



HOW TO GET BEST RESULTS FROM YOUR SALES EFFORTS



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Synopsis

If you want to boost sales, you need to give your salespeople several opportunities to win, to be acknowledged, and to receive bonus for being a “super star”. Rather than just rewarding the top earning performers, reward the individual who closes the most deals, the person who brings in maximum new clients, and who grows revenues on existing accounts. Focus on three keys areas: alignment, motivation, performance, and you are sure to be a winner!

Your sales members are your company's delegates who represent your company to the world. They carry the future profits of your company, too burdened probably with sales quotas, targets to get into new territories, increase customer base and revenue inflows, and present a suitable image of your company. What you need to work on is a place from where the sales team can get motivation, direction, and performance support in the middle of these challenges.

Challenges faced by salespeople

Often salespeople fall into the trap of describing their products and services to their prospects. In this age of information overload, it's probable that your prospect already knows all about what you offer. Start by identifying the problems your prospects are facing. You can then frame the solutions you present in terms of their specific problems. This will make your prospect feel acknowledged and more likely to get excited about the value you offer.

1. Not asking the right questions to expose what concerns a buyer the most

It is important to know your buyer's need before you start selling to him. You will rarely find a buyer who places his requirements on a silver platter in front of you! So to reach the destination, you should know what to ask to construct the right bridge.

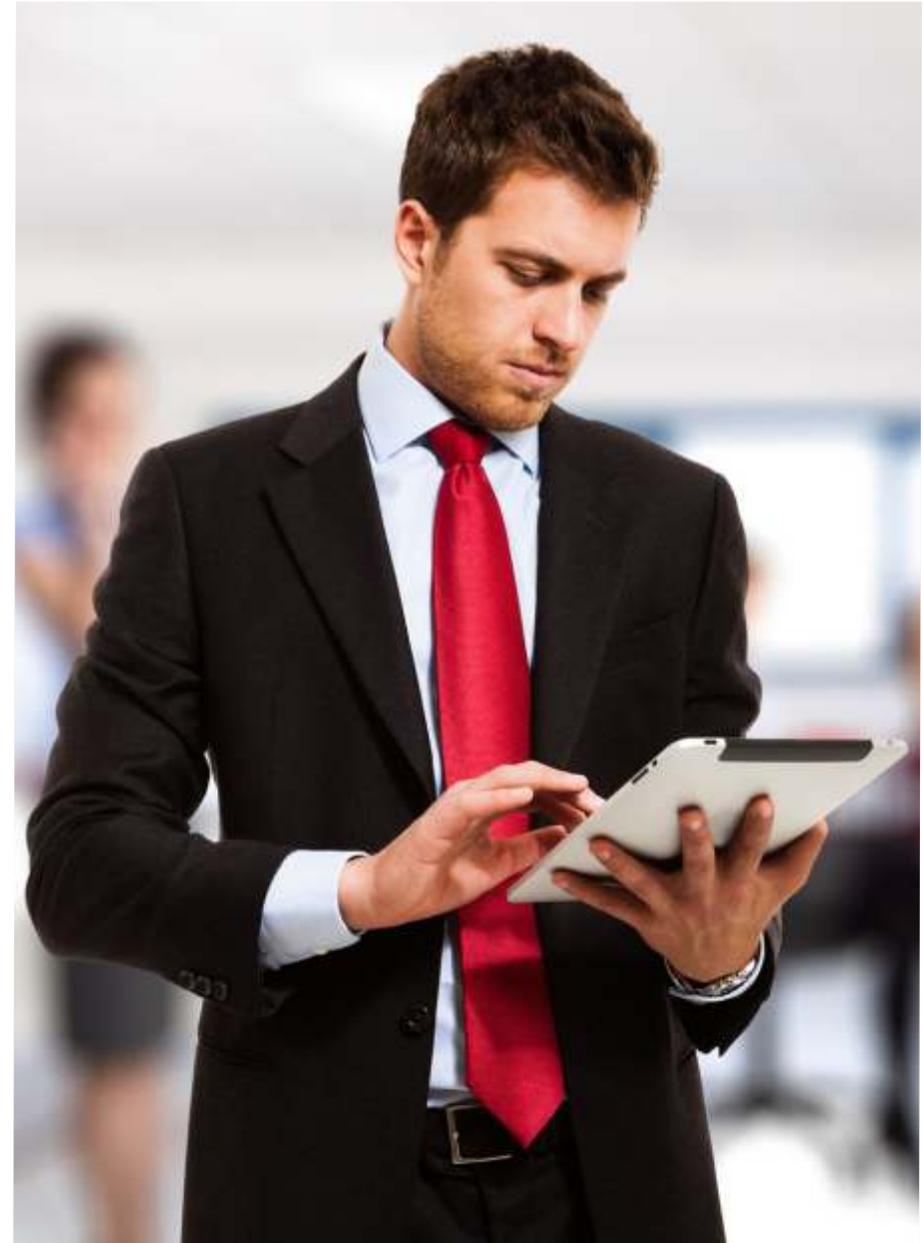
Here are the five typical areas buyers focus on, along with some of the queries they want answered before they buy a product or service:

- **What buyer says** - Who are you?
What they mean - Should I trust you as a person? Are you honest, credible and do you know what you are talking about?
- **What buyer says** - What does your organization do?
What they mean - Is your company a good fit for my firm? Does it have a reputation that aligns with what I expect from a provider?

- **What buyer says** – What does your product do?
What they mean - Will it create new opportunities for my business? Does it meet my requirements?
- **What buyer says** – What are your charges?
What they mean - Is it a good value and fair price, compared to the competitor's offering?
What is the return on investment? What are the payment terms?
- **What buyer says** – Why should I buy your product?
What they mean – I am half convinced that I should buy your product but can you convince me for the next half? What can you give me that your competitor cannot?

It takes four key skills to address each of these five areas effectively:

- A good research on your prospect
- Asking probing queries
- Active listening
- Building good relationship



2. Not having a proper follow-up process post a meeting

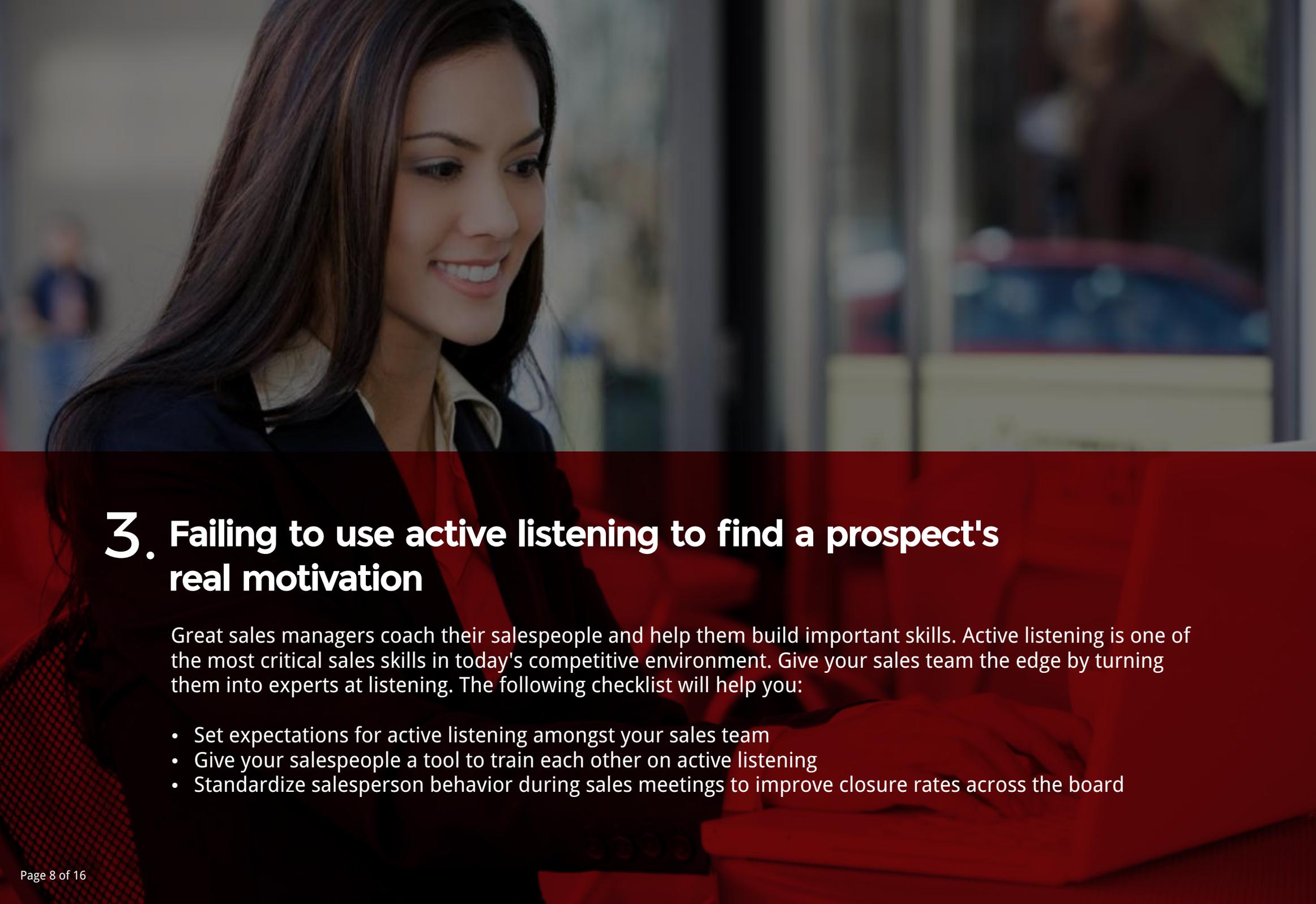
You crossed the biggest hurdle with the first meeting. Now it's your responsibility to ensure you do not mess it up by not conducting a proper follow-up.

Hence, a concrete follow-up plan and alternate plans should always be ready. The most effective follow-up emails add value and help lay out the road map for a successful relationship—and shorten the sales cycle.

- **Determine requirements:** Every good salesperson knows it is essential to listen to your prospects. This involves more than just listening, rather active listening for needs, problems, and concerns. Your minutes of meeting email is the first step to show that you have paid attention to the concerns of your prospect. Key issues discovered in the meeting should be shared in series of succinct, well-phrased bullet points. This will demonstrate to the prospect that you understand what they are looking to accomplish and why they need your help.
- **Engage the client:** The next step is to engage your client to make this relationship mutually beneficial. You should let the prospect know exactly what they are going to have to provide you so that you can begin helping them. Perhaps, they need to give you specific information or make themselves and others available for discussion before you can give them a budget, proposal, price quote, or other information necessary to move forward. Again, these bullets should be kept short and to the point.
- **Assume responsibility:** List down what you will do in response to the information that they have provided. This is an opportunity for you to show everyone concerned about your approach and your action plan.
- **List the desired outcomes:** This section lists the requirements for a successful deal to move forward. It might involve providing a scope of work, a product list, timeframes, or simply a list of next steps. In most cases, this information will be repeated for many of your deals. Therefore, much of this section can be simply copied from one email to the next.

Overall, the document should be concise and informal. There is a good chance that your prospect or others on your team will recommend quite a few changes to the document during the lifecycle of the sale. As you get better with practice, you will find it easier to summarize key concerns and identify specific actions that you and your prospect will take as you go through the qualification process.



A woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark blazer over a light-colored collared shirt, is smiling and looking towards the right. She is sitting at a desk with a laptop. The background is a blurred office environment. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red rectangle that contains the text.

3. Failing to use active listening to find a prospect's real motivation

Great sales managers coach their salespeople and help them build important skills. Active listening is one of the most critical sales skills in today's competitive environment. Give your sales team the edge by turning them into experts at listening. The following checklist will help you:

- Set expectations for active listening amongst your sales team
- Give your salespeople a tool to train each other on active listening
- Standardize salesperson behavior during sales meetings to improve closure rates across the board

4. Failing to do key selling exercises on a routine basis

Do you know the single most important behavior a salesperson can engage in, to become a better seller? Practice.

- **Identifying killer problems:** In order to be a problem-solving machine, you must also become a problem-finding machine. Developing your ability to uncover, recognize, or breath out problems will be critical to your success in sales. Keep in mind that your product or service is the second best only for a few very specific problems. Match up your company's features and benefits with the problems you solve, and you will have a list of common problems your customers face that you can learn to listen for during sales meetings.
- **Asking the right questions:** Coming into a sales meeting with a few truly excellent questions will set you apart from the pack in your prospect's eyes. Great questions show professionalism, preparation, and deep knowledge of your product and your prospect. Start with the list of common problems you have been working on. Match these problems with key questions to uncover the pain that the problem is causing.
- **Telling great stories:** Human beings are wired for stories. Stories have been used throughout human history to communicate, entertain, educate, and persuade—and they are a salesperson's greatest tool in building rapport and demonstrating value to a prospect. Top salespeople have great stories to tell and know how to connect them to their products and services and to the problems they solve for customers. Take some time to write down as many great success stories as you can. Then start practicing—tell them in different ways, with different terms and important points so you can fit your story to your audience. You could also practice with a coworker and get their feedback to continue to improve.

Set some time aside to build your skills in each of these three areas. Identify where you are weak and keep working on that area until you feel confident in your abilities.

5. Not using internal systems, such as CRM, to effectively manage the sales process

When you feel like you are bogged down by disorganized data, CRM is the answer.

- **Revive old opportunities:** The end of the year is a great time to look back at opportunities you have lost and see which ones might be revived. If you have been tracking the reason you lost opportunities, take a look at those which were lost due to competition. A friendly note that you are thinking about them might reveal that they are unhappy with your competitor and are looking for a change! If you lost the opportunity due to price, their financial situation may have changed. These old prospects probably remember who you are and what you do.
- **Review old leads:** This is also a great time to scan through your old leads. You never know which ones slipped through the cracks! If possible, run reports of all open leads, grouped by the month they were created. The grouping can help spark memories of specific people you met, and you might just think of a reason to call.
- **Wipe the slate:** Take the New Year as an opportunity to start fresh. Is there an opportunity you have been hanging on to, that is never going to close? As you wind this year down, clear some of that from your priority list so you can start the New Year with a fresh focus.

Ways to improve the efficiency of your sales team are

- **Train them properly, reinforce the training, and observe them**

Great training is ineffective without reinforcement and you must make your reps practice, rehearse, and then make sure they are actually doing it. It takes time and effort but that's what the sales manager gets paid the big bucks for!

- **Motivation**

If you keep them motivated, they feel valued. In order to let them know you truly value them and their opinion, it's important to ask for and appreciate their input. What motivates them? What is the goal they are working for? Know these things, and your team will know how much their success means to you and the company.



- **Know and work with the personality style of each team member**

One of the key characteristics of a great team is being able to leverage their strengths. Great teams know who has what strengths and they know how to leverage those strengths in order to achieve maximum team efficiency. Those with strong organization skills, know how to put in place the best sales process for selling and delivering solutions. Those that have the strength of problem solving and innovation, can craft the best solution for the customer. Those that have the strength of persuasion, can leverage their ability to beat the competition. And those that have great relationship skills and the ability to build trust, can win the customer. Each personality style makes decisions differently, communicates according to their style, and is motivated when their strengths are leveraged by their peers and superiors. When a team knows each individual member's personality, they know how to effectively communicate and work to maximize team performance.

- **Run your sales department as strictly as possible**

Set working hours, have a dress code, and hold them accountable for everything they do. That will create a more professional atmosphere. Your salespeople will feel much better about the company they sell for, and therefore will be more efficient.

- **Streamline reporting**

Demanding too many reports from your team takes up valuable time that can be used for business development. It is the management's job to put their team in the best possible place. All you need to know is: how much business is pending, what chance it has to close, and what management may do to move the process. This can usually be accomplished with a spreadsheet and a 30-60 minute meeting once a week.

- **Implement a sales management rhythm**

A sales management rhythm is simply a plan that outlines the formal and informal interactions that sales managers and their employees engage in, to achieve sales goals. It defines what interactions should take place, who should be included, how frequently the interactions should take place, as well as the duration and purpose of the interactions.

- **Set specific goals and follow-up**

If the goals are not met, then the sales team does not have direction. If there is no follow-up and accountability then they will not strive to reach those goals. With reachable goals and accountability along the way, the efficiency of a sales team is drastically improved. Improving the efficiency of a sales team can come in many forms: improving productivity and minimizing distractions, expanding on sales training, and providing your team with all the tools they need to educate their prospects and move them along the pipeline.

- **Not more leads, but better leads**

More leads might mean the reps are calling prospects who aren't ready to buy. Their dials and talk time might increase, but their conversion rates will suffer. Many sales organizations see dramatic increase in productivity and output by delivering fewer leads to the sales team, but ensuring that those leads are qualified and ready for the conversation.

- **Eliminate as many options as possible and create very specific path to follow**

The more structured your sales people are and sales process is, the more efficient your sales team will be. The structure will only work if the management is making sure that these paths are being followed. People will respect what you inspect so you must have a team leader or manager actively involved ensuring the team stays within the guidelines that you set.

- **Ensure that your sales team truly understands the product**

An efficient sales team knows their product inside and out. Your sales team needs to be able to discuss every aspect of the product they are selling without sounding like a robot. When a sales team can speak confidently about what they are selling, it builds trust and credibility. Sales is a tough game and you must be prepared. Potential customers and prospects are going to have some very specific questions, and unless answered correctly, they will find another solution. Spend time educating your sales team about what you are selling. When the sales team fully understands what they are selling and why it benefits the purchaser, it allows them to speak to the prospect on a much more personal level. This type of interaction builds relationships and closes more deals.

How to improve your sales

The ability to sell someone something—whether it's a product, a service, or an idea—is the fundamental skill of many jobs in the business world. When it comes to closing a sale, it's not all about smooth-talking. It's just as important to be able to think critically and to intelligently apply effective sales techniques.

Part 1: Interacting with a customer

- **Delight your customer:** Above everything else, try to keep your customer happy and satisfied. Be friendly, charming, and open with your customer. Whatever your customer is looking for, that's what you should try to provide. This applies both to your conduct and to the thing being sold. You should do your best to convince the customer that whatever you're selling will give him exactly what he wants.
- **Give your full attention:** When a customer is considering making a purchase, you want to give the impression that you're available to fulfill any needs or answer any queries that may arise. Whenever possible, interact with customers on a personal, one-to-one basis, returning to your other duties only when the job is done. When you've gotten a sale, you can back off somewhat and allow your customer some breathing room. Most customers will eventually want to be left alone.
- **Build relationships with your customers:** Building happy, respectful relationships with customers is a great way to give yourself a long-term sales boost. After making a major sale, consider sending a quick note or making a phone call to make sure your customer's enjoying his or her purchase. This can give the impression of a friendly, personal relationship.

Part 2: Using Sales Techniques

- **Don't rush a sale:** Customers don't like the idea that they're being tricked, so sales tactics that rely too heavily on making fast, high-pressure pitches can build hostility. Even if these tactics result in short-term sales gains, negative word-of-mouth can cause long-term downturns and tarnish your image. The smartest salespeople present convincing pitches to the customer, then let the customer decide to buy the product, rather than pushing them to do it. While good salespeople do everything in their power to play up their product's benefits and minimize its downsides, they never attempt to actually make the decision for the customer.
- **Be responsible and reliable:** Try your best to have personal integrity. When you make a promise to a customer, deliver on it. When you make a mistake, offer a sincere apology. Respect is at the center of any sales transaction. Customers want to respect a salesperson enough to be confident that they won't be conned; salespeople want to respect customers enough to assume that they'll get a good review for their hard work; and businesses want to respect customers enough to assume that they'll be paid for services rendered.

Investing in your salespeople—helping them develop and improve their skills and abilities—is an investment that pays an ongoing dividend of increased performance. Remember, your job is to serve the salespeople on your team and equip them with the tools, training and mentoring they need to succeed. Do this consistently, and you will be pleased with their results and your own.



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