

# Sales Wisdom

Here's a collection of sales wisdoms found along the way. If you don't sell, don't be fooled by the title: although the wisdoms are pointed at sales people, they are equally applicable in any persuasive situation.

## Start with rapport

You won't sell anything until you get rapport with the other person. Rapport is a state of emotional bonding, where they are aligned with you and vice versa.

If you move, then if you are in rapport, then they will move too.

## Customers don't have needs--they have problems

A lot of sales training and books tell you about the importance of selling to customer needs. Although this is basically true, customers don't sit down and think 'I've got a need'. Instead, they experience problems and hence seek solutions to these.

The customer has to perceive the problem, of course. You may perceive the problem, but if the customer doesn't, then there's no way they can bite the solution line.

So the sales job is about finding, eliciting and solving these problems. Where understanding of needs does come in useful here is that problems appear when needs are not met. But when you talk to customers, it usually works best if the subject is problems.

## Urgency is proportional to pain

Problems are like health. The more a problem hurts now, the more the need for a solution now. And the more it hurts, the more they'll be prepared to pay for a speedy solution.

## It's got to hurt enough

The operation of resolving the pain is itself a painful process, so if the pain is below this threshold, the patient will prefer to continue to suffer than accept any treatment.

Research has shown that most people will seek a solution when they have three problems. About a quarter seek solutions earlier, and another quarter seek solutions later.

## You don't sell products, benefits or solutions--you sell feelings

Sales used to be about selling products. But a sole focus on products leads to objections, so sales moved to selling benefits. Better again, the focus turned to understanding the underlying problem to be solved, but this is still not the whole story.

When we make any decision, including the 'buy' decision, we do so by an emotional process. It may not seem that way, and there may be much logical processing, but the point of decision is always emotional, and usually subconscious.

### Ask for the sale

A lot of sales people are so paranoid about the customer saying no that they keep on selling long past the close-by date. They may even talk the customer into buying and then talk them out again.

The trick is to swallow your fear and ask. When the time comes, ask for the sale. Ask 'Are you ready to buy now?'

### Ask for honesty

Ask them for honesty and you will get it. Ask 'Can you be honest about this?' They will say yes, of course. Then you can ask them for critical information and you will get the truth.

By asking for honesty, when they say yes then they must then maintain consistency with that statement and be honest.

### The best sale seems to be driven by the customer

Great sales people give so much apparent control to customers that the customer seem to sell the products to themselves.

They do this by being incredibly sensitive to the customer's situation and state of mind, then nudging gently with the right questions such that the customer realizes their need and ends up asking for the product.

They have turned causal conversation into an art, persuading by subtle inference and influence rather than more overt presentation and persuasive talk.

### Love that customer!

Love is a funny word that is much misunderstood. Loving the customer doesn't mean hugs and kisses, but it does mean caring about them both before and after the sale.

When sales people truly care about the success of their customers, it shows all over their faces and all over their actions, too. A loving sales person will never dupe their customers and will always give them a fair deal. Note the emphasis on fair. That means the sales person gets something out of it too.

It's difficult not to trust someone who loves you. In fact it's difficult not to love them back, and loved customers often love their sales people. Now there's a relationship to kill for.

### Be paranoid

Paranoia is a normal and healthy state. This is as compared with the enormous dangers of complacency. The sale is never in the bag until the ink is dry. Even then, customers can often return products. They can also complain like mad and never buy from you again.

Always assume there's a competitor lurking. Always assume the customer has not fallen in love with you or your products. Never assume that a sale will fall into your lap without due and continuous effort on your part.

### You said

'You told me you wanted a widget? Well here's a great one.' Frequently use their words, needs, and so on. Use 'You said', 'You mentioned' etc. to make undeniable connections.

### ABC

Always Be Closing is a common wisdom, but it isn't always wise. If the customer is not ready, trying to close them will result in more objections, often false ones, put up as a defense.

ABT is better: Always be Testing. Always test that they are with and that you are with them. Test for outstanding objections and misunderstandings. Test for commitment. And, yes, test for readiness to close. But only at the right time.

### Handle the transfer

If the sale involves transferring an account from a previous supplier, the thought of doing this transfer can block the sale. It's embarrassing to tell someone you are no longer going to do business with them, and they may want to try and grab you back. It's also a lot of hassle.

So offer to handle the transfer as a part of the package.

### Let them discover things

There's a world of difference between you telling them things and them finding them out for themselves. The difference is ownership and a sense of identity. If they find a great benefit from your product by themselves, their identity will connect through the benefit directly to your product. When you tell them, then they don't get that connection.

### If you don't talk product, they won't object

If you want to avoid price (and other) objections, stay off the subject of your product. It's difficult to object to something that is not in the conversation.

Of course, you will have to talk product at some time, but if you can stay off it until they are crying out for a solution just like your product, then the only product conversation will be short and sweet.

### It's not who you know, it's who knows you

Having a great list of contacts is not much good if you have to explain you are and rebuild trust levels every time you call them.

When people know and trust you, just the sound of your name will send good feelings surging through them. They will be ready and willing to do your bidding.

Not only that, but rather than you call them, they will be calling you, and telling other people to call you. When people know and trust you, sales turn from push into pull.

### Be clean

Physically, that is. Nobody buys from a dirty, smelly, slovenly sales person. Your presentation is, literally, a hygiene factor. If you are clean, tidy and smell ok, then it may not increase your chance of selling, but it will, at the very least, not get in the way.

Shower daily. Wash before seeing clients. Avoid bad breath. Have your suit or clothes cleaned often. Make your shoes shine.

The degree to which you polish up will depend on circumstance. If you are selling grease guns to mechanics, you don't want to turn up in an Armani suit. But you still want to appear tidy and clean. Generally, you want to avoid presentation being a block to sales, and maybe being a subtle encouragement as people admire how you look and smell. But you don't want to show them up so they feel you are 'too posh' for them.

*A simple rule: try to avoid your audience noticing what you are wearing. Any influence from your clothes should be very largely subconscious.*