

Quick...When I Say Salesmen What Comes to Mind?

When I ask most people that question the typical responses are a wrinkle of their nose and words like, pushy, intrusive, won't take no for an answer, an interruption, and even rude. It is a reaction born from experience and stereotypes. Just think of the last time you interacted with someone trying to sell you something. Was the experience a good one? Did you find yourself becoming defensive?

Salespeople who act in ways that make us uncomfortable have confronted us all. For example, there is the sales person that just would not leave you alone or tried to push you into buying something you didn't need. Not all of our experiences have been bad, but they are the ones we remember...and tell others about! The good experiences tend to be ones that feel right and you did not feel pressured into the purchase. The salesperson may have been very persuasive, but their style and approach did not leave you feeling pressured.

Many times, I find my clients struggling with the concept of truly selling in their business. They are concerned others will see their business in this same negative light. "If I'm just nice to my customers and give them a good product, then they will buy," is the common position many owners take.

But, here's the real shocker...we are all salespeople! That's right; we are all salespeople. We sell every day...in our personal life, with our spouse, kids, friends and others we meet, during our normal daily activities. In your business life, you are selling to your employees, co-workers, vendors, and yes, even with your customer.

You see, selling occurs anytime you are trying to persuade someone else. In fact, the most successful sales people are those who can talk to people, listen actively, and uncover their needs to reach agreement. Selling is actually a very positive activity and extremely important in every business. No business can survive if selling is not a key priority that is practiced and coached daily.

It is also critical to understand your sales numbers. Three areas you must focus on in order to improve your results are: your conversion of prospects into paying customers, the average amount each customer spends with you each time they make a purchase and how many times they buy from you. Let's take a quick look at each one.

Sales conversion rate – set up a simple process to measure the number of prospects your business generates and how many of them make a purchase. Your business already generates prospects so converting more of those prospects to paying customers is a low-cost way to increase revenues. This includes how many people contact your business through website visits, phone calls, personal visits, pro-active salesperson contacts, etc. Improve your conversion rate and your marketing efficiency increases making your business more profitable.

Average amount sold to each client – measure the average ticket size per sale in your business. Increasing this average through cross-selling and up-selling will increase revenues very cost effectively. Your average will increase by offering your prospects and clients additional services or adding value to their purchase. It goes without saying that this must be done ethically and be in the interest of the client. However, there are many ways to increase the average amount sold. Some of these include offering additional products or services, service agreements, or other valuable items that are in the best interest of the customer.

Number of times a customer buys from you – keeping your current customers coming back again and again is cheaper than finding new people to buy from you all the time. Build a base of loyal customers and keep them coming back to grow your business. Successful businesses know how to keep their customers coming back while also attracting new ones. Build customer loyalty programs, communicate with them on a regular basis, understand and meet their on-going needs and be sure to thank them for their business.

I define selling as “professionally helping others to buy.” Note the term professionally as that is a critical part of the process. It is not about being pushy, rude, aggressive, etc. It is about finding a need and showing the prospect how to meet the need through your business and its products...professionally.

Changing perceptions, either yours or those of your team, about what selling is and how to do it will help you grow your business revenue and even more importantly your profits.

Now go sell, sell, sell...professionally!

To your success,
Dennis