual.
- d) Insightfulness – the ability to read people and understand the right approach.
- e) Concern - the ability to communicate concern to others so that they feel you are on their side and genuine in your efforts to help them solve their problems.

### **3. Product Knowledge**

There are plenty of sales gurus out there who claim they don't need to know anything about a product in order to sell it. This is beyond nonsense. You cannot explain the reasons to buy a product you don't understand. You cannot ask questions of prospects to examine their needs and then explain how you address those needs with a product you don't understand. Product knowledge is a key component to selling. The better you know your product, the more of it you will sell. The product knowledge components for the complete salesperson include:

- a) Functions – what are the functions of the product, why those functions were incorporated, what needs those functions address, and how those functions interact with existing workflow issue.
- b) Benefits – how the product addresses the needs of the customer and what benefits it delivers.
- c) Competitors – customers will not believe your product is superior to that of your competitors if you are unable to explain how and why. You need to understand your competitor's product at least to the extent that enables you to make a comparative statement that is valid and credible.

### **4. Selling Skills**

Not everyone can be converted into a good salesperson. The skills for great sales include:

- a) Discipline – sales requires a great deal of discipline so that pre-meeting research is done properly, follow-up is engaged in on schedule, and responses to inquiries are answered in a timely manner. Without discipline sales cannot be closed.
- b) Presentation Excellence – sales needs a good presentation, not only in terms of structure and content, but most critically in delivery. A good salesperson knows how to deliver a great presentation.

- c) Prospecting Skills – a great salesperson knows how to prospect for customers and does not have issues of ego and pride that disrupt the process. Prospecting requires an ability to accept rejection, sometimes out of hand and for no reason.
- d) Networking Skills – the ability to meet people, get them to like and trust you, get them to listen to your story, and get them to want to hear more is a key selling skill.
- e) Overcoming Objection – there is never a sales process that skips the objection phase. Every sale prospect has reasons why he/she should not make the purchase. The ability to overcome the objections – by honoring them, acknowledging them, respecting them, and responding to them – is a critical sales skill.
- f) Closing the Sale – there are many salespeople who possess excellent sales skills for 90% of the sales process. That remaining 10%, during which the sale is actually closed, is often lacking. Yet it is the 10% for which the other 90% exists. The ability to close the sale, bring pen to contract, is the most critical of selling skills, and it is the culmination of all the other skills combined.
- g) Follow-Up – great sales don't end once the contract is signed. The level of service delivered and the follow up provided complete the great sales process and are the hallmarks of the complete salesperson.

Sales is the engine that drives the company because it is the vehicle chosen to execute the processes that provide the revenue the company needs to exist. Using mediocre salespeople or not recognizing the skills required to be a great salesperson can lead to a sales effort that does not perform up to its fullest potential. In very real terms that means less revenue for the company. By selecting complete salespeople, a company can maximize its sales effort and generate maximum revenue. The better choice is so apparent anyone should be able to sell it.