

## It's *All* Customer Satisfaction

We in "Sales" are really in the Customer Satisfaction business. Almost every successful sales person will agree that it is much easier to work with a previous customer or a referral than with a new prospect. Studies have shown that any drop from total satisfaction results in a drastic decrease in loyalty--a drop from **Very Satisfied** to **Satisfied** results in a decrease of 83% in repeat business. Yet most sales people try to "sell" the customer something rather than help the customer "purchase".

Is there a difference? Most definitely!

People buy for their reasons, not yours - and if somehow you get them to buy for your reasons, they will never be completely satisfied. Only when someone is completely satisfied will they freely recommend you to friends, relatives and co-workers as someone with whom they should do business.

It's not always easy to get a prospective customer to open up to you and share wants and needs. In many cases they've known you only a few minutes and aren't yet sure they can trust you. So you start with a SMILE!, a sincere greeting (such as "What brings you in to (insert business name here) today?") and a firm handshake.

"The selling process is a two-part sequence. First, you must educate yourself. Then, you must educate your client." -- Tom Hopkins

In this article we are going to assume that you have already educated yourself on the products you offer... You may want to ask your prospective customer to take a few minutes at the very beginning to sit down and discuss what it is they want before you show them any products. Ask a mixture of open and closed-ended questions with appropriate follow-up questions. The right questions will comfort the customer and show him or her that you really are interested in helping them and not just notching another sale. They will also give you the information you need to find the product best suited for the customer's wants and needs. Remember that closed-ended questions can be answered in one or two words ("Do you want fries with that?" or "What's the most important thing to you in your new \_\_\_\_\_?"), while open-ended questions require more detail ("Please tell me a little more about the \_\_\_\_\_ you have now.").

Try to ask questions that involve the senses, such as "Can you describe to me what the ideal \_\_\_\_\_ looks like?" or "How does that feel?" These questions are much more likely to invoke positive emotions and good rapport than the "What do you want?" or "How much do you want to spend?" they've encountered with most sales people.

Listen with your ears, of course, but also with your eyes. Many times customers will give visual signals that seem to contradict their words. Or they may mean something different than the meaning you take from a response. When you think this may be happening, ask follow-up questions for clarification. Two excellent examples are: “Could you please tell me more about that?” and “What do you mean by \_\_\_\_\_?”

Once you know the customer’s wants and needs, show them the *least expensive* product you have that meets all their stated desires. We all think in pictures, rather than words, so try to create mental images for the customer as you point out each feature that will meet the requirements. Be sure to also explain how it will do so. (Note: If you doubt that we think in pictures, say the word **elephant** out loud. Are you now thinking of the letters e-l-e-p-h-a-n-t written on the page or are you picturing a big gray wrinkly critter you wouldn’t want stepping on your toes?)

Many times the price of product you offer will be less than was expected because you’ve taken the time to find out exactly what is wanted and know how to show the value in what you offer. If the customer requests more features or a higher level of product, it will be with the understanding that more costs more and with appreciation for the fact that you didn’t try to “sell” them more than they requested.

Imagine how happy you would be if you set out to buy something and, because the sales person asked questions and listened to the answers, got exactly what you wanted for less than you had expected! Wouldn’t you insist that all of your friends, family and co-workers go to that sales person?

Well, so would everyone else, and that’s why you want to **be** that sales person. Be the one sales person at your place of business who helps the customer purchase.

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