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The Fundamental Flaws of ‘Traditional’ Sales!

What if we told you that everything you’ve ever heard about ‘Sales’ is...fundamentally flawed?

Curious? Then read on...

As a Business Owner, and whether you like it or not, you’re also a salesperson. What’s more, even though you like to think of your Business as ‘unique’ this is what makes it the *same* as every other Business:

Every Business is selling something to somebody else.

You’ve had to sell to the bank to get them to loan you your start-up capital. You’ve had to sell to the best employees on why they should work for your business. You’ve had to convince your business partner, spouse, and friends why your business idea is a good one.

Now you have to repeatedly sell your product or service to your customers.

The ability to sell effectively and efficiently is one every successful business owner has cultivated, and continues to develop. It can be a complicated and time consuming task; one that you will have to continually work on throughout your career in order to be – and stay – successful.

Fortunately, making sales is a step-by-step process that can be learned, customized, and continuously improved. There are a wide range of tools available to help and support your sales efforts.

You don’t have to be the most outgoing, enthusiastic person to be successful at sales. You don’t even have to be a good public speaker. All you need is an understanding of the basic sales process, and a genuine passion for what you are selling.

Key Fundamentals of Sales

Making sales is a process. There are clear, step-by-step actions that must be taken to result in a successful sale.

The sales process varies according to the type of business, type of customers and type of product or service that is offered; however, the core steps are the same. Similarly, sales expertise varies from individual to individual, but the core skills and abilities remain the same.

Here is a basic seven-step process that you can follow, or fine tune to suit your unique products and services. Remember that each step is important, and builds on the previous step. It is essential to become adept at each step, instead of solely focusing on closing the sale.

1. Preparation

Make a note of the acronym AWIPP. It stands for ‘Amateurs Wing It, Professionals Prepare’

Be prepared for your meeting, presentation, or day on the sales floor. You have complete control of this part of the sales process, so it is important to do everything you can to set the stage for your success.

- Understand your product or service inside and out.
- Prepare all the necessary materials, and organize them neatly.
- Keep your place of business tidy and organized.
- Appear professional and well groomed.
- Research your potential client to find common ground.
- Understand your own personality type and how it relates to your potential client. Personality and behavioral Tools such as DISC (which you can access online) are invaluable for this and help you understand the different characteristics of different personality types.

2. Build a Relationship

The first few minutes you spend with a potential customer set the stage for the rest of your interaction. First impressions are everything and you never get a second chance at a first impression. Your goal in the second step is to relax the customer and begin to develop a relationship with them. Establishing a real relationship with your customer will create trust. Here are some important considerations:

- Make a great first impression: shake hands, make eye contact, and introduce yourself.
- Remain confident and professional, but also personable.
- Mirror their speech and behavior.
- Adapt your approach according to their personality type. Some people will want to begin with general questions and small talk. Others will want to get straight down to business.
- Show interest in them and their place of business.
- Notice and comment on positives.
- Find some common ground on which to relate.

3. Discuss Needs + Wants

Once you have spent a few moments getting to know your prospect, start asking open-ended questions to discover some of their needs and wants. If they have come to you on the sales floor, ask what brought them in the store. If you are meeting them to present your product or service, ask what they are interested in, or what purpose they have in mind for that product or service.

- If you are making a sales presentation, ask for a few moments at the outset to outline the purpose of your visit, as well as how you have structured the presentation.
- Ask what **THEY** want to get from your meeting and listen intently. Clarify anything you are not sure you understand.

- You have two ears and one mouth. Use them in the same proportion! Ask open-ended questions to get them talking. The longer they talk, the more insight they are providing you into their needs and purchase motivators.
- Ask clarifying questions about their responses.
- If you become sure the customer is going to buy your product or service, begin to ask questions specific to the offering. i.e., what size/color do you prefer?

4. Present the Solution

Once you have a solid understanding of what they are looking for, or what issue they are looking to resolve, you can begin to present the solution: your product or service.

- Explain how your product or service will solve their problem or meet their needs.
- Illustrate your points with anecdotes about other happy customers, or awards the product or service has earned.
- Use hypothetical examples featuring your customer. Encourage them to picture a scenario after their purchase.
- Highlight the benefits they will get from the product, NOT the mechanical features.
- Watch your customers as you speak, and ask further qualifying questions in response to body language and verbal comments.
- Give the customer an opportunity to ask you questions or provide feedback about each product or service after you have described or explained it.
- Only ask closed-ended questions to gain specific agreement as appropriate. (*We'll cover this more shortly*).

5. Overcome Objections

As you present the product or service, take note of potential objections by asking open-ended questions and monitoring body language. Expect that objections will arise and prepare for it. Consider brainstorming a list of all potential objections in advance, and writing down your responses.

- Repeat the objection back to the customer to ensure you understand it correctly.
- Empathize with what they have said, and then provide a response that overcomes the objection.
- Confirm that the answer you have provided has overcome their objection.

Common Objections

The product or service does not seem valuable to me.
There is no reason for me to act now. I will wait.
It's safest not to make a decision right away.
There is not enough money for the purchase.
The competitor or another department offers a better product.
There are internal issues between people or departments.
There is an existing contract in place with another business.

6. The Close!

Here's the great news if you feel awkward and anxious at the prospect of selling and intimidated by the idea of having to 'close the sale': *most of the traditional ways of 'closing' are old fashioned and out of date!* They stand out a mile if you use them with today's more savvy buyers.

So, let's get rid of the word 'close' and simply refer to it as helping your prospect decide what's best for them. *Now, doesn't that make you feel better?*

Knowing when to do this is a judgment call that you make during your discussions, asking yourself questions like:

- Does my prospect agree that there is value in my product or service?
- Does my prospect understand the benefits of the product or service?
- Are there any remaining objections that must be handled?
- What other factors could influence my prospect's decision to buy?
- How well have I minimized the risk involved in the purchase, and provided some level of urgency?

Temperature Checking

This whole process is made much easier by a technique we call 'Temperature Checking'. When you have presented a solution to their problem, overcome objections, and have the customer in a place where they are ready to buy, you simply check their temperature by asking:

How does that sound to you?

Or

How does that fit in with what you had in mind?

Assuming you've done your job properly and they respond positively, all you then have to do is ask a final question, something like this:

'That's great - Would it be OK if I outline how to we can get that started...?'

When they say yes, simply explain the next steps. Here are some sample statements you can use to get the process rolling:

- Shall I grab a new one from the back?
- If you just give me your credit card, I can take care of the transaction while you continue browsing.
- When would you like the product delivered?
- Can I email you a draft contract tomorrow?

That's all there is to it.

Don't be misled by all the nonsense you read about all the 'powerful closing' techniques that you must use to 'win the sales battle'.

It's not a battle. It's a relationship.

You're simply helping your prospect make the right decision.

7. Service + Follow-up

Once you have made the sale by helping them decide to use your product or service, your work is not over. You want that customer to become a loyal, repeat customer, and refer their friends to your business.

Invite them to be in your customer database, and keep in touch with regular newsletters. Follow up with a phone call or drop by to ask how they are enjoying the product or service, and if they have any further questions or needs you can assist them with.

This contact opportunity will also allow you ask for a referral, or an additional purchase. At the very least, you will be continuing to foster and build a relationship with the client.

Up selling

Up selling is simply inviting your customers to spend more money in your business by purchasing additional products or services. This could include more of the same product, complementary products, or impulse items. Regardless, up selling is an effective way to increase profits and create loyal clients – without spending any money to acquire the business. These clients are already purchasing from you – which means they perceive value in what you have to offer – so take the information you have gained in the sales process and offer them a little bit more.

You experience up selling on a daily basis. From “do you want fries with that?” to “have you heard about our product protection program?” companies across the globe have tapped into and trained their staff on the value of the up sell.

Up selling is truly rooted in good customer service. If your client purchases a new computer printer, you'll need to make sure they have the cords required to connect it to the computer, regular and photo paper, and color and black and white ink.

If you don't suggest these items, they may arrive home and realize they do not have all the materials needed to use the product. They may choose to purchase those materials somewhere closer, cheaper, or more helpful.

Customer education is another form of up selling. What if your customer doesn't realize that you sell a variety of printer paper and stationery in addition to printers? Take every opportunity to educate your customer on the products and services you offer that may be of interest to them.

An effective way of implementing an up sell system into your business is simply by creating add-on checklists for the products or services you offer. Each item has a list of related items that your customer may need. This will encourage your staff to develop the habit of asking for the up sell.

Here are other up sell strategies that work well for our clients:

- **At the point of sale.** This is a great place for impulse items like candy, flashlights, nail files, etc.

- **Newsletter.** This is an effective strategy for customer education.
- **Merchandising.** Place strips of impulse items near related items. For example, paper clips with paper and pens near binders.
- **Over the phone.** If someone is placing an order for delivery, offer additional items in the same shipment for convenience.
- **New products.** Feature each new product or service that you offer prominently in your business, and ask your staff to mention it to every customer.

You're only as good as your Sales Team!

What Makes a Good Salesperson?

There are a lot of salespeople out there – but what qualities and skills make a great salesperson? These are the attributes you will want to find or develop in your team:

- Willingness to continually learn and improve sales skills
- Sincerity in relating to customers and providing solutions to their objectives
- An understanding of the company's big picture
- A communication style that is polite, and professional
- Honesty and respect for other team members, customers, as well as the competition.
- Ability to manage time
- Enthusiastic
- Inquisitive
- Ability to ask great questions
- A great listener
- Ability to quickly interpret, analyze, and respond to information during the sales process
- Ability to connect and develop trust with potential clients
- Professional appearance

Managing your Sales Team

In many businesses, sales is a department or a whole team of people who work together to generate leads and convert customers. Effective management of your sales team is a skill every business owner should cultivate. Teambuilding, recruitment, and training will be discussed in a later chapter, but take some time now to consider the following aspects of managing a sales team:

Communication

- How are targets and results regularly reviewed?
- What opportunities are provided for regular discussion?
- How well does your sales team understand what is expected of them?
- Do all sales team members know daily, weekly, and quarterly targets?

Performance Management

- How do you motivate them to reach targets?
- What rewards are provided when the targets are reached?
- What opportunities exist for skills training and development?
- How good is their product or industry knowledge?
- What career opportunities exist for growth within the company?
- How do you review and measure performance?

Operations

- How well do you understand your sales numbers (revenue, profit, margins)?
- How often are your sales processes reviewed?
- How many sales scripts exist?
- How do you measure conversion rates?
- How are your leads generated?

Sales Tools

Every salesperson should have an arsenal of tools on hand to assist them in the sales process. These tools can act as aids while a sale is taking place, or help to foster continual learning and development of their skills and approach.

The following list includes some popular sales tools. Add to this list with other resources that are specific to your business or industry.

Tool	Description + Benefit
Scripts	Used for incoming and outgoing telemarketing, cold calls, door-to-door sales, in-store sales Create several different scripts throughout your business Maintains consistency in your sales approach Revise and renew your scripts regularly
Presentation Materials	High-quality information about your product or service Forms: PowerPoint presentation, brochure, product sheets, proposal Serves as an outline of your sales presentation, and keeps you on task

Colleagues	<p>A source of help and advice, especially when you are on the same team or sell similar products</p> <p>Also a source of support</p>
Customer Databases	<p>An accurate, up-to-date database of customer contact information and contact history</p> <p>Used to stay in touch with clients</p> <p>Can also be used for direct mail and follow-up telemarketing</p>
The Internet	<p>A powerful resource for sales help and advice</p> <p>Information to help improve your sales process</p> <p>Online sales coaching</p> <p>Source for product knowledge</p>
Ongoing Training	<p>Constant improvement of your sales skills</p> <p>Constant increase in product knowledge</p> <p>Investment in yourself and your company</p>

8 Tips for Better Sales

- **Dress for the sale.** Dress professionally, appear well put together and maintain good hygiene. Ensure you are not only dressed professionally, but *appropriately*. Would your client feel more comfortable if you wore a suit, or jeans and blazer?
- **Speak their language.** Show you understand their industry or culture, and use phrases your customer understands. This may require researching industry jargon or common phrases. Doing so will help build the relationship.
- **Ooze positivity.** Show up or answer the phone with a smile, and leave your personal or business issues behind. Be enthusiastic about what you have to offer, and how that offering will benefit your customer. Reflect this in your voice and your body language.
- **Deliver a strong pitch or presentation.** Be confident and convincing. Leave self-doubt at the door, and walk in assuming the sale. Take time to explain complex concepts, and always connect what you're saying to your audience in a specific way.
- **Be a poster-child for good manners.** Listen intently, don't interrupt, be prompt, engage, and give everyone you are speaking to equal attention.

- **Avoid sensitive subjects.** You know what these are! Similarly avoid negative comments about other customers or the competition.
- **Create a real relationship.** Icebreakers are not just to pass the time before your presentation. They are how relationships get established. Show genuine interest in everything your customer has to say. Ask relevant questions about topics that interest them. Speak person to person, not salesperson to customer. Remember everything.
- **Know more than you need to.** Impress clients with your comprehensive knowledge – not only of your product or service – but also of the people who use that product or service, and industry trends. Be seen as an expert in order to build trust and respect.

...and finally those fundamental flaws!

Can you now see what we meant at the beginning of this chapter about the flaws in traditional Sales?

Most of what you see and hear in Sales today is out of date, which gives YOU a huge opportunity to start using what works in today's world!

Examine the way you currently conduct your Sales and use the tools in this chapter to create a tailored Sales Process that out-thinks and out-sells the competition!