



Listening for More Sales

Salespeople love to talk. And most are good at it. Most salespeople are people oriented and outgoing. These qualities allow them to build rapport and close sales. But the same friendly qualities can turn some customers off and cause lost sales. Many salespeople fail to recognize that it's more important to listen than to talk.

Becoming better listeners is something all salespeople can work to achieve. Here are 10 reasons why many salespeople tend to talk too much.

1. False assumptions

Some salespeople really believe that telling is selling. They think that the more they tell (talk) the more they sell. To change this assumption, ask your salespeople to develop a list of the disadvantages of excessive talking during the sale and another list of effective ways to persuade people other than talking. Then, ask them to share and discuss their lists at your next store meeting

2. High stress

People who are under stress tend to talk faster and longer. There's plenty of stress to go around in this business. Stress can cause salespeople to fall back on old habits. Look for ways you and your salespeople can reduce stress throughout the day.

3. The "Keep-on-Selling" syndrome

After the customer has said "yes" and the sale is closed, salespeople relieved and may want the customer to know how much they appreciate the sale. Since the pressure is off, they may think they can socialize a bit (talk, talk, talk). What may happen? The customer is also relaxed and with the additional time may experience buyer's remorse, putting the sale is up in the air again. Try this, train your salespeople to: Close the sale and close their mouth. Most Customers are pressed for time and once they've made a decision they want to move the process along.

4. Nervousness

Everyone gets nervous from time to time. When it happens, the natural reaction may be to start babbling about all sorts of things, relevant and irrelevant. One strategy to deal with this is to stop, ask the customer a question, and shut up. Ask your salespeople to develop two or three key questions in advance of greeting a customer that will give your customer a chance to do the talking. This break will help the salesperson calm down and regain control over the sales process.

5. Insensitivity

Sometimes salespeople fail to watch the customer's body language and miss both the buying and non-buying signals. How many times does the customer have to look at the time before a salesperson gets the idea that they are taking too long? How many times do your customers have to say that they are ready to buy before they get up to the counter? Encourage everyone on your staff to be aware of and appreciate both nonverbal and verbal selling cues.



6. Lack of curiosity

The less interested someone is in the other person the more likely they will talk about what interests them most. A really curious salesperson will never run out of questions. A sincere interest in the customer will go a long way toward limiting excessive talking. Remember that customers don't care how much a salesperson knows until they know how much they care.

7. Selfishness

A salesperson whose primary objective it is to earn a commission will have a tendency to say whatever the customer wants to hear to get them to sign on the dotted line. Selfishness creates commission breath. Once your customer's sense what this fast-talking, self-serving salesperson is trying to accomplish, they'll leave them talking to themselves.

8. Ego

Excessive talking about the product or service is less troublesome than excessive talking about oneself. No matter how interesting a salesperson may think they are, chances are that customers simply don't care. Ask your salespeople watch their customer's eyes. When they find that the lights are on but no one's home, it's time to shut up and move on to something the customer cares about.

9. Poor preparation

When a salesperson doesn't know what to say, they tend to talk too much. Lack of preparation creates nervousness. Nervous energy creates a greater urge to talk. Prepare for your salespeople, make sure they know what you want them to say and know what you want them to ask. Prior planning to listen prevents poor performance.

10. Poor qualifying skills

Many salespeople don't realize that the best way to control a sale is to ask questions and to listen. Encourage them to study how to "draw out" their customers. Have them prepare simple questions that quickly get to the point. If the conversation starts to "drift," they can repeat the question if the customer has failed to answer. Encourage your people to ask sharp questions and be sharp listeners. Ask them to write 5 or 6 qualifying questions, for each product category, on three-by-five cards. They can carry these cards with them and review them regularly. Test them from time to time by asking them to share their favorite questions with the rest of the sales staff.