

Selling tips

They say that a product needs to be sold - it is never bought. Whether you operate a factory, a retail store, a service shop or you are a consultant - you will have to sell. No matter how good your product or service is, no matter what consumers think about it - if you don't sell you will not survive. If you are to establish your business on a firm footing, you will be required to sell aggressively, using all the standard methods plus new ones to achieve this.

You may find that there will be established competition to overcome. If your idea is new with little or no competition, then there may be the extra problem of convincing customers of the value of that product or idea. It will always require some sort of personal selling work and so therefore, if you as the business owner are not a good salesperson, you will need to employ experienced people.

Steps in selling

There are generally five accepted steps in selling and these are:

- 1. Find out who the prospects are.** These are the people who could be interested in buying your product or service. You need to find out who they are by getting out to them and demonstrating if necessary. If your product is acceptable and the price is right, then you may be surprised at the customer bases you will build.
- 2. Have a thorough knowledge of your product or service:** Unless you know your product inside out you will not be able to present it properly to potential customers. This is therefore an important part of the selling process - product knowledge is critical.
- 3. Learn how to locate the person who makes the final decision:** There is no point spending a lot of time on people who do not make the ultimate "buy" or "not buy" decision. As much as possible, try and work with principals or the business owner, rather than just employed staff. Often you will be able to get very encouraging answers from staff, only to find that the owner of the business vetoes the decision to buy. To save wasted time, try and deal with those who have the authority to say "yes" or "no".
- 4. Learn how to deal with any objections:** In any selling, there will inevitably be objections raised. Whether the objections are genuine or whether they are just excuses doesn't matter because they would still be objections that need to be overcome. Always counter objections with the features and gains that they would get from the use of the product or service.
- 5. Learn closure:** Every sales person must learn the techniques of closing the sale. Learning closure is critical, because all the efforts that have been put in prior to this will be wasted unless the sale can be finalised. There are a lot of people who can sell and can demonstrate and eventually convince the customer to buy. However, when it comes to finalising and asking for the sale (the closure), they fall down. This is an area that sometimes can be learned because it is so important that one should not assume that they have the ability to just ask for closure and get it first time round.



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Methods

The type of customer that you are aiming for will influence the method of selling that you decide to adopt. Some of these methods could include the following:

- Direct to the customer, as in a retail type situation.
- Calling on the customer, as in a mobile service where you call on people in their homes or businesses.
- Selling by mail order, where you advertise in catalogues or magazines and orders are sent out by mail.
- Selling to other than end users, where manufacturing businesses sell direct to wholesalers or retailers and not to the end customers.
- Household parties, where goods are demonstrated and sold in the homes of customers, for example, Tupperware.
- Sale by consignment where goods are placed into a store and paid for only if the store sells the item.
- Internet selling, where goods are ordered and paid for via the internet and distributed by a courier company or similar.
- Seminars, where goods (usually property or homes) are marketed at a private seminar where people are introduced to the products and arrangements made for completion of purchase documentation.

Sales need good products

Contrary to popular opinion a good product does not necessarily sell itself. With the increasing variety of products and services it has become necessary to take deliberate action to sell and distribute successfully. Whereas marketing embraces the whole concept of satisfying the customer's needs at a profit, selling is concerned with ensuring that enough customers buy the goods already in stock.

Motorcar manufacturers for example, spend huge amounts of money trying to develop the kind of car the public will buy in the future. However, in the meantime, the company, in order to stay in business, must sell this year's models in sufficient numbers at the right price.

Selling tips

- If the product you are selling is something that your prospect can hold then get it into their hand as quickly as possible. In other words, get the prospect into the act and let them feel it, weigh it and admire it.
- Don't stand or sit alongside your prospect. Instead, face them while you are pointing out the important advantages of your product. This will enable you to watch their facial expressions and determine whether and when you should go for the close. In other words, watch their body language because that's a good indicator of whether there is any interest there and the level of that interest.
- Control the situation. If you have sales literature that you are passing out, keep a hold of it until you have finished your explanation. Once you pass over the literature, they are more apt to read it and you find that they won't be listening to the words that you are speaking.



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- Watch your presentation to see that there is reaction from your prospect. Along the way stop and ask questions like, "Do you agree that this product can help you such and such and such?" After you have asked the question, stop talking and wait for him to answer. It is a proven fact that following such a question the one who talks first will lose, so don't say anything until after the prospect has given you some kind of an answer.
- Watch for prospects that are themselves sales people and other prospects that feel they know a lot about selling. They can usually present obstacles in your way and can cause you problems, especially if you are not experienced in selling. The funny part about it is that these prospects are some of the easiest people to sell to. Simply make your sales presentation and instead of trying to close, toss out a challenge, such as "I don't know Mr Prospect, after watching the reactions to what I've been showing and telling you about my product, I'm really doubtful as to whether this product can really be of benefit to you" - then wait a few seconds and just look at them and see what they have to say.
- Start packing up your material as if you are about to leave and you will find that in almost every case, your "tough nut" will quickly ask you why? The more sceptical you are in relation to their ability to make your product work to their benefit, then the more that they will demand that you sell it to them. If you find that this prospect won't rise to the challenge then go ahead with the packing of your sales material and leave them to it.
- Remember that in selling, time is money. Therefore, allocate only so much time to each prospect. The prospects who ask you to call back next week or want to ramble on about similar products, prices, or other matters are costing you money. Learn to quickly get your prospect interested in and wanting your product and then systematically present your sales pitch through to the close when they sign on the dotted line and reaches for their cheque book.
- Spend as much time as possible calling on your prospects. Your first call should be a selling call with follow-up calls by mail or telephone periodically. Persist and keep in contact with your prospects until such time as you receive the order. Once you receive the order then you can look at other items that perhaps could also be sold to them.
- Review your sales presentation and material and your efforts at prospecting. Make sure you have a "door opener" that arouses interest and will force a purchase the first time round. This could be a \$5 item that could stimulate interest and allow you to get in there and make your full presentation.

Further information

The following fact sheets provide further information on these issues:

- Business growth tips
- Increase your sales