

Happy Selling

Contributed by Penny

A look at selling as a skill rather than a chore, breaking away from the "pushy" salesman approach and showing that responsible ethical selling will not only create happy customers but also make for a more pleasant working environment than the "high pressure" call centre.

HAPPY SELLING

All those lovely call centres, car sales people and mobile phone sellers really have giving the art of selling a bad name. A lot of people cringe and break out in a cold sweat just thinking about selling. Ironically, it's usually people who have this reaction to selling who are the best at it!

That's because selling as a taught skill, from a crib sheet or script is false, uncomfortable, and often counter productive. The thought of having to do that for most people is not nice.

However, real selling is done best by honest people with integrity who like people and who are interested in them as human beings, not just as a potential addition to their sales target.

Selling is no more or less than finding out what your potential customer's wants or needs, telling them how your product or service meets those wants or needs, then asking them to buy. Simple? Absolutely! Just LISTEN to your customer, know your products inside out and upside down and all will be well.

An example from my business of exploring customer needs –

Customer

How much are your t-shirts?

Staff

They're £10.99 including any choice of print in the shop

Customer

If I wanted my company logo done, how much would that be?

Staff

That would be £7.50 for customisation, so a total of £18.49

Sounds OK?

Yes, but the member of staff didn't find out what the customer really wanted. With a bit more chat, and a couple of extra questions, the conversation could perhaps have gone like this –

Customer

How much are your t-shirts?

Staff

The prices vary, what are you looking for?

Customer

Well, I want my company logo printed.

Staff

Is it just one top you're looking for or a few?

Customer

Well, probably about 30.

Staff

What does your logo look like?

Customer

It's just one colour and goes on the front breast pocket

Staff

Well, for that, anything over 20 t-shirts, the price would be £6.75 for the top plus £1.00 for the printing, so that's £7.75 each.

A huge difference. In the first instance, the customer will have gone away, probably never to return! In the second he could have spent over £150, just for the sake of a few questions! These are real examples of conversations we've observed with our staff, not made up, and show how important it is to learn how to talk to your customers, and if you have staff, how to train them too.

So just chat with your customers, find out what they truly want or need, don't assume the first answer is the complete picture. Probe and tease the information out of them. If this worries you, remember it's in their best interest for you to know what they want; otherwise you could sell them something that's wrong for them. The same thing applies to on-line selling, make sure you present you customer with enough information for them to make an informed choice.

Another trap you can fall into is bombarding them with information, being too specific about your product, without it being relevant to them.

For example:

A Cat:

Customer

I'm thinking of getting a cat. Can you tell me a bit about this one?

Staff

Well this cat has four paws, a nose, two ears, a tail, some whiskers….

Customer

Oh…

Alternatively:

Customer

I'm thinking of getting a cat. Can you tell me a bit about this one?

Staff

Is there any particular reason you're thinking about getting one?

Customer

I'm living on my own now and thought it might be good company for me.

Staff

Well yes, they can be. They can sit on your lap, be there when you get home to welcome you, but if its company specifically you want, a dog may be better, as cats can be a bit aloof sometimes – have you thought about a dog?

That's an extreme example, but substitute cats for tractors or computers, or cars, or foodstuffs. It is so easy not to understand your customer if you just launch into the details of your product, and it's probably what you feel most comfortable talking about. You may be excited by its hydraulic lifting gear, its 80 megabyte RAM, its low levels of fat; the customer may not care, and you will lose them!

ASK THE EXTRA QUESTIONS

BUT…

DON'T INTERROGATE THEM, that's just as bad. We've all experienced that from pushy sales people. Once you've asked a couple of extra questions listen to them, the rest of the conversation will flow naturally and hopefully to a satisfactory conclusion for both parties.

If however, after you've chatted to the customer, you realise that what you have on offer isn't right for them – tell them so and why. They'll respect you for it and tell all their friends how helpful you were. From one lost sale, you could get ten more!

AND FINALLY…

The bit that often gets forgotten (this happens a lot on websites too, drives me potty!) ASK THEM TO BUY.

It seems to be a very difficult thing to do. We feel awkward, embarrassed, just plain silly. To overcome this, practice on friends, family, the dog – anyone you're comfortable with, practice any variation of:

Would you like that one then?

Shall I do that for you?

Will this one be OK for you?

How many would you like?

Do you want it with… or without…?

How would you like to pay?

So that will be £xx – is that OK?

Once you've practiced, the only time you'll feel awkward or silly with this is if you haven't listened to the customer, found out what they want, and told them why your product or service is right for them. After you've done these three things, the last bit will be easy. Trust me I'm a sales-person!!!!

Take a look at Penny's business at <http://www.squatorange.com/>

Starting in business checklist

Part one of Penny's guide to starting your own business