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Understanding the sales process to close more sales

By Andre Plessis

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Understanding The Sales Process To Close More Sales

You may not have put much thought into it but if you are a business owner and sell products and/or services to consumers or/and businesses then you are a sales person. Have you spent enough time understanding the sales process and what it takes to close more sales for your business? If you haven't this October Newsletter will help you understand the sales process, how your prospects think and how you can close more sales.

There are two things in your business you need to master and those are marketing and selling skills.

Most marketers don't give a lot of thought to the buying processes of their clients. That's very unfortunate. Paying attention to the buying process can have a dramatic effect on your revenue. It is extremely important to understand that although people inquire about your products/services, it doesn't mean they are the ideal prospect. There are many reasons why people may not buy your stuff which has nothing to do with you.

Each and every one of us goes through some sort of buying process when we make a purchase decision. At times the process is long as when making a big purchase. At other moments it happens almost without thought when buying an inexpensive item. Sometimes we may be seeking information on a products or service but that doesn't mean we are ready to buy right away. May be we need to be convinced that we are making the right decision.

It is very important that early in the sales process you differentiate the prospect that is on the market to buy and the one WHO DOESN'T KNOW WHAT HE WANTS. Don't spend much time on the second one; you will be wasting your time and energy.

Generally speaking, the buying process consists of four steps.

Do they really need it?

Understanding the sales process to close more sales

During this step, shoppers realize they WANT or MAY need something. They realize that they have a problem or a desire, and they choose to find a solution. If this need is strong enough chances are that they will make a quick decision and buy from you or your competition. If the need is not really there, they will just shop around and won't be making a quick decision. That decision could be made in a few months or may be never. It is extremely important that you identify the real prospect to the undecided shopper. It can be very frustrating to deal with those undecided people. You should focus your energy on the real buyers. I consider this stage interview the most critical part of any sales process. The interview is the stage where you try to get to know your customer's needs, concerns, issues, objections, and real desires. It's from the interview that you have enough information to determine how to present your products and services.

Information Search

Once the choice has been made to fill a need or want, the prospects begin to search for information in order to make the best buying decision that is in his/her best interest. Make sure you give all information necessary to help them make a buying decision. You should offer some way for the prospect to remember you, such as brochures and catalogs, a way to bookmark your site, newsletter etc.) Free samples, test drives, free report and other means of "trial" work extremely well to guide the prospect through the information search stage and onto the evaluation and purchase stages. In this particular state of the buying process make sure to educate the process as much as and make sure you differentiate your company from the competition.

In that particular stage you will need to do two things. Educate your prospect and create an interest.

When educating your prospect on your products/services, be sure to present reasons for them to buy. Remember...solve a need, problem, or improve a current situation. The Key: Give them reasons to buy.

Your recommendation shows the customer your personal efforts and interest in helping him. He will be able to compare your products and services to the competition, and see the difference (if there is any). This should bring out his final objections, giving you the opportunity to answer all his questions.

Your recommendation should be designed to relate value to your customer. Here is where your product or service begins showing logical and practical solutions to the customer's problems, needs, and goals. This is where you lay out your plan of action and explain how the process will work for your prospect. This step will also uncover and give you the opportunity to handle objections.

Find out about their objections

Often the trial close will lead to objections. You might say, "So which program do you feel most comfortable with?" (That's a soft form of the trial close.) Your customer will probably respond with objections (e.g., price, features, delivery, no time, or no need). During this step, don't try to counter the objections. Continue the interview and learn all you can about their objections and challenges. You need to help them make a decision and they need to be reassured they are making the right decision. Try to learn whether the objections are honest or made up because the prospect doesn't want to hurt your feelings, or genuinely isn't interested in buying at this time.

Understanding the sales process to close more sales

Handle objections

Your options are to rebuttal an objection, change your offer, or provide other incentives. But make sure you do the homework and actually follow up with the prospect. Occasionally, you will find an objection is legitimate and you really can't meet the prospect's needs. Be honest, wish him luck then walk away. Don't waste your time with undecided people who do not know what they want.

Evaluation

After your prospects have collected all the information they feel is necessary and you have answered all their objections, they begin to evaluate their options and narrow their choices until they finally pick the one thing that they are comfortable with, and that they can afford. This is the time to follow-up with your prospects. Is there additional information they need in order to choose your company? Did they have any issues with the free sample that can be corrected? Your presence during the evaluation stage is important, so do your best to retain customer contact information in order to offer any

additional information the buyer might need.

Purchase

Once all the information has been evaluated, a purchase is made, and your customer walks hopefully happy.

Why people really buy.

People buy for their own reasons, NOT FOR YOURS. Until you know your customer's reasons for wanting, or not wanting, to buy your product/service...you are in the dark! It doesn't matter how many reasons you give for believing your product/service is a great buy, they will mean nothing unless your customer has VERY GOOD reasons to buy from you. Customers face new challenges every day that can alter their needs for your products/services. The key is to stay in contact with your prospects...and ALWAYS ask questions to learn where they are in terms of needing your product/service.

If a prospect avoids making the decision to buy from you, it's typically because they have no sense of urgency to buy or they may not be convinced that your products/services will solve a problem they have. Your challenge is to prove to the prospect that buying now is best for them and you must be able to offer support and real reasons why. What will they miss if they wait even one more day? What will they miss if they don't buy from YOU? Make sure you emphasize on the potential opportunities if they go ahead and get started on the program NOW. WHY is it important for them to buy now? In other words, what's in it for them? Remember...the reason a customer buys your product or service is because of what it can do for 'them'. JUST TELL THEM.

Know Your Competition

We all have competition. When you call on a prospect, you will likely encounter a situation where the prospect knows your competitors. In order to sell all the reasons why YOUR product or service is best

Understanding the sales process to close more sales

for the prospect...you need to know as much as possible about your competitors. This allows you to explain why your product/service is better than the rest to solve a specific need of your client.

Why is my product/service best?

In order to make a decision to buy your product and/or service, a buyer will need specific information about you, your company, your products, services, etc. Provide them with specifics on your reliability, special features of your products and services and where you stand in your industry. Tell a complete story of why they should buy from YOU rather than your competition. **TESTIMONIALS ARE POWERFUL. CREDENTIALS ARE IMPORTANT**. If you belong to a specific organization such as BBB, it may help you tremendously close a deal.

What about those prospects that is not ready to buy?

Simply follow up regularly with them through direct mail, phone calls, or newsletters. That allows you to build credibility which you may not have been able to build earlier. Many individuals are not ready to buy right away but after, 6, 7, 8 follow up they may be ready.

Understanding each step in the buying process can help you structure your selling process and your marketing materials to cater to the prospects. Take the time to consider what your customer goes through when making the choice to buy, and alter your business accordingly. In doing so, you will

increase your chances of making more sales.

In the sales profession you are the company, the product, the service. What you do and how you do it will impact your success. Perfect your sales skills by asking and answering questions, overcoming objections, and provide reasons to buy your products/services. Tell your story, create a need, solve a problem, handle follow-up procedures correctly and you will be on your way to great success.

Golden rule: PEOPLE BUY FROM PEOPLE THEY LIKE AND TRUST.

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None

Sales As A Positive Experience

By Don Osborne

No matter what your age or stage in life, some words come with preconceived meaning. "Sales" is one of them. For most people, it means being put in a position to have to buy something you don't want at a price you can't afford. Therefore, how do you conduct a critical element of the small business marketing process without incurring the negative impact of the word "sales"?

It starts with you. Check your own attitude about the word. What does "sales" mean to you? How do you feel when you're the one being sold? How much of that feeling do you transfer to the experience you're now being asked to conduct as a small business owner?

Next, putting aside any of your own negative feelings, what exactly are you offering your potential customers – what's in it for them? How you answer this question is the starting point for a "Positive Experience" for your potential customer. When a person really understands the pain you'll helped them relieve or the joy you'll help them experience as a result of your product or service, they'll see your "sales" process as a positive experience.

So, what's the lesson to be learned? Develop a positive, personal understanding about your own products and services. Determine what you're selling in terms of it's value to the potential customer.

Understanding the sales process to close more sales

Present that value in a solutions manner. Result: you'll turn your sales process into a Positive Experience for both you and your customer.

"Learn & Do" Action Steps:

1. Write a 3 – 5 sentence description of how you feel when you're the customer?
2. Select the product or service you're most passionate about. List 5 incentives with matching features and benefits you feel have a high value to your customer.
3. Role play with a trusted friend the perfect, interactive presentation of the product or service you've selected.

Don Osborne is the Author/Publisher of THE PROFIT PUZZLE – A Free Small Business Course –

Sales As A Positive Experience

How Sales Visibility Will Help You Close More Frequently!

4 QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS BEFORE YOU ADVERTISE

The 7 Step Challenge – Does Your Marketing Company Measure Up?

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