

Is sales a dirty word?



Sharon Williams

In the modern world of business, it is useless to be a creative, original thinker unless you can also sell what you create. Management cannot be expected to recognise a good idea unless it is presented to them by a good salesman.

David M. Ogilvy.

It always amazes me how *sales* is almost a dirty word and salespeople are often looked down upon by the majority. It's almost fashionable to verbally slam the sales function. Sure, there are few *really* good salespeople out there (and it's a joy to see a good one in action) and sure, Sales has earned its low reputation from poorly targeted sales calls, naff sales approaches and badly prepared salespeople. But in spite of the sales role having such a poor brand, it is one of the most vital ingredients of business success.

The sales function deserves the respect, energy, training and scrutiny that you would give to your production, pest control, distribution or any other business function.

Most salespeople have no formal training, have no sales professional body to belong to, are given little time to learn their job and lack the skills to know what they need to ask for to be successful. This all occurs in what is arguably one of the most important roles in an organisation.

New staff members to Taurus are constantly surprised at my kindness to inbound telesales people. I'm not patient by nature but I choose not to be rude. I don't slam the phone down and I give them 30 seconds. If they can't convince me, I'll tell them politely why. If they are really good, I'll interview them, tell them to keep in touch or offer them a job.

Salespeople are there to sell

On the flip side, I am relatively unforgiving. Salespeople are there to sell and should be doing just that – their job is to bring in revenue – no excuses. We wouldn't keep the postman if he didn't deliver letters. Or the brickie who can't lay bricks. Salespeople should bring in revenue and build businesses. But I also advocate that it's up to business owners, business managers and their marketing departments

to do everything possible to grease the wheels of the sales process and arm salespeople with what they need to help the sell'.

So, what makes a good sales function? I believe successful sales are based on the following:

- Energy;
- The hunter mentality – the need to win;
- Empathy with your customers' situation and environment;
- Knowledge of your customers' pain' or needs;
- Having a solution that will meet their needs at a reasonable price;
- Being armed with the information you need to sell;
- The backing of a firm brand; and
- The ability to deliver on your promise.

Management and Marketing should support sales

It is the job of Marketing to grease the sales process and to arm Sales with the research, information, sales kit and clean database required to sell. In turn, Sales need to make the calls, take action, follow through and close the deals.

Management plays a huge role in defining a clear business plan complete with sales and marketing objectives which should provide clarity in understanding your target market and your customers' needs. But critical to your success will be the assistance of senior management to set a sales strategy with your customer specifically in mind, supported and backed by a brand that clearly and visually separates you from your competitors.

The importance of a good sales kit

At Taurus, we have great fun putting together our own sales kit and those for our customers. It's the fun and creative part of marketing. Your sales kit should be professionally produced, ready to impress. It should contain material that quite simply wows you, your customer and your prospect. It builds your brand and stands you apart from your competitors. It greases the wheels of the sales process, takes most of the effort out of selling and hopefully answers prospect questions before they are asked.

Your sales kit is evidence of your skill, success and capability and it should:

- Make it easy to show who you are;
- Make it easy to see what it is you do or sell;
- Demonstrate past successes and satisfied customers;
- Display different ways to communicate, e.g. visual, written, printed, photographic or multimedia;
- Shout awards and events;
- Prove, very simply, that you are experienced at what you do;
- Make you proud represent you and your business;
- Stand alone without you be able to be left as a leave-behind; and
- Be practical to carry, post or hand to someone.

Start by defining your brand values, e.g. are you traditional, professional, conservative, long established etc, and then have those values in mind when you create your sales kit. Your brand is the way the world perceives your business, your products and services and it is important your brand sits well with your core values, e.g. if you are warm and friendly, make it appear so; if you are selling strength and durability, make your brand represent that. Make sure your sales kit fits with the rest of your branding, e.g. website, labelling, t-shirts, letterhead etc. and reinforces it in a positive way.

It is a good idea to create and standardise templates for selling that can be used by others in the business. This way anyone can conduct sales in a consistent and professional way.

What should your sales kit contain?

- A folder or carrying medium;
- Company background;
- Staff or management biographies;
- Product or service information sheets;
- Testimonials;
- Case studies;
- Appropriate samples;
- A business card;
- Newspaper clippings (if you have any);
- Information on awards won;
- A giveaway (pen, bottle opener etc. if appropriate); and
- Links to demonstrations on the web.

Include case studies that convey your key messages and key values in a real and tangible way. Source positive testimonials on

your service or product to include in the kit. In the B2B industry, reference selling is the name of the game. Customer case studies, endorsements and positive testimonials cement your offering with definitive, positive proof.

How do you know when it is working?


You know your sales kit is working when people nod their heads, their questions are relevant or you are quite simply able to close the sale faster. When people reach for the brochures or photos you have placed on the table, you have usually caught their interest. Conversations tend to be shorter. If you feel it is appropriate you can ask for feedback on the materials; people are often forthcoming and like to be asked for their opinion.

Go on, give salespeople a chance

Take a moment next time you go to slam the phone down on an inbound sales call. The poor guy is just doing his job. If he's not doing it well, take a moment to pass on a constructive tip his next approach will only be better!

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