

The Rules of Selling

We live in a quick-fix society so it's no wonder that many salespeople look for the magic cure or band-aid solution to increase their sales. However, I believe that success in sales follows a basic set of rules.

Fill the pipeline. Many people experience tremendous peaks and valleys in their sales because they do not consistently prospect for new business. This frequently occurs when a sales person is busy. They neglect to prospect because it is the least enjoyable aspect of their job but when the sales drop or business with their current clients ends, they scramble to generate new business. Invest time filling your pipeline on a regular basis and you will seldom have to worry about reaching your targets.

Ask high-quality questions. I have written about this before but the vast majority of sales people (even seasoned pros) fail to ask their prospects and customers high-quality questions. This can happen because they have never been taught to ask questions or because they think that they do it. Unfortunately, failing to ask high-quality questions early in the sales process means they often mis-pitch their product, service or solution which causes the prospect to voice more objections. And once you ask a question...be quiet, wait for an answer. Too many sales people give their prospects answers to the questions or continue talking after the question has been asked.

Listen. I believe that the best salespeople are the best listeners. If you invest time asking great questions it is critical to listen to what the other person tells you. Many things can get in your way and prevent you from accurately hearing what has been said. Try this; at the end of a sales meeting, summarize your understanding of the conversation in your own words and check the accuracy of this summary with your prospect.

Focus your presentation. Make your presentation all about the customer. It's not about you, your company or your product. Virtually every sales presentation I have been subjected started with the sales person talking about their company; reciting stats about how long they have been in business, who they have as clients, etc. Adapting the presentation to meet the specific needs of each individual customer is what the top sales people do. Regardless of what your marketing department thinks people seldom care about your company. They want to know what problem your solution will solve. Avoid using unnecessary jargon or terminology. The simpler your presentation, the easier it is to understand.

Trust is essential. If people don't trust you chances are they won't buy from you. This is more challenging than it sounds because your prospects are inundated with calls and emails from other people all trying to sell them something. And, because of the less-than-honest

experiences decision-makers have encountered, they are more reluctant to trust someone they don't know. That means you need to demonstrate exactly why a prospect should trust you. You can't tell them; you must show them. You can do this by acting in a professional manner, treating the people at your prospect's company with respect and dignity, and respecting the time of your prospect.

Show value. The best way to demonstrate value is to show exactly how your solution will benefit your prospect. Contrary to popular belief this does not mean talking at great length about it or telling your prospect everything there is to know about your product or service. Showing value means discussing the aspects of your solution that are most relevant to each customer or prospect, in terms that are easy to understand.

Do what you say you will do when you said you would do it. Sounds simple, huh? Personal experience has taught me that sales people frequently say they will do something then fail to follow through on their commitment. This lack of attention to detail demonstrates a lack of respect and quickly leads to a loss of trust.

Know when to let go. I often talk to sales people who continue following a lead even when it is clear that a sale will not happen. This usually happens when their pipeline is not active with prospects. If you have done everything you can to move the sales process forward but it has ground to a halt you must consider whether it is the best use of your time to keep trying to make it happen. More often than not, it is not worth the time and effort. You have a finite amount of time in a day or week which means you need to focus your attention on leads and prospects who are interested in your product, service or solution.

Follow these rules of selling and you will notice an improvement in your results.

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Kelley Robertson, author of *The Secrets of Power Selling* helps sales professionals close more deals so they can reach their sales quotas and targets. Receive a FREE copy of *100 Ways to Increase Your Sales* by subscribing to his free newsletter at www.Fearless-Selling.com.



Kelley conducts workshops and speaks regularly at sales meetings and conferences. For information on his programs contact him at 905-633-7750 or Kelley@Fearless-Selling.ca.