



Old-fashion Selling Skills

by Michael J. Galante, *The Sales Coach*

Coach's Message

There has been much talk and a lot written about selling solutions and partnering with customers. Although these concepts are important, there is still the need for good old-fashion sales technique.

Salespeople throughout their career, go through a few phases. First, there is the "I can't believe I'm in sales!" phase. This is often followed by the – "This isn't such a bad job" phase. Once they've gotten through that, they are ready to learn and build a sales career.

Interestingly enough, successful salespeople build on what they've learned in the previous phases. For example, I refer to the following selling skills as the "blocking & tackling" of professional selling. They are usually taught or learned within the first or second year of selling. And need to be reviewed regularly throughout one's career.

All of the really good salespeople I have met; know how to blend fundamental selling with the sophisticated approach of solution selling.

Sales 101

Professional salespeople have to internalize the concepts of basic selling before they can truly be effective on a consultative level. For example, you can consult with a client or discuss his problem all you want, but:

- a) without "prospecting" for new business in some fashion, you are going to have a thin pipeline;
- b) if you are not actively "listening" during your consultation, you are going to miss critical information or key selling opportunities;
- c) at the end of each meeting you still have to ask, "So what is the next step?" (Even when you know what that is, but are just trying to see if the customer is ready to move forward or not.)

With that said, my customers use good old-fashion sales technique to create selling opportunities; then we develop a value based sales approach based upon the needs of the customer.

Six Fundamental Selling Skills

By segmenting opportunities when "prospecting," you can align yourself with the best potential customers. Those that fit the specific aspects of your offer and purchase on value, not price.

"Probing" is a skill broken into two parts. The first is to know how to "qualify" customers. The ability to identify Decision Maker(s) or significant influencers having the authority, budget and a defined timeline.

The second part is to figure out each customer's specific needs. Plus any ancillary issues you can impact. (Clearly there is more to this than can be stated in this short article.)

"Listening" is a fundamental communication skill. One that transcends sales yet is invaluable when probing, qualifying and selling solutions.

"Presentation" is your ability to inform and persuade. Whether it is a one-on-one, trade show or group presentation, you must connect the benefits and solutions of your product to the customer's needs.

A customer of mine once said, "Salespeople are really in the objection handling business." I completely agree and believe that many salespeople are ill-equipped to handle even the most common of objections.

"Closing" in my opinion is a lost art. Now I'm not suggesting high-pressure selling, but if you don't ask – you won't get! There are many soft selling and professional ways to advance a sale.

Coach's Practice Session

The best way to hone these skills is to practice. Salespeople, just like professional athletes need to prepare.

During the hundreds of training sessions I have conducted over the past 16 years, by far, both experienced and new comers alike, have said that our Role Play sessions were the most fun and productive training exercises they have had. And what better way to get ready for your next sales call then to test your skills on your manager or co-worker.

Michael J. Galante, The Sales Coach is a recognized expert on sales, sales management and marketing strategies. He has conducted hundreds of workshops for thousands of sales professionals worldwide. His client list includes companies of all types and sizes. To obtain permission to duplicate or redistribute this article, call 1-800-766-0462 or send your request to customer.support@thesalescoach.com