



High Performance Selling

Advice, Tactics and Tools: The Complete Guide to Sales Success

by Terry Beck
Career Press © 2001
287 pages

Focus

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Take-Aways

- Successful salespeople know that customers won't come to them — They must seek out customers.
- Selling isn't the same as peddling.
- Selling is based on research, planning, organizing, understanding the customers and their needs, and building relationships.
- The customer's buying cycle is more important than your selling cycle.
- Guide the customer through his or her buying cycle.
- Forget the canned sales pitch.
- Don't create a salesperson personality. Be yourself.
- By solving your customer's problems, you make sales.
- Persistence can save a sale.
- Different types of customers care about different things.

Rating (10 is best)

Overall	Applicability	Innovation	Style
8	10	6	8

Review

High Performance Selling

Terry Beck's selling wisdom is practical and based in common sense. Many of the suggestions here pertain to the most basic of all sales traits: persistence. It's refreshing to hear a sales guru say simply that it's a salesman's basic job to make the call, and he has no one but himself to blame if he doesn't. The advice here is grounded in hard work: show initiative, do your homework, know your product, cater to your customer, be yourself and don't make phony pitches. More distinctively, Beck corrects a lot of myths that actually harm your ability to make a sale. Of course, if you're a weathered sales veteran this information is not exactly breaking news. But if you're always looking to sharpen up your skills — and in this day and age you should be — *getAbstract.com* recommends this well organized and conversational manual.

Abstract

What Is Selling?

Millions of unsuccessful sales people have one thing in common: They're not selling because they're waiting for the customers to come to them. Salespeople aren't the only ones who make this mistake. Plenty of people in other professions have this damaging attitude at work and in their personal lives. They're waiting for something — a big sale, a promotion, a larger house, a winning lottery ticket, a better job, a better life. Waiting gets you nowhere. Things don't come to you; you go out and make them happen. In sales, you must take the initiative and become proactive. Customers won't call you; you have to call them. Plenty of people who are classified as working in sales are not actually selling:

- Answering the phone and taking an order is not selling.
- Sitting by a cash register and smiling at customers is not selling.
- Showing your wares and haggling over price is not selling.
- Visiting a corporate client and telling them about your new “solutions” is not selling.

So, what is selling?

- Answering the phone and digging a little deeper.
- Walking away from the cash register and showing an interest in customers.
- Asking questions before showing anyone your product or service.

Selling is not the same as peddling. A seller asks questions and listens to the responses. A seller first understands a client's point of view and then makes statements that address that point of view. A peddler doesn't care about reaching an understanding; a peddler simply wants to push his own point of view. A seller wants to understand the client. A peddler wants the client to understand him. Salespeople succeed when they learn how to do the following:

- Research, plan, organize and make things happen.
- Capture someone's interest.
- Understand and influence people and build lasting relationships.
- Understand business issues and create or uncover business needs.
- Position yourself against the competition.

“You don't wait for the sale. The sale waits for you.”

“Dominating the conversation is not going to help you sell anything. Customers want to be heard. You should be talking less than your customers.”

“If it’s important customer information you’re after, ask your customer.”

“No day in the life of a professional salesperson ever looks like the one before, and it will look that much different again by the time tomorrow rolls around.”

“Don’t try to be tricky. Talk to your customers the way you would talk to anyone else.”

These skills also have a positive impact on other elements of your life, fostering growth and success by helping you deal with all kinds of people in difficult and challenging situations.

Cycles

The customer’s buying cycle is more important than your selling cycle. Forget about where you are in your selling cycle. The most important consideration is where your buyer is in his or her buying cycle. If you try to close when the client is still in the shopping or information-gathering part of the buying cycle, you will not make the sale. To make the sale, pay attention to your clients and guide them through their buying cycles. After all, customers are the ones who buy. You’re not the customer, so your cycle simply doesn’t matter.

The KISS Principle — Keep it short and simple — is essential in sales. Long-winded sales reps quickly annoy busy customers. Make it easy for clients to understand you; offer solutions that make sense to them. You can develop rapport without talking in circles, and you can make a sale without bombarding the client with a ton of information. Forget the canned sales pitch, that’s the kind of behavior that makes customers think of salespeople as cheesy. Talk to your customers as you would talk to anyone else. Don’t use sales jargon or tired catch phrases that people associate with pressure selling. Forget comments such as:

- “We’ve bought the whole shipment and are passing the savings on to you.”
- “This is a limited-time offer.”
- “I’ll have to talk to my manager about that.”
- “That’s funny, we’ve never had a problem with service before!”
- “It’s foolproof!”
- “Don’t worry about installation, it’s a no-brainer!”

You make sales by solving your clients’ problems. Your products are the answer to those problems, but that’s just the beginning. Service and price are also aspects of problem solving. Be creative with your problem solving and you will make more sales.

Persistence can turn a maybe into a yes, and even a no into a yes. But you must know when to be persistent and when not to. If a client has been giving you strong buying signals, but suddenly stops doing so, you can save the sale by being persistent and uncovering the reasons behind the wavering or sudden reversal of interest. Above all, be yourself. Display your own personality. Do not create a sales personality for yourself. People can see right through that sort of behavior and don’t want to deal with someone acting smooth or slick.

Customer Types

Since different types of customers care about different things, you must position your products or services according to how they will help each particular type of customer.

For example, when you sell to operations managers, remember they are always in react mode, since they deal with customer service. Consider what they contend with every day — the fires they have to put out — and how what you sell can help them fight their fires. When you sell to executives, remember that they are almost solely concerned with what is on their horizon. Their issues are connected to the future, and their success will be based on how well they can steer the ship. They care about current performance as

“There will be times when your persistence alone will make the difference between winning and losing.”

“We have all met people who exude self-confidence from every pore. As a customer, I feel much more at ease when I’m around confident salespeople because I have found that there is a strong correlation between confidence and competence.”

“Your appearance is important. But it’s not that important.”

it relates to their goals and objectives. Try to determine if anything is preventing them from meeting those goals and objectives, and what you can do about it.

Psychologically speaking, you have only two types of customers: the decision maker and the decision catalyst. The decision maker can decide to buy from you, but many people — decision catalysts — can influence that decision. Some catalysts are positive and can help you make a sale because they have something to gain. Some catalysts are negative, and are against you. They prefer your competitor, they don’t want to spend the money or they just don’t want to change.

Identify your decision maker, and then identify (by title if you don’t know names) who has the power to influence decision making. Try to identify the positive and negative decision catalysts. The decision maker may give you some of this information. Call these catalysts. Engage the positive ones to affirm that they’re on your side, and neutralize the negative catalysts by lessening their objections or winning them over. This takes plenty of homework and good communication skills, but without this crucial step, you may find yourself losing sales that you could’ve landed.

Problem Solving and Comfort Zones

Remember that a problem is only a problem when the customer thinks it’s a problem. Problems you identify don’t count. Only problems that the customers perceive will prompt them to make changes and to view your products or services as solutions to their problems.

Often, customers won’t buy because buying usually involves change. People hate change, even change for the better. People also like to stay in their comfort zone. The more things change, the more people are inclined to grab on to the few things that aren’t changing, even if those things don’t do them much good. Your customer’s comfort zone may be a major obstacle to sales. What you see as a solution, your customer sees as change — and that could spell trouble. Part of your job is changing your customers’ comfort zones, since customers who are comfy have little motivation to change.

To do this, you have to confront your customer’s comfort zone and make it uncomfortable. You can do this two ways:

1. Convince them that their comfort zone is more of a threat to their business than is the change you are proposing.
2. Convince them that you are, in fact, extending their comfort zone with the change you are proposing.

Follow-Up Rules

Your customers aren’t going to help you make sales. Customers often don’t return calls, but don’t let that worry you. It’s not the customer’s job to contact you; it’s your job to contact the customer. A customer’s failure to return a call doesn’t necessarily indicate a lack of interest in your product or service (although it could). Returning phone calls might seem like common business etiquette, but if you expect customers to return your calls, you’ll be disappointed and frustrated. Make that call again. You don’t want to miss a terrific sales opportunity simply because you misread the customer’s mindset as negative when you didn’t get a return call. Customers are busy and won’t necessarily place much importance on returning your (or anyone else’s) calls. They’ll figure that if it’s important, you’ll call back.

“Success is finding a way to make your customer win!”

“Some customers need you more than others.”

Remember these rules:

- Following up is your job.
- Don't ask your customers to follow up with you — they probably won't.
- If a customer says, “I'll call you,” suggest a contingency follow-up such as, “Great, but if you get tied up I'll call you on Friday afternoon. Is that a good time for you?”
- Avoid leaving voice mails, especially if you're in the early stages of the sale, when the customer doesn't know you that well.
- When leaving voice mail, keep your message short and stick to the point.
- If you do leave a voice mail or an e-mail, call back after a reasonable period of time.

People Skills

Selling simply is the process of people buying from other people. Use these observations about attitudes and behaviors to help guide your sales relationships:

- Everybody wants to win, so if your customers feel they're winning when they buy from you, you'll make the sale.
- People buy from people they trust.
- Every company has its politics. Find at least one supporter in the organization you're trying to sell to, someone who can help you navigate through the company politics.
- Some customers don't play fair. Stop calling on bad customers; focus on the good ones.
- Serve your customers and they'll remember you.
- Some customers need you more than others.
- What your product does isn't as important as the effect the product has on your customers' businesses. Communicate that effect directly to the customers.
- The cost of your customer's problem must be higher than the cost of the solution you're trying to sell.
- Your proposal will only work if it's written the way your customer wants it written.
- Manage the close through bite-sized commitments from the customer, ones that build up throughout the presentation.

About The Author

Terry Beck is a sales performance consultant who has worked with several *Fortune* 100 companies. He worked with Xerox Canada where he was National Sales Trainer and winner of the President's Club and Sales Rep of the Year awards. He lives in Wilmington, Delaware.

Buzz-Words

Buying cycle / Decision catalysts / Selling cycle