

The Myths of Selling

For more than a decade I have the opportunity to interact with thousands of salespeople and I have discovered a few myths that many of them have fallen prey to. Here are just a few.

1. Buyers are liars. I'm constantly amazed how many salespeople use this expression. Do people mislead salespeople? Absolutely. But this usually occurs when the sales person has failed to earn that person's trust. Gaining someone's trust means not pushing them into making a buying decision. It means focusing your attention on THEIR situation rather than trying to close the sale. Earning trust means treating people with respect and dignity even if they are not prepared to make a buying decision right now.
2. Anyone can be persuaded to buy. This may be true of impulse purchases but in today's business world, buyers are more savvy than ever before. I once heard someone say, "If you have a strong case you will clarify it. If you have a weak case, you will try and persuade the other person." The real key is to determine whether or not the person or company you are speaking to has a genuine need for your product or service. If they do not, then your best strategy is to move on to someone who does need AND want your particular solution. Even if a company could benefit from your product but they are reluctant to give you the opportunity to discuss, your time is better spent talking to other companies.
3. Price is the primary reason people make a buying decision. I will never dispute that price is a factor in the buying process but it is not usually the primary reason, unless, of course, you fail to establish the value of your products or services. If you don't clearly show how your solution will help your customer, price will become the default decision-making criteria.
4. A technique that works well for one person will work for everyone. Countless books have been written about one sales strategy or another and I have read many of them. In this search, I have discovered that we all have our unique personality and what works well for someone may not work as effectively for us. However, instead of discarding that particular idea you should look for a way to integrate it into your natural style and approach.
5. It's critical to close the sale as soon as possible. This is one of the craziest beliefs. Yes, it's important to move people towards a buying decision. Yes, it is important to gain commitments along the way. Yes, it is important to include a call to action in your proposals and conversations. But, it is also important to recognize that not every sales decision will be made quickly. Decisions can be delayed for a number of reasons, and

in certain situations, trying to rush the customer to a commitment will actually cost you the sale.

6. Close the deal at any price. Too many people feel they have to close every deal, even if it does not make good business sense to do so. I have spoken to countless sales people who will accept a deal that has virtually no margin just so they can get the sale. I recall talking to a store owner who quickly matched the prices of her competitor in order to prevent people from going to her competition. However, this seldom creates loyalty and only conditions that customer to continue asking for a better price. Decisions like this cost you or your company money. If you are not making your desired gross profit on a particular sale, then you need to consider whether it makes good business to accept it. I know small business owners who will offer substantial discounts to a large company in the hopes of generating additional business from that client in the future. Unfortunately, they end up giving away their services and expertise because they don't get any more business from that company. They neglected to negotiate an upfront agreement.
7. Do whatever it takes to get the sale. Manipulative, aggressive, high-pressure sales tactics work. But, they don't create loyal customers and clients. You may win the sale, but in the long run, you will lose the customer. I once had a participant in a workshop proudly state, "I don't care what my customer's want, I'll sell them what I need to hit my quota." Ouch! As a sales professional I take serious offense to this mentality and type of behavior.

Selling is an honorable career and sales professionals need to avoid falling prey to these myths. Focus on helping your customer make an educated buying decision. Concentrate on asking high-quality questions and positioning your solution appropriately and these myths will not affect you.

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