

Shut Up and Sell!

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No wonder we're afraid of selling. We don't want to hunt people down, we don't want to take their money without consent, and we don't want to sell them something they don't need.

You Don't Have to Do That!

Those salespeople have it all wrong. You don't have to pressure anyone to get a sale. In fact, I'll go as far as to say that you don't even want those people who succumb easily to sales pressure. You want these people to know what they're getting, up front, and have no remorse over the buying process.

The informed consumer is the repeat consumer.

I'll give you an example: Several years ago, I was in communications with a business person who had some very specific needs. (And very specific questions.) Over the course of several months we communicated via email and telephone several times a week. We weren't even talking about costs - we were talking about the schematics of working with a virtual business. "How would we do x virtually?" "Can Y be virtual, or would there have to be some physical correspondence involved?" "Is Z possible in a virtual situation, and if so, how does it work?"

This gentleman was really doing his homework. And I really didn't mind. We were building a great rapport, he was generating referrals for my business, and he was learning a great deal about the virtual assistance industry. All his questions were valid - I had no problem answering a question that would have taken him too much time to find the answer on his own.

After about six months of correspondence, he finally signed a contract with me. We agreed upon a five-year term (almost unheard of within the VA industry), during which time he would continue to generate referrals for my business. He's still working with me to this day, seven years later.

He was informed and comfortable in his decision - and this made all the difference.

So the moral of the story is this - shut up, listen, and answer your consumers' questions.

There are only three steps to selling - none of which have anything to do with a pushing anyone into buying.

In order to sell, you have to connect!

Primarily, you have to connect with a person - you want to be talking with someone not at them. Build rapport. Ask them about their business, their situation, and listen whole-heartedly. You need to figure out where they are in their situation, and use this Q&A time to help you formulate responses to cater to their needs. Don't forget to take notes!

Now talk a little about their expectations of the relationship. If you're a coach, for example, ask them how they expect coaching to help them within the next three months. Ask them how they expect the coaching relationship to work. Ask lots of 'why' questions - they'll help you more later. ("Why do you feel you need a coach?" "Why do you want to achieve x?")

After you've talked about their expectations, tell them the reality of your business. Tell them specific outcomes you can help them achieve, and present case studies if possible. In all matters, be honest. Don't over-hype anything... be straight and they'll appreciate you for it.

Now you can persuade

Now is your turn to talk. Talk about their problems. Take their expectations and their situation and tell them their problems in your own words. If you understand their situation, they will be able to tell. Don't fake concern or empathy - but do be understanding of their needs. Speak of their problems as if they asked you a 'why' question - "You need x, y, & z because you need a & b to function appropriately for outcome N".

Also talk about their outcomes in your own words "If I understand, you need x, y, & z; and you want ABC to happen because of it, correct?" The more you relay your competence of their situation, the more comfortable they'll be with you. Approach this as you would approach an elementary school student with a difficult math question - rephrase so you both understand, and make sure you have ALL the elements. Without all the elements, you can't fully understand their needs.

Once you're comfortable with their needs and desired outcomes, present your solution. DO NOT use a canned 'solution statement', you truly need to cater all your responses to their specific needs. Speak of their future, your future, and how they intertwine. You want this to be seen as a group effort - not just a one-sided deal. You can't possibly solve all their problems, but you are always on their side. Let them know your vested interest, and they'll appreciate it.

Let's not close - let's agree

Now that you've talked with them about their needs, how you can help, and any other items that need discussion, you should be ready to come to an agreement. You should both agree by now that their needs and your solution are a good fit. If you don't feel you're a good fit, move on.

Make them an offer. Tell them how you intend on helping them, how you plan to work together, and how long you plan to work together. DO NOT discuss money until this point. (If the question arises beforehand, don't evade the question, but don't give them a precise estimate. I've always used the phrase "We need to cover some more information before I can give you a solid quote because pricing is based on individual needs". Give a ballpark estimate if necessary.) Go over your pricing & procedures, and offer to send them a formal proposal & contract. You're done!

As you can see, selling isn't what you think it is. No one wants to talk to a pushy salesperson, and now you have the tools to be an effective salesperson. Just remember to prepare, relax, shut up and sell!

Author: ppeptt

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