

LESSON 1 PRESENTATION, PERSONALITY AND COMMUNICATION IN SELLING

First impressions count! The first impression a customer has of a sales person will shape their attitude towards not only the sales person - but also of the business in general. A great first impression is the key to making sales and establishing and maintaining a thriving business.

As a salesperson, your clothes, your dress and your manner, leave an instant first impression. Most people will make their mind up about a person within the first few seconds they meet them. A person who is badly groomed and presented doesn't engender a feeling of confidence in a customer; confidence (by the customer and by the seller) is the one of the most important aspects of making a sale.

Psychology tells us that a lot of information is gained on a person's first impression and these impressions can be hard to break, so make sure you make a good one!

A good sales person should possess the following qualities:

- Enjoy selling
- Be well groomed and neatly dressed
- Have a pleasant personality
- Be courteous and tactful
- Have a basic understanding of human nature - have the ability to read people's body language etc.)
- Be a great 'listener'

Personality, Self-Awareness and Attitude

A person's personality is the way in which an individual represents themselves to others. Your personality will determine whether someone will like or dislike you. It is important to remember that personality is not necessarily a reflection of your inner self. It is merely an outward representation - your 'public face'. In sales, an open and bright demeanour shows customers that you are willing to help, that you like your job, and that you think the customer is important.

Your positive approach and friendly 'public face' leads to a greater willingness, on the part of a customer, to buy. Your job is to sell and the customer's role is to buy. This is one simple fact that you should always have in the forefront of your mind, whenever you deal with a customer.

Types of Shoppers

Not all customers are the same; in any retail situation, customers can be categorised into the following four groups:

1. Economic shoppers: most interested in: prices, value, product-quality and economic factors. Not so interested in treatment by staff, decor of the store, location etc.

Suggested Tasks: ▼

Throughout this course you will be provided with suggested tasks and reading to aid with your understanding. These will appear in the right hand column. Remember: these tasks are optional. The more you complete, the more you will learn, but in order to complete the course in 20 hours you will need to manage your time well. We suggest you spend about 10 minutes on each task you attempt, and no more than 20 minutes.

LEARN MORE >>>

Suggested Tasks

Make a list of what you think are important attributes for a salesperson.

2. Personalising shoppers: Enjoy the interaction with sales staff, preferring to shop with sales staff they know and like. Or they like to develop a 'relationship' with the staff - these customers, given great customer service, are 'return' customers and wonderful advocates if treated in a friendly manner and with respect.
3. Ethical shoppers: Avoid large chain stores or companies which tend towards monopolies or deal with products which are judged unethical. Don't shop at big supermarkets because "they are putting the small men out of business". Avoid chemicals, and like organically and 'natural' products.
4. Apathetic shoppers: Don't like shopping, go to the most convenient supplier because they must.

If you understand these groups and can recognise, when faced with a customer, which group they may fall into you can still facilitate a sale.

- You can ask economic shoppers if they need help but back-off if you think your intervention may lose, rather than gain a sale.
- Personalised shoppers are the easiest to deal with because they like you helping them.
- Ethical shoppers can be steered towards 'ethical products'.
- Apathetic shoppers are not necessarily the most difficult to deal with – they want to get in and out fast so your help in steering them to the right product or product position can be positive for them and earn you a fast sale.



Communication, Active Listening and Conversation Selling

Communication is a two-way interaction with three components:

- A sender
- A listener
- The message

Communication at its most basic level is the sending and receiving of ideas, thoughts or feelings. Verbally, it has to do with the use of words, but tone of voice, posture and facial expressions also play a big part in the communication process. Communication can also be through a written or visual presentation.

- The ability to communicate a clear message depends on the communication skills of the sender.
- The listener needs to understand exactly what you are trying to say.

Active Listening

Clear communication is most important in sales; however, listening to what the customer has to say is just as important.

- Listening shows the customer you are interested in understanding their needs.
- Listening carefully ('active listening') shows the customer that you respect them, and in turn, they respect you.
- Listening also gives you the information you need to advise a customer and make a sale.

Conversation Selling

Conversational selling is recognised as the finest form of salesmanship. It is the most effective way of one person influencing the mind of another. Conversational selling is dependent on the understanding and practice of excellent communication skills.

Buyers are individuals, they communicate differently and receive messages differently - sales people need to understand that.

Customers can be divided into three categories:

1. Thinking - they require facts.
2. Feeling - they respond emotionally to a salesperson's plea.
3. Intuitive - they believe that they have extra sense, some insight, which allows them to arrive at the right decision more often than others.
4. Some of course may be just browsing but may be motivated by displays to make a purchase.

Within a short period, a professional salesperson can recognise which type of buyer they are dealing with and can vary sales technique accordingly.

Selling is the art of persuasion: helping people to buy what you want because they want to.

- The buyer must truly believe that the product they are about to buy is the best one for their purpose.

LEARN MORE >>>

Suggested Tasks

1. Look up the terms 'What is Conversational Selling' and 'Conversational Selling Skills' online; read two articles by authors of texts on this subject. Watch a YouTube video on Conversational Selling – make sure that this is a professional one e.g. Active Listening Exercise for Sales Training by Charles Bernard

Note the key techniques used in conversational selling (write them down in point form) and think about how you can use these techniques in your day to day dealing with customers. Spend about 20 minutes on this task.

2. Look up the term 'active listening' online; write a definition of the term in your own words. Think of ways that active listening can help you in making sales. Spend no more than 10 minutes on this task.

- A buyer likes to feel they are making their own decision and not being 'pushed' into a purchase.

Communicating Confidence

Confidence engenders trust. How do we communicate confidence?

- A well-presented appearance.
- Know your product or service and trust your abilities.
- Hesitation and uncertainty may be misread as lack of knowledge or ability.
- Use positive communication language.

Using positive language

Watch the words you use carefully. Avoid hesitant expressions such as: "I think" "I hope" "Possibly". Replace them with more positive expressions such as: "I know" "It will" "I am certain". Even if you must communicate uncertainty (as when you are asked if a particular product is available, and you don't know), you can still phrase your word confidently. Say something like: "I will phone the company that manufactures it and ask" or "Let me find out for you" or "let me offer some great alternatives that will work just as well".

Another way to communicate confidence is to say exactly what you intend to say. Clear communication creates the impression of clear thinking (which you should also aim for). Avoid ambiguous or ambivalent language; clearly state your message, and be precise in what you say.

Conversation Development

- To promote conversation you need to ask questions.
- Through questioning you can clarify a customer's needs.
- Questioning puts you in control of the conversation – allowing you to direct customers to certain products, or solution.

There are two types of questions you might ask:

1. Closed-ended questions: these questions are good for getting specific details out of the client/ audience but rarely promote conversation. The subject of the questions usually feels interrogated. Questions are usually responded with yes/no or brief answers e.g. "What do you think of the weather?" These questions usually begin with the words: are, do, who, when, where and which?
2. Open-ended questions: these questions promote answers with many words. They ask for explanations which show the person you are interested in their responses. These questions usually begin with the words: how, why, in what way and tell me about?

Both types of questions may begin with the word "What?" How you use it is important.

Why do we use open ended questions?

- To begin a conversation.

- To encourage the person we are speaking with to elaborate.
- To motivate a person to communicate.

Why do we use closed questions?

- To get a simple yes or no response.
- To obtain specific information.
- To narrow the topic of discussion.
- To interrupt a customer who is straying from the subject – do this carefully try to make it a part of the conversation.

Other points:

- Don't be too open-ended you can close down a conversation that way for example: for example "What's new?" "How was your day today?" are too open ended to promote further conversation customers usually respond with "Fine" "Pretty good" "Not bad." This pretty well closes the conversation down.
- Like a social setting, in a sales situation, conversation still relies upon whether you are liked, but also is influenced by whether you are respected, knowledgeable and sincere.
- Once you have made the sale: SHUT UP! And proceed with the sale.
- Above all, appear INTERESTED!! Countless sales are probably lost by disinterested salespeople who do not seem interested in their product or their potential customer.

LEARN MORE >>>

Suggested Tasks

1. Think of some open and closed questions you might use in a sales situation.
2. Make a list of reasons why we use open ended questions to encourage a sale.