

Guide to

SALES FOR SMALL COMPANIES

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PRACTICAL SERVICES
for
BUSINESS DIRECTORS

However effective your marketing is and however good the leads it helps to generate, whether a potential customer decides to do business with your company or not, comes down to the person who is 'closing the sale'.

And we all know that even if we are producing the best product in the world or providing a service of fantastic quality and value, unless enough people buy them, they are in fact worthless and our business will not flourish. For many small businesses the person doing the actual selling is often not from a sales background but has simply inherited or drifted into the role.

Good training for them is absolutely vital and a fantastic investment if your business is to survive in an ever more competitive environment let alone grow in the way you might want it to.

Because there have been literally millions of words written about different ways of selling, hundreds of thousands of articles published on the subject and thousands of books have been printed, it can be very confusing as to where to start.

With that in mind we have set out here Seven Steps of the Sale, which the inexperienced sales person should find useful as a structure to follow.

1. Planning & Preparation
2. Introduction
3. Questioning
4. Presentation
5. Overcoming Objections
6. Close
7. After-Sales Follow-Up

Step 1. Planning & Preparation

Ensure you know your own product/service extremely well — especially features and benefits that will be relevant to the prospect you will be meeting.

Have a through understanding of what other competitors are able and likely to offer, and find out which ones are being considered if you can.

Prepare your opening statements and practice your sales presentation, which should be prepared in the format in which you are to give it (e.g. MS PowerPoint slides for laptop or projected presentation). Make sure all materials, samples, handouts, brochures, are easily accessible and in the order that you are going to use them.

Think carefully about what you want to get from the meeting and organise your planning to achieve it

Step 2. Introduction

Smile — be professional, and take confidence from the fact that you are well prepared.

Introduce yourself and the company you represent, and what your company does. Set the scene — explain the purpose of your visit.

Ask if it's okay to start by asking a few questions or whether your prospect would prefer a quick overview of your own company first.

Step 3. Questioning

The main purpose of questioning is to find out if there is a match between the products or services that you can supply and the needs and requirements of your potential customer.

Good empathic questioning also builds relationships, trust and rapport. Nobody wants to buy anything from a sales person who's only interested in their own product or company — we all want to buy from somebody who gives the time and skill to interpreting and properly meeting our own personal needs

Use open questions to gather information — for example, questions beginning with Who, What, Why, Where, When, How?

Listen carefully and empathically, maintain good eye-contact, understand, and show that you understand — especially understand what is meant and felt, not just what is said. When you've asked a question, SHUT UP. Do not interrupt; you have two ears and one mouth and use them in those proportions.

Step 4. Presentation

The sales presentation should focus on what your products and services can do for the prospective customer.

You will have found out from the questioning stage what those needs are and so you describe how what you have to offer can meet and fulfil those needs to the benefit of the customer.

Also at this stage you need to talk about price. Always tell the customer what the price is but don't stop and wait for a response, it is likely to be negative if you do. Instead sandwich the price between benefits.

All sales presentations must be well structured, clear and concise, professionally delivered, and have lots of integrity. The quality and integrity of the presentation is always regarded as a direct indication as to the quality and integrity of the product/service.

Keep control of the presentation, but do so in a relaxed way; if you don't know the answer to a question don't waffle — say you don't know and promise to get back with an answer later, and make sure you do.

Let your personality and natural enthusiasm shine through — people buy from people who

love and have faith in their products and companies.

Step 5. Overcoming Objections

Objections are a reality of the sales process, sometimes as part of the buying strategy and sometimes they arise because of the lack of information provided by the sales person earlier in the presentation.

They are also sometimes a buying signal.

Qualify each objection one by one and if necessary dig a little deeper to find the real specific objection.

Only once you have isolated the objection can you hope to overcome it.

Avoid head-to-head arguments. Even if you win them you will destroy the relationship and lose the sale.

Step 6. Close

Every sales person's aim should be to prepare and conduct the selling process so well that there are few if any objections, and not really any need for a specific close.

The best close is something like — Are you happy that we've covered everything and would you like to go ahead? — or simply — Would you like to go ahead?

In many cases, if the sales person conducts the sale properly, the prospect will close the deal himself, but always be prepared to ask for the order. There is absolutely no point in not doing so — after all that is what the call was aimed at achieving in the first place and you have nothing to lose.

Step - 7 Follow-Up

After-sales follow-up depends on the type of product and service, and the internal control operations of both the supplier and the customer but having done the hard work — getting the order it is essential that this "house keeping" part is carried out diligently.

The sales person should also make follow-up contact with the customer as often as necessary to confirm that the customer is happy with the way the order is being progressed or has been completed. This helps reduce possible confusion and misunderstood expectations, which are a big cause of customer dissatisfaction or order cancellation if left unresolved.

Customers rightly hold sales people responsible for what happens after the sale is made, and good conscientious follow-up will usually be rewarded with repeat orders and referrals to other potential customers.

Christopherson Associates Sales Improvement Services include Sales Training, Sales Coaching, Interim Sales Management and if necessary, we can provide an Interim Sales Force or an affordable part-time, experienced sales person to help win new clients for you.

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*If you are interested in any of our services please telephone us on **01225 480325** or complete the contact form on our website www.practicalservices.co.uk to arrange a free discussion.*

*The author of this article is available for group presentations to your business or organization. If interested, please call us on **01225 480325** to arrange.*

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Christopherson Associates help business owners achieve their goals by providing a whole range of practical services.

These services include boosting profits, increasing sales and marketing activities, streamlining operations, installing Quality or IT systems, ensuring compliance with Health and Safety regulations or Employment legislation, raising finance, planning and implementing an exit strategy or helping with any business problem outside of the experience of the business owner.

All our associates are seasoned and mature business professionals with decades of relevant business experience either at board or director level of major companies or have run their own businesses.

They are well trained in working with business owners and take a highly practical approach to solving problems and enhancing your business by working closely with you every step along the way.

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