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Introduction

How to get the most from this training

This self paced training includes plenty of good advice to make you more successful at sales. It will help you to be more productive selling your products and services. It will help you to make more money and will help you enjoy your success.

How do I know? For one thing, I have been training sales people and sales teams for more than 25 years. I started out as an AT&T telemarketing trainer back before MCI decided to break up the phone monopoly and when every long distance phone call resulted in AT&T revenue. Our simple goal: get business to phone more often.

At AT&T, we would go out to visit manufacturers, truck sales companies, anyone who sold stuff, and we would teach them how to do it better over the phone... and it worked. Our customers sold more using our training assistance, so they were willing to make more phone calls. Eventually, our customers were able to create so many leads that they needed to learn how to complete the sales cycle and close more deals. So we accepted that challenge to train them in all steps of the sale.

Since then, I have helped tens of thousands of business people through seminars, books and magazine columns, including 120 sales and marketing training columns for a very popular sales publication, Reseller Management Magazine. Readers have sent me an amazing number of letters of thanks, over the years, so I know that the material I have prepared for you, here, will work.

In customizing the information in this course on selling so that it helps you to sell more, I have relied on more than years of sales training experience. I interviewed hundreds of sales people, some successful and some not so, in order to determine what sales problems you are facing in the field. I interviewed numerous people who need to sell but have no training, people who are wonderful on the technical side, but who have important questions regarding how best to increase sales.

You told me you would love to learn:

1. How to uncover greater numbers of fresh sales leads.
2. How to overcome fears prospects have regarding reliability and trust.
3. How to organize your sales calls to greatest effect.
4. How to stand up to competition from large, traditional vendors.

The 80/20 rule is wonderful when applied to sales training. It says that you derive 80% of benefit in the first 20% of the time and the remaining 20% of benefit in the remaining 80% of the time. I don't know if that is 100% true, but this sales training resource will answer your most urgent sales questions and will provide you with tools to make more sales.

80/20 notwithstanding, if you have had no prior selling experience, or if your current sales results are limited, you should consider this as a great beginning to build on, a valuable resource, but not the only resource. Read additional books and magazines on sales and marketing. Attend selling seminars. Join groups and associations comprised of sales professionals who freely exchange ideas leading to greater success.

Recognize that selling is a profession that gives forth its greatest rewards to those who continue to expand their professional understanding with time set aside, each month, to invest in its study. For those of us who do, it's a wonderful way to succeed. So, let's turn directly to lesson one and start creating more fresh sales leads.

Why Prospects Don't Buy!

There are five true, basic, reasons why prospects don't buy. The sooner you learn these five important reasons, the sooner you can get to the sale.

There are five marketing reasons why more prospects don't buy from you. These are not sales objections, mind you. Objections are more numerous. Your prospects can come up with almost as many objections at any one sitting as President Clinton can eat cheeseburgers...That many. Objections are not the real reasons they don't buy, just reasons why your salespeople need to clarify matters.

But as for true, basic, marketing reasons for many prospects not plunking down hard-earned cash on the barrel head and scooping up your solution, there are five. If you knew why they all don't buy, do you think you could modify your marketing strategy in order to improve your sales closing ratio? Let's see.

The first reason you don't get a higher percentage of orders is that you haven't qualified those buyers who can afford you or you don't arrive at user-acceptable price points.

It isn't enough to be cheaper than the competition, nor is it enough to be able to show cost-justification and relative value; you must be able to meet real and emotional pricing constraints in order to get the buyer to sign the contract. In other words, they have to know that they can afford it even if the worst-case scenario occurs. The prospect's financial comfort factor sometimes has less to do with your markup and profit than it has to do with the prospect's internal budgeting demands. The question may not be "Should I buy from vendor A or vendor B" but "Should I buy a new software-driven inventory control system or a new delivery truck?" Like it or not, if that's the question, the Ford dealer wins.

Pricing is not a science, but it is a marketing discipline. I have found that it is critical to determine early in the selling effort just what the prospect's financial limitations are. Then, when it is time for the proposal, you can tailor a cash purchase, lease purchase, or other funding method to the path of least resistance...but only if you understand the buyer's financial limitations and have a strategy to deal with them.

The second reason that all of your prospects don't buy from you is because, believe it or not, you are not presenting to the prospects who can use what you sell.

No matter how much you pride yourself at being able to sell "ice to the Eskimos" in today's business world, if your product or service doesn't fill a void, it's a real tough, time-wasting sell. Prospects tell your salespeople this, but, in the greater wisdom of some sales training course you took years ago, you folks believe that the prospects are lying to you.

On any given day I will receive catalogs and/or telephone sales calls from people who sell esoteric magazine subscriptions, hallway lighting, even telephone pole climbing gear...stuff I don't buy at all. For every one of these telemarketing calls, I receive about forty direct mail pieces.

In some cases, field salespeople visit me and pitch me on new office furniture, or something else I am not in the market for. Then, they call me back several times to see if I am ready to order something. I believe that I am pretty articulate, but, by my not being verbally abusive to the salesmen, they read it as a positive sign and continue to follow up. Even though I tell them I am not in the market for what they sell, they refuse to believe me.

A long time ago, somebody wrote a book, I think it was Zig Zigler that said that the sale begins when the customer says no. Now, everybody in the selling game seems to take it as a personal challenge

to turn every "no" into a "yes". If you have something that I need, this may be admirable.

If you have nothing I need, this is not only dumb salesmanship, but dumb sales management. Hasn't anybody ever heard of qualifying a prospect? If you want to make more money than ever before, you must manage your time and the time of your sales force and only spend time with true prospects instead of people who are simply too polite to throw you out.

The third most common reason that people don't buy from you is that you don't establish enough confidence with them so that they will trust you.

I know you don't believe me, and they're often too embarrassed to tell you straight out, but it's true. Maybe it isn't that they think you're a bunch of shameless, lying slime balls who will say or do anything for a sale (although many prospects have just that opinion of salespeople); perhaps it is just that they don't have confidence in your company's recommendation...your professionalism. This is possible even in the medical profession. Let me illustrate.

Once, during a ski club trip to Park City, Utah, I was run down by another skier on the morning of the first day of my vacation. For the first time in thirty years of skiing, I found myself on the ski patrol toboggan headed for the medical shack. A doctor of the age and pre-shaving demeanor of *Doogie Howser* examined me. If you remember, *Doogie Howser, MD* was a TV show about a child prodigy who became a practicing MD coincident with his reaching puberty. The young physician examined me with the routine thoroughness that you would expect at a ski facility.

He then told me that I had torn a knee ligament and immediate re-constructive surgery was a sensible way to go. If I waited, I might find that I did not need surgery. On the other hand, I might do even greater damage to a knee in a weakened condition.

The implication was that the surgery was the better way and the ski area surgeon was the most competent one to perform the task. To satisfy my fear, Dr. Doogie suggested I get a "second opinion" from his boss in Salt Lake City (an interesting sales strategy for a subsequent lesson, no?).

I told the doctor that I liked to buy my ski equipment near home, so I can bring it back if things don't work right. In my opinion, that formula works for surgical purchases as well. In spite of Doogie's best consultative sales effort, I took the next plane home to see the knee specialist at my local HMO. The bad news, according to my local surgeon, was that the young Park City doctor had correctly diagnosed that my anterior cruciate ligament indeed was gone. The good news, however, was that it was probably lost in a sporting mishap some two decades ago and I have functioned well without it all these years. My local specialist, also a skier, advised rest, mild physical therapy and no need for slicing and dicing.

I tell you this story because most of our prospects, yours and mine, view us with more skepticism than I viewed this young doctor. We sales types are viewed with skepticism because, more times than not, the advice given to buyers by sellers is just wrong.

Don't get on your high horse. This has nothing to do with your own recommendations, but, rather, with the perception of buyers in general. Think about it. Do you always believe what highly-credentialed salesmen tell you? If I did, I would be walking now on a new plastic knee.

If you want to make more sales, you must recognize this unwillingness of many buyers to accept what your salespeople have offered based only on your own testimony. If you are to bridge this credibility chasm, you must arm your salespeople with ample references, third-party evidence to the competence of your recommendations. Do this and your closing ratio will climb significantly.

The fourth reason that you fail to make the sale is that you don't create the relationship that gets your prospects to really like you or your company.

I mentioned that I receive a lot of sales calls. One cold call telemarketer actually said,

"Hi! I SELL ACCOUNTING SERVICES. HAVE YOU FILED THIS YEAR'S TAX RETURN YET?"

"No!" I GUSHED, "I WAS WAITING FOR A TOTAL STRANGER TO CALL. COME RIGHT OVER!"

Oh, brother! Does this guy actually expect to make a living this way? He might make a few sales, but he will not have a successful career no matter how friendly he sounds over the phone.

It is a mistaken belief by many in sales that likability and trust are solely the sales person's job. Image is a marketing function that includes sales training, collateral materials, and support for your local Little League team. That's why big companies give prospects copies of internal company newsletters that gush with wedding and birth announcements, and include photos of individual employees doing personal stuff.

The most successful selling mission meets the need to create an emotional bond between buyer and seller. The buyer has to care about you and he has to believe that you are nice enough to want to care about him.

The fifth reason you don't get the order is because you fail to understand the internal politics of the prospect firm and create a true working rapport with all of the forces for change.

Some people think that it is enough to train salespeople to target somebody called the "key decision maker", but this may not always be the top dog.

I recently heard of a case where the owner of a successful company told his CFO to give certain business to the owner's friend. Instead, the CFO gave the owner's friend's bid to the competition, along with the subsequent order. When a salesman makes a deal with the number one decision-maker in a company, but the number one has a very egocentric, number two decision-maker at his side, you lose. Your deal is with number one, but your results are number two.

In fact, it can be documented that the company we are discussing consistently makes poor purchasing decisions, but the owner is unwilling to take a critical look at his CFO's performance. So, by not appealing to the CFO's ego, the seller and the owner have ended up in a true lose-lose situation.

In summary, the five areas that marketing can strengthen in order to improve your sales closing ratio are:

- 1) Uncover prospects who can afford what you sell,
- 2) Don't waste time on prospects unless they have uncovered true needs for what you sell,
- 3) Build a company image of trust with references and other third party evidence,
- 4) Establish an image of corporate friendship and warmth, and
- 5) Train yourself to understand the workings of corporate ego-politics.

Work on these points and watch your sales productivity improve without the need for a bigger marketing budget...