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How to become a top salesperson

101 Tips that will transform your sales results, and your income!

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Introduction

I wrote this book for all of you who really want to be the best salespeople you can be. I have spent many years learning and practicing my craft. Now you can benefit from all the mistakes I made, and what I eventually learned when I made them! At the end of the day, your future is in your hands and no-one else's. I wish you the very best of luck, success, and fun in what is possibly the most satisfying career you will ever find.

Paul Irving.

1. Get the fundamentals right

By getting the fundamentals right you will make your life in sales much easier. There is no point in making life in this demanding profession any more difficult than it need be!

2. Sell the best

Never make the mistake of selling less than the best. If you can't believe in your own product, then how can you expect anyone else to? If you insist on trying to sell something you don't believe in, it will be like trying to swim with an anchor tied round your ankles. Don't do it! If you really don't feel that you have something excellent to sell your prospects and clients, then quit the job, and sell what you **can** believe in.

3. Ride the wave

If you really want to be successful, there is no point trying to sell “against the tide”. You need to look for the best market to be in so you can ride the trend. You'll go much further and much faster, with less effort if you “let the wave carry you”. So find a buoyant market to focus upon.

Remember a lot of people made a lot of money out of the internet when it became the market to be in. But, just like the gold rush, the people who made money most reliably and with the least risk, were those that supplied the tools, not those who actually went prospecting for gold!

4. Know your market

Once you have done your market research to identify which market you want to be in, read everything you can about anything that may be of relevance to that market. You need to become completely familiar with the product, jargon, trends, et cetera so that you become seen as an expert in that market.

5. Be honest

Above all, be honest, since anything else is just going to bite you back sooner or later. Your reputation is valuable, so don't lose it by telling silly lies. You really will be much better off being truthful, instead of wasting energy trying to remember what lie you told the prospect to get the sale.

6. Write down your goals

Astonishingly few people ever take this step, yet this simple process will make a world of difference to your life. Written goals have a peculiar magic which helps keep you focused on what matters.

7. Be specific

When writing down your goals you must be specific about the goal, describing it in great detail, as vividly as possible. You must also write down precisely when the goal is to be achieved by, for the goal to have the maximum effect. Leave this part out and you lose an essential element of the process.

8. Monitor your progress against your goals regularly

If you really want to achieve your goals, make sure you review them on a regular basis, preferably daily.

9. Pin them up in front of you

I used to write down the key sales I wanted to make in the next quarter. I pinned the list up in front of me so that I was looking at it every time I was at my desk. This kept me focused on what really mattered to me and meant that I regularly achieved 150-200% of my target every year, compared with my colleagues who only did 25-50% of theirs, and yes, I did get the biggest target every year, but I also made the most money!

10. Winning *really* matters

Or, as the ABBA song has it, ‘the winner takes it all...’ Unlike the Olympics, there are no prizes for 2nd place in sales. You either win or lose. But you know this already, so I want to make a more subtle point. In life the very best earn far, far more than the very good. As for the rest...

If you look at the top people in any competitive sport or profession, the champions are the ones that command huge salaries and rewards. Everyone knows that Roger Bannister was the first man to run the sub 4 minute mile, but who was the second?

Nowadays many good athletes can beat that performance, but they don’t get the glory or the kudos. So, by being the best in your chosen area, you will earn much more money and respect than being one of the “also-rans”. So I urge you to aim high. This booklet is dedicated to helping you be the best and enjoy all the rewards that go with it.

11. Keep good records

Management will always want to know what your sales have been and who your prospects are. Don't make a drama out of this. Keep your records up to date, and you can give them the answers they want, whenever they need them and save yourself time and hassle.

12. Bigger is better!

Why sell a small deal if you can sell a big one? At the end of the day it often as easy or easier to sell big, rather than small. And it takes fewer sales to make your target too!

13. It's your time – don't waste it

There are only so many days available to you, so value them. You owe it to yourself to get the most out of the time working, so you can spend more time (and money) playing. So what is the biggest waste of a salesperson's time? Doing your expenses? Cold calling? Writing that sales report? No – it's losing the deal!! So...

14. Qualify the prospect

Yeah, yeah, heard it all before. Ah, but do you do it? The problem is, it's hard to do. Every sales person is an optimist. If we weren't, how would we do the job, after all? So how do you find out whether to spend your hard earned time and energy, not to mention that of your colleagues and the Company, on a deal that you will, on the basis of pure statistics, lose. Well, the answer is more complex than you might think, but it is a process with very real benefits if you just follow it! It's so important that I have separated this into 8 separate tips. They are:

15. Solution

Do I have a real solution to my prospects needs, or am I really being honest with myself and with the prospect? Have you asked the prospect if your solution meets their needs? This can be done with careful questions, finding out what they particularly like about your solution. If they are not clear about the benefits (more on this important topic later) then you have more selling to do. If they are clear, then they truly do understand and appreciate what you have to offer. Score 1 if you have a solution, 0 if not.

16. Competition

Is there competition? If not, ask for the order!! If there is, you need to find out more. Who are they? How does the prospect perceive them? What are your strengths and weaknesses compared to them? Score 1 if you have good grounds to believe that you have no competition or that you have successfully beaten them off. Otherwise score 0.

17. Only Me

What do you have that is unique? Apart from your undoubted charm and wit of course... Seriously though, what matters here is more than having unique features. (No, not your personal features!). Uniqueness only matters if your prospect *needs it*. Otherwise it's irrelevant. If you can, try to find a reason why your prospect cannot do without your unique feature. He'll even pay more to have it, if you do your job right! Once again, score 1 for having a unique feature that the prospect wants/needs, and 0 otherwise.

18. Timescale

You need to make this month's (quarter's, year's, whatever) target so of course you'll get the deal in time! Yeah, I've been there too...funny how it seldom works out like that. Timescales are one of the keys to continued sales success. To really be a super sales person, you need to understand the timetable of the deal. Armed with this, you can deliver results when you promise, and earn the undying respect and gratitude of the management, for a week at least....

The larger the sale, the more protracted and complex the timescale tends to be. If you can get in early, and establish the prospect's timetable, you will have the inside track on the deal and understand the various steps to the final decision. Score time again. 1 for a clear understanding of the timescale, 0 otherwise.

19. Size

At risk of being offensive (have you *no* sense of humour?), yes, size does matter. Why knock yourself out working flat out on small stuff. Value your time carefully, and you'll soon see that the size of the deal really matters. The best sales people make their target, and often much more, by thinking bigger than the rest of their peers. If you want to stand out from the rest, and you wouldn't be reading this if you didn't, then be prepared to throw away the small fish, to avoid distracting you from the big ones that are still out there.

Okay, that sounds great. However, you also need to be realistic too. If your company can only handle for instance, business within a 100 mile radius, because of delivery issues or whatever, why bother going after a multi-country deal. There are days when you may simply be biting off more than you can chew. Be honest with yourself and the prospect. Leave the field

gracefully, with honor intact and go find a *good* lead. Size is right, score 1, otherwise 0.

20. Money

It's not "what do I earn from this deal?" – although that's important later, once you've won the business! What I mean is, do they have the budget? Ever tried to sell a Rolls Royce to a guy with a \$500 budget? No? You'd be surprised how many do. Can they realistically afford your solution? If so, do they have a budget set aside? Can you find out how much it is? This can be part of the timetable exercise, since some organizations will do the research, with the help of a willing sales person of course, and only then start to put together a budget for the project. If you don't find out, how can you tell where you are in the whole process? Score 1 if you know, 0 if not.

21. Authority

Who will actually make the decision? Is the person you are talking to the

decision maker – or the recommender? Or do they have any influence at all? If at all possible, you should be talking to the person who will make the decision. How do you find out?

The difficulty is that a direct question does not really do the job here. No one likes to be challenged about his or her authority, so you *need* to dig a little deeper. Finding out what the decision process is should give you the answer you need. (If you can't get to the decision maker at once, don't worry, I'll come back to this later.) Score 1 if you know the answer, 0 if not.

22. Need

Do they need what you have to offer? Or could they do without it? If you don't have a clear understanding of their needs, or worse still, *they* don't, then things are not good. One of the biggest enemies of any sales person is simply the 'do nothing' option. Unless you understand their needs, preferably better than your competitors, you simply can't sell anything to them! Score 1 if you have identified their needs *and you can meet them*, otherwise 0.

And that, my friends, all spells 'SCOTSMAN'.

23. Use SCOTSMAN to analyze your prospects

Right, now you have the scores, you can measure the quality of your prospects. So let's take a look. Score 7-8, great, all you need to do is ask for the order. Above 4, plenty of work to do, but there is still hope. Less than 4, you should be thinking very seriously about dropping this one!

However, there is more to this than just the scores. When you don't know the answer to any of the qualification questions, then you have a good idea where you need to find out more. Filling in the blanks is a key part of the whole sales process.

24. Take action

From the SCOTSMAN qualification process above, you need answers to those questions you can't yet score. These are key to deciding to stick with it or qualify out. So make sure you have the answers you need. Where you don't, you have the agenda for the next call.

25. Handling Meetings

In my view, you can't sell anything complex over the phone, so meetings are a must! But you must control the meeting, to maximize your effectiveness and effort. After all it's not a social event...

26. All meetings must have an objective

Respect your time, and the prospect will too. So have clear objectives for your meeting. Every sales person I have known always thinks about what they are going to do at a meeting. Only the best focus on what they want as the outcome from the meeting. In other words, ask yourself 'What do I want the prospect to do at the end of this meeting?'

27. It's not what you do that matters, it's what *they* do

Now this is the clever bit – this is the clue as to how the sale is going! If the prospect does as you ask, then you are winning. If not, then there is a problem you need to uncover. By choosing what you want the prospect to do, you are in control of the sale, and not the other way round!

28. Call High and Wide

When selling into a large organization, it always pays to start as high up the ladder as you can. It is easy to go down the management chain – 'Mr. Jones said you would be able to help me'... than it is to move up the ladder. Don't make the mistake of relying only on one person either. The more contacts you can make the better, as you can never be certain what influences others have on the sale, unless you talk to them too. Get your contact to arrange

meetings for you with other interested parties in the deal, to find out what they are looking for, so you build broad political support for your case.

29. You can't have too much of a good thing

At least when it comes to qualified prospects... One of the common mistakes many sales people make when prospecting is to stop when you have 'enough' prospects. After all there are only so many prospects you can handle. Big mistake – you *need* too many prospects. Why? So you can choose the best, and leave the rest.

Remember, you want to be very choosy when it comes to what prospects you pursue and which just are not worth it. That way you have the luxury of choosing the work you want to do, so your hit rate goes up. Remember, the biggest waste of your time is the sale you lose. So, like the professional gamblers, pick only the racing certainties and leave others to chase the outsiders.

30. Don't present the solution until you know the problem

Another common mistake that many sales people make is to be too keen to present all the benefits before they know what the prospect actually wants. You need to spend time getting inside your prospect's mind to understand how to help them.

31. Dig for the emotional needs

We all buy for different reasons, but the most common is to avoid some kind of pain or hassle. It is your job to dig a little to find out what is really driving the sale. How? By asking the implications of not going ahead, for example.

How do they feel about the current situation and what does their boss think? The longer you spend unearthing the emotions driving the sale, the more powerful the energy driving the sale becomes. It's then up to you to harness this energy to act in a direction of your choosing, by getting the prospect to do what you ask.

32. Use what you find out

What you are doing by spending time before presenting your solution is focusing the prospect's mind on the problem. Before you can plant, first you have to prepare the ground. With the ground carefully prepared, then your chances of success will be much higher. Use all the information you have been given to create a series of more vivid, compelling reasons to buy from you.

33. Tell them 3 times

Repetition is a remarkably powerful technique often neglected by sales people. When you come to demonstrate your solution, first take a few moments to explain what you will be covering. As you go through the demonstration, tell them what they are seeing, and at the end tell them again what they have seen, stressing the benefits of your proposal to the prospect.

34. Ask them to reiterate benefits

At the close of your meeting, just take a moment to ask them what they felt was the 'best' part of your proposal and get them to tell you why. Listen carefully, as this is when they will reveal how they perceive what you have offered, and how they feel about it.

35. Be memorable

All too often, presentations can be boring, both to give and to receive! Think very carefully what you want them to remember about you and your product and make it as memorable and vivid as possible. If you don't, in a couple of days all they may remember was that curious stain on your tie!

36. Always ask for referrals

Whenever a meeting has gone well, and you feel the prospect is well warmed up to what you have to offer, why not ask them if they know of anyone else who might benefit from your help? It's a great time to test for their commitment. If they are keen, why not ask them to make a call to introduce you. After all isn't a personal introduction a lot more powerful than a 'Mr. Jones said you would be interested...' call. And it will be more difficult for your prospect not to buy from you once he has recommended you to a friend.

37. Be punctual

I am regularly astonished by salespeople who seem to think that timekeeping is really not that important. Perhaps they think that their time is more important than mine. I've got news for them. It isn't! If you want to sell to me then I expect a certain amount of respect as a prospective client. Frankly, if I don't feel valued before the sale, then how I am I going to feel afterwards?

Inevitably things do go wrong from time to time and you can't make the meeting as scheduled. Always make a call to apologize and explain when you will be there, BEFORE you are due, not after. Sorry to shout, but there is no excuse for ill manners in my view, and certainly not in sales. (Okay, call me old fashioned. I can live with it...)

38. Rehearse your recommender

You can't always get to the decision maker – 'He never sees salesmen'. So you need a strategy to accommodate this difficulty if there really is no way round it. Actually this can be a *very* effective sales technique, and one which has won me a *lot* of business.

What you do is coach your contact as to how to present your proposal to his boss (or to the committee), who will actually be making the decision. The fun part here is that while they know that you are the sales person, they don't see your contact as a sales person at all. Effectively, if you do it right, you have a secret agent working the deal from the inside!

The best way to set this up is to schedule a meeting with your contact just to 'recap on the details' so he is properly prepared for his meeting with the boss. You want him to have all the tools at his disposal so that he can deal with the questions and objections that may get thrown at him. By preparing him well, he will look good in front of his boss, having all the facts at his fingertips. Make sure he is a star, and he will be a lifelong ally who will place a lot more business with you. If you don't do this, then how well do you think he will present your solution?

'Actually boss, I thought it sounded pretty stupid too, but I wanted to run it by you just to confirm what I was thinking...'

39. Be interesting by being *interested!*

People crave attention. By being intensely interested in their business, believe me, you will stand out from the crowd. So ask lots of questions about the business, *in your area of expertise*. The more obviously interested you are in them, the more they will give you time and give you help, where others would simply not. Ask their advice – it's amazing what you can learn, even if you think you already knew the answer!

40. Be unselfish

You're a sales person. Of course you're only out for yourself! Well, no, frankly. Unless you can really try to understand your prospect's needs and wants, you simply won't get inside his defensive zone. We all want to be listened to, so listen actively for their needs, and don't bore them with yours. 'But I need this sale to make my target for the quarter' I hear you say. Well, that's really going to close the deal, isn't it?

So you really, really need the deal for this quarter, fine, I know that and so do you, but let's keep it as our little secret. Frankly your prospect doesn't care!!

Like most of us, he is his own top priority. So find compelling reasons why he needs to act that are absolutely in his interests. And that doesn't have to be a discount!!

41. It's not an objection!

Personally I hate the word 'objection' in a sales context. It smacks of sales as some kind of verbal contest where you need to browbeat the prospect into agreeing with you. You know the feeling – 'agree with me now, it will save so much time'.

Actually so-called 'objections' are great 'buying signals'. Your prospect is now thinking quite clearly about what it will be like to live with your product or service, and is mentally 'trying it for size'. They want to be sure that they are not overlooking something that they will later regret in their enthusiasm. So your prospect voices doubts, looking and hoping for an answer that will reassure him. So get in there and reassure him. However...

42. Is this a deal breaker or just an attempt to get a discount?

Prospects may feel that they are not doing their job properly unless they can show that he or she is not a pushover. So they put up some kind of token

resistance. But is it really token resistance, or a genuine problem that has come to light? How do you find out?

First, always take their point seriously and thank them for pointing it out. Then restate it as a question so you can get a better handle on their real thinking. ‘That’s a good point – let me see if I understand exactly what you are saying here...’ By rephrasing and confirming the question, the objection may get answered by the prospect themselves. This technique also buys you some time to consider your response and show that you are ‘on their wavelength’. Seek clarification - ‘How does that affect you?’ or ‘Is that important to you?’ It may be a trivial issue, or maybe it is the tip of the iceberg that you need to understand and deal with, if it is not to sink the sale.

43. Don’t make claims, quote evidence!

In this situation, poor sales people often make exaggerated claims in the hope of being believed, but it’s hard evidence that really counts, as many a convicted criminal has learnt to their cost! Don’t tell the prospect ‘it’s nothing to worry about – it’s the best system in the market’. Instead tell him how one of your clients went through months of evaluation, benchmarking, customer visits or whatever, so he doesn’t need to. Then give him the client’s name and phone number and get him to ‘make the call’.

Make the story as vivid as you can. so it is memorable. Tell him how another client who you look after (notice the ‘look after’, we all want to be

looked after, not sold!) achieved various specific benefits. And please remember, be specific. In the words of one famous scientist, 'if you can't measure it you don't know what you are talking about'.

Remember, they are seeking reassurances, not issuing a challenge! So be reassuring, not confrontational. If appropriate, give them guarantees – often the law will protect them in any case, but show them, in detail, precisely how you will guarantee their satisfaction.

44. Benefits, not features

An old chestnut perhaps, but still it is well worth reminding yourself that a feature is not a benefit, nor an advantage for that matter. Personally, I prefer to talk about results. After all, that's what we all want, and preferably fast. People don't buy things because they're newer, shinier or have more bells and whistles, but because they will in some manner feel better afterwards. Look for the results you are going to deliver, to make their lives easier and better. Explain clearly how they will get the results, when and how big they will be. Then find out how they will feel about the results when you deliver them.

45. We buy what we want, not what we need

Unlike Mr. Spock, we are creatures of emotion and not logic. So we will always find a way to buy what we want, as opposed to what we need. Try to build an emotional element into the sale - ask them how they will feel when they use what you are proposing – remember emotion powers the sale, so keep up the momentum. You only win if they need what you offer and the other guy doesn't.

46. Feature comparisons cancel out

Human nature is a funny thing. When making a decision, prospects will often draw up lists of features for each product. Each product's features are listed in columns to compare one against the other. Then a rather strange thing happens.

All the features that the prospect feels are irrelevant cancel each other out. In other words, if they are not interested in the 14 day delivery of one product and the extra warranty in another, they will simply score both off the list as if they were equal – which in a way they are. To make sure some of your best stuff doesn't get thrown away like this, you must find a way in which your special unique features actually matter, i.e. deliver results that matter to them, and make this absolutely clear to the prospect.

47. What is *your* USP?

Frequently, we talk about our USP, or Unique Selling Proposition. While it is important to know what your product or service's USPs are, remember that they only matter when they are relevant to the prospect. Push a USP that they have no interest in, and you will turn them off big time. So if you are not getting through with one of your USPs then try another, paying careful attention to how your prospect reacts.

48. Prospecting is a process, not a problem

As we said earlier, you need to create the luxury of choice that allows you to cherry pick the best opportunities. It is a common mistake to cease prospecting activities when you are busy with closing sales, but the consequences can be dire. So you need to have mechanisms in place to make sure that you have a steady stream of new prospects to keep the pipeline flowing.

One of the ways you can do this is to block out one day a week for no activity other than prospecting work. This can be cold calling on the phone, preparing a mail shot or whatever. This way you are always creating new opportunities on a regular basis. The important thing is to keep it up on a regular basis, and you will always keep the pipeline flowing.

49. The Deadly Spiral

Another common, and all too often deadly mistake is the ‘big sale’ death spiral, as I have heard it called. Your prospecting has gone well and you have found this deal that can make your target for the next 6 months. Great – well done. But this deal demands your total attention and resource – after all it will bring you a lot of kudos as well as a lot of commission! So you throw yourself into the deal wholeheartedly, and do such a good job that you win it. Fantastic! But... with all the fuss and hassle in getting the deal, you have let the pipeline run dry.

So now you have to start again from nothing, rebuilding the momentum you had before this great deal came along. You can go from hero to zero very fast in this game, and you may find yourself out the door in a surprisingly short time.

50. ‘The harder I work the luckier I get’

A splendid quote, I hope you’ll agree. Because, in my view, there is no such thing as *consistent* luck. The stars in this profession are those elite sales people who consistently turn in outstanding performances year in and year out. How?

In my view, planning. We have all heard the old cliché ‘Fail to plan, plan to fail’. Just because it is a cliché does not mean it’s no longer true. It is said

that the US Military have a plan for every situation, a plan designed by geniuses and executed by morons. They don't want it executed by morons, but sometimes, that's just life!

Okay, enough - so we need a plan – but what kind of plan exactly?

51. Draw up your plan

Identify roughly what the average value of sale that you expect to make will be, and then work out the number of sales you need to achieve say 150% of your target. Armed with this piece of information, you can now proceed to

Step 2, which is ... looking at past history, work out what kind of success rate have you had, i.e. your conversion rate from good prospects to sales. Now you can tell how many good prospects you need.

Step 3, work out how many new suspects it takes to get a properly qualified prospect that you genuinely should pursue. Now you can see how many suspects you have to pour into the sales funnel to get the desired results out.

Step 4, find enough suspects, on an ongoing basis, to meet your target figure. As you can see, you need to plan, to ensure that the raw suspects you feed in

will be enough to for you to make and preferably handsomely exceed your target.

52. Optimize everything that you do

What does that mean? Well, basically if you improve each step of the plan you get geometric, not arithmetic growth. In other words, improve the number of suspects by 10% and you will improve your total sales by 10%. But if you improve the number of suspects by 10%, and improve the effectiveness of your conversion to prospects by 10% and the conversion of

prospects to sales by 10%, you have actually improved the final sales figure by over 33%. By working carefully on each step of the process you will get a LOT more out!

53. Find a niche

With the advent of the Internet, it has become much easier to become highly focused on servicing the needs of very specific groups. Think of any specialized group, and you will almost certainly find a web site catering to that market's needs. You need to find a specific community that needs your services, and then target your marketing activities on that group. Specialize in their specific area, and you will easily stand out from the crowd.

54. And dominate it

Once you have made a few sales into any well-chosen specialized community, you will find that subsequent sales to that group will become easier and easier. Word of mouth is an enormously powerful marketing tool. By specializing, you will become the de facto standard in that niche, and soon people will be calling you as the acknowledged expert in the field. (Some of them may even be competitors, looking to headhunt you for your obvious expertise!)

55. Build multiple niches

Relying on only one niche is quite simply a dangerous strategy. All your hard work can be wiped out if that particular market 'catches a cold'. If your niche is in say, the oil exploration business, imagine the effect of a sudden drop in the price of oil, due to a change in the politics of the OPEC countries. A strategy built on one pillar is at best shaky. You need to build

your future on multiple pillars, so always look for other pillars that you can use to support your continued success.

56. 3 Ways to grow your sales

Actually there are only 3 ways, no more. Either you get your clients to buy more, to buy more often, or you get more clients. All too often we ignore the first two steps, and just worry about new business so...

57. Don't neglect your existing customers

While you are rushing about chasing that exciting new prospect it is easy to neglect the opportunities in your existing customers. Remember it is much easier to sell to an existing client than to sell to a new prospect.

58. Visit your customers regularly

Make a point of diarizing regular meetings with your clients. They will appreciate the attention you give them, and it will reward you well in due course.

59. Plan their budgets for them

Don't just make it a social call – find out what their longer term plans are, and make sure you are part of them! If you can help them plan their future,

you can be much more confident of their commitment to your products and services. You can also be a lot more certain when you will get their next order and what they are likely to spend with you.

60. Look for new opportunities

While working through the plan with them, always be alert for new opportunities that may present themselves. Find out where their business is going, and how you might be able to help them get there.

61. Know your products

Maybe an old cliché but... you can never know too much about your products. The more you know about your products and services the better prepared you are to answer whatever questions you may be asked. Nowadays, prospects are very well informed, and they expect you to be too! So when they ask questions they do expect answers, and good ones too. By being totally familiar with your own products and services, you will come over as a professional not an amateur.

Clients want to deal with the best salespeople because they know that the quality of service is always better than with the less successful ones. Why? Because the best salespeople have the respect of their own company's senior management and are more likely to make sure that the client is given excellent service as a result.

62. It's okay not to know – just not very often!

No one can know everything, and it is always better to admit it up front. Don't bluff – you will be found out! Always accept that you don't have the answer to their question, but make a point of it that you will get them an answer *and be sure that you do*. Honesty will always build respect, and by following up you build an extra level of confidence and trust in your prospect's mind.

63. Know what matters to your prospect

Product knowledge is fine, but do remember, your job is not to show how clever you are, but how clever they are to buy from you! So, harness your product knowledge so you can use it to explain how it helps your client meet his needs. It's your job to help your prospect see how to achieve their goals by using your products and services.

64. Don't knock your competitors

It can be tempting to try knocking your competitors. Don't! All that happens is that you lose credibility. Don't be tempted into cheap tactics, as they are extremely risky, and generally backfire. If your competitor indulges in such tactics, find out why your prospect takes such comments seriously and then take the time to give them a satisfactory answer.

65. Treat them as *they* want to be treated

The Bible says 'Do unto others as you would be done unto'. However, in sales it's not quite as straightforward as that. Selling to someone who thinks as you do is not too difficult, as you naturally treat the prospect as you would like to be treated. However, this approach won't work on everyone.

If you are an outgoing impulsive type who makes decisions easily, using gut feelings, then how do you go about selling to the person who always wants to 'think about it' before making any decision. On the other hand, if you prefer lots of tables of figures, ROI calculations and the rest, how will you talk to someone who wants to know who else uses it and what colors it comes in?

66. The three different modes of thinking

Research on the brain has uncovered that there are in fact three distinct modes of thinking, and that we all have one 'preferred' mode which we use

for the majority of the time. However, in order to understand your prospect better, it will help greatly if you can understand their primary mode of thinking and adapt your proposals to suit.

67. The Visual

The visual prefers to think pictorially, painting vivid pictures in their mind's eye. To sell effectively to this group of people, you should use lots of graphical material and pictures with strong memorable colors. When discussing the benefits, use words and phrases that work with their thinking, e.g. Bright future, visible benefits, see the wood for the trees, give the project the green light, and so on.

68. The Aural

The aural prefers to vocalize internally, listening to their own thoughts, and often thinking out loud. They will listen intently to what is said, often avoiding eye contact and sometimes paying more attention to how it is said than what is actually being said. When selling to this group, use words that are in harmony with their thinking, like 'sounds good', 'rings true' etc.

69. The Kinesthetic

The third group uses 'gut feel' or instinct. When selling to this group, dwell more on how they feel about the solution and how they will feel once they

have your solution. Use words like ‘ run more smoothly ’, ‘ get a firm grip of the situation ’, ‘ handle the issue ’, ‘ weigh the evidence ’.

70. Create Empathy

What you are trying to do with all this is to create an empathy with your prospects, which says ‘I am just like you’. When you can get on their wavelength, see things through their eyes or even walk in their shoes, then you are much more likely to be able to sell successfully to all of them.

71. Use body language – carefully!

One of the most powerful ways to build empathy is to mirror the prospect’s body language. This needs to be done with care, as you are not trying to mock them, but to show (subliminally!) that you are thinking like them. So if they drink coffee, you do too. At lunch, eat and drink as they do. If they wear casual clothes to the office, do the same when you visit them (within reason!)

Curiously, there is an extraordinary side effect here, which is that if you adopt the exact body language of another person, your own thinking is affected. Remarkably if you adopt the posture of a depressed person, you actually become depressed yourself. Similarly, a confident posture actually creates a confident mental state. Use this biofeedback to put yourself in the right frame of mind for the task you are undertaking.

72. Ask open questions at the beginning

When you are looking to understand the prospects needs, use open questions to find out as much as possible. For example, at an exhibition, don’t ask ‘Can I help you?’ which can only get a Yes or No answer. Instead ask ‘How can I help you?’ which will give you a lot more information.

73. Silence is golden

‘The right word may be effective, but no word was ever as effective as the rightly timed pause’ – Mark Twain.

Many salespeople *never* learn to be quiet. Ask your question and then shut up! Don’t be satisfied with just a few words. Wait and see what then comes out of your prospect’s mouth. Don’t interrupt them and don’t feel you must fill every silence. Silence forces them to speak and reveal information that you would otherwise never get. So use this powerful tool to get at the nuggets of information that your competitors overlook in their haste to tell the prospect what they think he or she needs.

74. And closed ones at the end

When you are looking to close the deal, this is the time to start using closed questions, but you want these to always be answered ‘Yes’. You want to build a series of closed questions, which reinforce a strong feeling of agreement in the prospect’s mind, so when you ask for the order you are bound to get agreement.

75. Ask for the order

It seems such a small thing, but you’d be surprised how often this little detail gets forgotten, and all the hard work is wasted, because the salesperson didn’t actually ask for the order. Many people think of this as some sort of crisis in the sales process, but actually if you have worked through the sales process properly, then getting the order is a natural outcome. Remember when I said you should always have an objective for any meeting (or phone call), which the prospect had to do something for you. If you have been using that tip, (and if not, why not?) then your prospect will be used to being asked to do something at the end of any of your meetings. So asking them to give you the order will just be another thing for them to do.

76. The magic word ‘Because’

Some recent psychological research uncovered the astonishing power of the word ‘because’. Harvard social psychologist Ellen Langer created a series of experiments where people lining up at a photocopier were asked to let the experimenter go ahead of them in the line.

First they asked ‘Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine because I’m in a rush?’ In 94% of cases, they were successful.

The experiment was then repeated with a minor twist - ‘Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine?’ The success rate plummeted to only 60%. Imagine what a difference this tiny change would make to your sales results.

Intriguingly, the experiment was repeated with a further twist – ‘Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine because I have to make some copies?’ Amazingly, despite the fact that there is no good reason given, the success rate was still 93%!

Use ‘because’ to justify your request, and you will see a HUGE increase in your success rate. Give people a reason why you are making a special offer, or asking for the order now, and you will be amazed at how much more successful you will be.

77. Ask as early as possible!

Often salespeople overlook the opportunity to close the deal because they still want to keep selling, even though the prospect is ready to say yes. How do you know when they are ready? Ask them of course. Always listen carefully for signs that they are ready to give you the go-ahead. If things look good, ask. Done properly, it won’t harm you. If the answer is no, then

you have an invaluable opportunity to find out what remains to be done before you can get the sale.

78. Trade commitments

‘Mr. Prospect, if I can just confirm that point for you in writing, when can we expect your go ahead?’ If they can’t or won’t say, then dig for the next step that needs to be taken before you can get the order. ‘Is there anything else I need to cover?’

79. Be calm and confident when closing

Understandably, at this stage it is easy to become nervous about the deal, at the very time you should be exuding calm confidence. Your prospect may be a little nervous about spending large sums of money after all, so you need to be reassuring in what you say and do. Remember, you have been there before, but this may be their first time making such a significant commitment.

80. Lower the risk... or better yet remove it!

Whenever making any kind of purchase, the buyer is taking on some kind of risk. Some people are completely happy about this, and want to be seen to be bold leaders, adopting new ways of doing things readily, to steal a march over their competitors, or just gain kudos from being seen to be ‘leading edge’. Most of us however are not so happy with risk. ‘After all, pioneers get arrows in their backs...’ So how do we deal with this natural reluctance to accept risk? Clearly proven references are a great way to say ‘Look how happy our clients are. Join them...’ But if you are a new kid on the block, this option just isn’t available to you. Instead you need to offer to accept the risk yourself and take it from the client. By giving them cast iron guarantees you are saying ‘I am so confident you will be happy with us, that I will put

my money where my mouth is'. Strive to lower or even remove the risk, and you will undoubtedly do more business, and gain a great reputation.

81. Earn a great reputation... and maintain it

Working in a niche market as we have discussed, has immense advantages. However there is also a potential down side. If for any reason you start letting customers down, word will get around. Remember, bad news travels fast. So work hard to deal with any problems as a matter of urgency.

82. You can't win an argument with a customer

When problems do arise (and they will), however tempting it may be, don't argue whose fault it was. Simply accept graciously that, for whatever reason, the customer has been let down and you want to see that it is put right. Customers want to be listened to and helped. When they *stop* complaining is when you know that you have lost them! So find out what went wrong in their eyes, and make sure it gets fixed.

Strangely, today's problem customer, treated correctly, will become one of your best references. 'We had some problems, but these guys buckled down

and helped us through. It's good to know that if we ever get into difficulties again, we really can rely on their support'.

83. Use non-threatening language

Don't use lines like 'We need you to sign a legally binding contract, in triplicate, oh, and by the way, you'll need to have your signature witnessed by two other members of staff'. You'll probably never see them again with that approach! Make it sound routine, and slightly boring. 'Finally, I just

need your okay on some paperwork, so we can get started.’ or ‘There are just a couple of things I need you to rubber stamp if that’s okay.’

84. Use your resources (wisely)

One of the keys to being a successful salesman is to use all the resources available to you. So what resources am I talking about?

85. Use your local library

Good salespeople know just how much valuable information is available in their local library. Make a point of visiting the reference section. Ask the librarian for help – that’s what they are there for after all. You want to find prospects – what better place to get the raw information you need to identify companies or organizations that you want to target?

86. Use the Internet

With the fabulous resources of the Internet at your fingertips, take advantage of the vast amounts of information available in a few clicks. Use the Internet to research market opportunities and trends and make your longer term plans accordingly.

87. Use technology

Use technology to make your life easier. Use a decent sales management tool that lets you manage all your sales and prospecting activities, prompting you when you need it, and producing all your sales reports from management with a few clicks of a mouse. Integrate the software with your quotation system so you can prepare quotes in minutes and not hours. Create standard responses for the questions you *always* get asked in tenders. Get a

hand held PC which allows you to do useful work while sitting on the plane, or at the airport or whatever.

88. Use your manager

Your own manager will be an excellent source of help and advice. (If he or she is not, why are you working for them?) All you have to do is ask. Plan your calls with them. Analyze the prospect with them, and get their advice. Get them to come on a difficult sales call with you, to help open doors that you can't. Remember, they have probably been there before, and know how to deal with it. But be careful with their time, they do have other responsibilities too...

89. Use your colleagues

Ask your colleagues for their advice. Most people are flattered to be asked, and salespeople generally enjoy such mentoring as a way of giving something back to the business.

90. Look for outstanding successes in your own company

One of the smart ways to be successful is to model other people's success strategies. Don't reinvent the wheel, copy it! Look for strategies that have

worked well, and then go talk to the person who did it. Find out what worked and why. (And what didn't, which may be even more important!) Take the strategy and apply it in your own territory, perhaps even asking the person whose strategy you are modeling for copies of their mail shot, presentation or whatever.

91. Run a seminar

Running a seminar is a great way to get prospects warmed to your company and its products and services. So how do you make sure they are a success? Once again, it's a process.

92. Find a strong topic

In order to get a good attendance you need to find a topic that will interest your target audience. Draw up a list of hot topics that might form the basis of a seminar, and talk to some of your clients to see what they think. Then brainstorm some headlines that will 'sell' the seminar.

93. Use good speakers

Look to get an expert speaker that will add credibility to your seminar. A speaker from one of your major clients can give your seminar and company's products credibility. Alternatively, if your budget will stretch to it, get some industry-respected speaker to give your seminar added appeal.

94. Mailshot the target audience

Write to your target audience, giving them all the details they need, explaining what is in it for them, and what they will get out of attending. Remember, you are selling the seminar, not your products or services.

95. Follow up the mailshot and get commitments

Make a point of following up on the mailing, calling the person you have invited, and stressing the need to book, as places are limited.

96. Don't push the sales message

When running the seminar, remember, people came to listen to real content, and not a thinly disguised sales pitch. Give them useful content and plenty of it, and you will become considered as an authority in the subject. By winning their respect, you have a real edge when subsequently selling to them.

97. Give them something to remember

No, not just good memories! Give them something to take away after the seminar is over, like a software demo CD or something that will continue to act as a reminder of you and your company. But don't just give it away, trade it for some kind of information. Have an exit survey for your attendees to complete. This is where you can get your attendees to give you valuable information about their buying intentions. So devise some kind of form (not too long or complicated!) that will give you the information you want, in exchange for something they want!

98. Use Refreshment breaks

Plan the day to allow time to talk to the people one on one. Use the opportunity to network. Remember, it's part of the attraction for your audience too. Always have enough members of your own organization around to make sure that guests are looked after, and to listen carefully for valuable tidbits.

99. Review the seminar afterwards

Get your people together afterwards and review how the seminar went. Pool as much information as you can to find out what went well, and what needs to be improved for the next time. Establish what leads you uncovered and how you will follow up.

100. Write to all attendees

Afterwards, it's always a nice gesture to write to everyone who attended. It will make you stand out from the crowd, since it shows that your company genuinely values their time and interest.

101. Go the extra mile

By going the extra mile, you will win more business. Look to give exceptional service, and you will gain exceptional rewards. So look for ways to do your work that little bit better than your competitors, and you will win big rewards. (And in case you hadn't noticed, there are actually 102 tips in the book!)

And finally... Don't just read this booklet, use it!

Make a point of picking a couple of the tips that particularly appeal to you and practice them in real sales situation until they become second nature. Then move on to the next couple of tips and do the same, turning them into good habits too.

When a deal is not working as well as you had hoped, re-read the tips, and see how they can be applied to the situation. By constantly working at your sales technique, you will see a big change in the quality and effectiveness of your work, and of your income, I guarantee it!

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