

Report Number 73636

10 Stupid Things Salespeople Do To Mess Up Their Sales

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Someone once wrote that nothing happens until someone sells something. Having spent 32 years in one form of sales or another I can assure you that this is absolutely true. No matter what part of the world you live something must be sold somewhere by someone or you would not be living very well right now. We offer goods and/or services for monetary exchange and in order for this process to take place a salesperson must convince the buyer that what is offered is a fair exchange for the item being sold.

So why is it that some salespeople do everything they possibly can to keep the sale from happening? In most cases it's lack of knowledge about how the selling process works and failure to do one or all of the following 10 things.

1. Failing to establish rapport with the customer

If I walked up to you on the street and offered to sell you a stock would you buy it? Probably not I hope. Why not? Well one good reason is that you have no idea who I am. We have not established a level of comfort between each other. No matter how good the stock or my offer to sell it might be you are still going to be skeptical. It's rarely the product or service that we are skeptical of it's the person we are dealing with that is most often the issue.

Many salespeople make this kind of common mistake. Something as simple as a name exchange can put the sale on a positive footing. Calling people by name shows respect for them as human beings. As Dale Carnegie says in his best selling book, *How To Win Friends And Influence People*, "The most beautiful sound to any person is the sound of their own name." Haven't we all met people that we just liked right away and others that we had to "warm up to" over time? Which type of person are you? If you are the latter are there ways you can become the former?

Do you realize that it's impossible to be polite and courteous and rude and pushy at the same time? If you come across to the customer as rude and pushy your chances of making it in the sales world are small. I have to admit there are people who are rude and pushy who are successful but I have to feel that the merits of their products overcome their poor people skills and customers by in spite of them not because of them.

Watch and listen to successful salespeople around you. What do they say and how do they say it? I'm not telling you to exactly copy someone but find what phrases work and use them to your advantage. If you can find someone who will be brutally honest with you, have them listen to your presentation and critique you. Build on your strengths and reduce your weaknesses.

2. Failure to Find Needs

When a customer walks into your place of business, they are there because they have some need to fill. And are they kind enough to share what that need might be? Mostly you will get the "I'm just looking." Sometimes they will but not often. Response. It is up to us as competent salespeople to help them fill that need with one of our products. So while you are building rapport you are also asking questions that you hope will give you a clue as to what products or services to offer them. So what are the types of questions you should be asking?

Rule No. 1 Always ask open-ended questions. These are questions that cannot be answered yes or no. Some examples might be: "What do you like about your present stereo?" "What would you change if you could?" "What features are missing that you might like to have on the new one?" When finding needs you need to establish a base first. What is the most basic product they will accept? Usually that is what they have now. The reason they are there is to either maintain that comfort zone or to improve it. This will also give you a clue to the price range they are looking for. We'll cover the price issue shortly.

Don't go near or even think about showing any product until you are certain you have exhausted every question that relates to what they have told you they are looking for. Then we can move to the next mistake.

3. Failure To Demo Or Present The Product Properly

Now that we're on a first name basis with our customer and we've discovered their needs it's time to show the product or service. What should be the first words out of our mouth as we start our presentation? Here are the words you should use. "Based on what you told me this is the product that should fit your needs." You begin your presentation by going down the list of features that they wanted. At the same time you are tying a benefit to each feature. You are mentally saying to yourself, "And what that means to you is" between each feature and benefit. "You said you wanted a car with four doors (and what that means to you is) so you won't have to crawl over the front seats to get in and out."

If it does not fit their needs then one of two things happened. Either they didn't tell you everything or you didn't ask all the questions you should have. If they tell you that it's not what they were looking for then it's time for you to apologize that you must have missed something in the "fact finding" process. Here is where the rapport comes in. Usually if they are going to open up and really tell you what they are looking for it's usually here that they do it. So assuming again that we have found the right product let's look at the next mistake.

4. Failure to build value

When the presentation is finished the job is still not done. Ask your customer what they think. If you did your job well they will probably give you some positive comments. If you did poorly they will probably tell you that they are going to continue looking.

Usually negative feedback is an indication that you did not build value into your product as you demonstrated or presented it. If this is the case it's not too late. Here is your chance to review what you have talked about and to revisit all of the benefits. Sometimes piling the benefits up all together makes your customer see that the product did more than they originally thought.

5. Failure to Close

There are probably more ways to close a sale than there are salespeople selling. But this is the most overlooked part of the sale. When customers were asked in surveys why they didn't buy the most

common response was, "No one asked me to buy it." You would think this would be pure common sense. Unfortunately the truth is that a large percentage of salespeople simply never ask for the order.

The second most common mistake in closing is not using trial closing questions. Test questions to evaluate where you are in the selling process. For example a simple, "How soon would you like us to install your new sound system?" would give you a good idea of whether or not they are ready to buy.

6. Failure to overcome objections

When you ask a trial question and the customer raises an objection what does that mean? It doesn't mean the customer is not going to buy. An objection is simply a request for more information. They do not have enough information to justify the exchange for their money and your product. Keep in mind that there are two kinds of objections. Valid and invalid. There is no way to overcome a valid objection. I wear size 12 shoes. No matter how much I like the size 7 shoes I can't wear them. They are the wrong size and that's a valid objection.

An invalid objection can be overcome by finding a way of satisfying the customer's concerns. Usually it's a matter of restating the objection so the customer knows that you understand it. Then deciding if it is valid or invalid. If it's invalid then you need to find a way to overcome it.

As I mentioned at the start of this article I have been in sales for over 30 years. I've sold all kinds of products and services. At most no matter what I was selling there are probably only 8-10 objections that you hear most often. Discuss the common objections with your fellow sales associates and find the best way to overcome those 10 common objections. Doing this one simple step should dramatically increase your sales.

7. Failure to Sell Ad-On

There are always accessories that go along with most products. Would any salesperson sell a musical instrument without a case to carry it in? A stereo system without speakers or CD player without CD's? If you are not selling the accessories then your commission checks are not as large as they could be. The secret to selling accessories is to mention them during the presentation and all through the selling process. That

way they don't come as a surprise at the end of the sale. "Here is the carry case we talked about."

8. Failure to know your inventory

This only happened to me once. And it probably will only happen once to you. You have finished the sale, the customer has said yes, and when you go to write up the sale you find that you are out of the product and it will be four to six weeks before you will have it in stock from the factory. After this happened to me I never took the sales floor again without checking the computer and knowing what I was out of.

9. Failure to Follow-Up

Customers who buy from you the second time are more likely to become regular customers. Customers like to feel appreciated. The fact that you check back with them is not only a sign of respect but shows your concern for their satisfaction. You also build a much stronger rapport with them. And the chances are very good that your competitors are not going to follow-up.

10. Failure to Ask for Referrals

Here is one more reason to build a strong rapport with your customers. If your customer is pleased with their purchase do you think they are going to tell someone about it? You can bet they will. During your follow-up ask them whom they might have told about their new product. If they mention anyone in particular ask them if you could get their number or mention your name when you call on them. We all like to buy from people our friends trust. Referrals are the best way to eliminate cold calling.

The Last Word On Sales Mistakes

Have I made all these mistakes during my selling career? You bet. That's the reason that I'm writing this article. Hopefully I can alert you or your sales staff to some common things they need to think about before during and after the sale.

The last point I want to make is this. You need to develop a way of measuring your sales. Nothing can be improved unless you know what to improve on. Keep records on how many customers you talk to in the course of a day. How many customers do you need to see before a sale occurs? Why didn't the others buy? Begin analyzing each sale until you discover what you are doing wrong or leaving out. Keep track of the selling steps and how you are avoiding the above 10 mistakes and watch your sales improve.