

100 Ways To Improve Your Sales Success

Some Great Tips To Boost Your Sales





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What makes a successful salesperson? I am often asked the question and it seems to me it comes down to several things:

- Attitude
- Skills
- Knowledge
- Hard work

The best salespeople expect to succeed. They always see the glass as being half full, not half empty. They have excellent communication skills and really care about their clients. They see selling as a problem solving process where their role is to help their customers and build solid, long term relationships.

They know about their products and their market. Also, they work hard, especially when times are tough.

I was challenged to come up with the 100 ways to improve sales results and here they are. You will notice they are all simple, practical and sensible. Sales is not Rocket Science. The basic principles are what matter and like the top sports people, the high performers in sales are successful because they understand and put into practice, the basic skills.

100 ways to improve your sales success

1. Begin with your attitude. The best salespeople think positively. Beware of negative thoughts. Thoughts like, "I could never do that" and "What if I fail?" can seriously impact the way you behave
2. When top salespeople catch themselves thinking a pessimistic thought about their situation they evaluate the evidence. What are the facts--not the fears--but the facts?
3. The best salespeople are aware of the importance of the image they present to clients. Invest in the way you look. You don't want to be perceived as just another rep!
4. Read a serious newspaper at least once a week. Be aware of current affairs so you can have a sensible conversation on any topic. This was one of the best bits of advice I was given as a young salesperson
5. Use the internet. Find out about your clients future plans. Keep up with technology. It's the way the world is going
6. Don't use high pressure selling techniques on your customers. They don't work. Treat your customers as you would want to be treated
7. Develop a style of selling that is relaxed and friendly, while still being professional
8. Never sell anything to a customer that they don't need, or can't afford
9. Set yourself goals. The most successful salespeople have clear goals and can tell you what they are
10. Set SMART goals. Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound
11. Read books on selling. Invest in your own long term development
12. Put together a sales plan.
13. Discuss your sales plan with your manager. Use your manager as a resource
14. Find out the long term aims and goals of your company. Where do you see yourself going in the next 3, 5 10 years. Set yourself a career plan

15. Find a mentor. This is someone who is already successful, either in your organisation, or elsewhere. This is someone you can talk to and who can give you the benefit of their experience
16. Solve problems in your own organisation. Most people just sit back and complain. Come up with solutions. You never know, they may promote you!!
17. Get the right balance between work and the rest of your life. Take care of your health and fitness
18. Learn new skills that may not directly contribute to your job. Learn a language, or attend a night class. The brain is a muscle that needs to be kept active
19. Network. There are lots of organisations that business people join to do well and to meet similar people from different industries. Do a Google search for UK business networking sites, or speak with your local Chamber of Commerce, or Round Table
20. Think. Set aside some thinking time to review progress and the direction you are going in. Most people say they are too busy, but it is a useful exercise
21. Find someone who is already successful and mirror what they do
22. Plan to hit your target. Break your overall target down so that it becomes more achievable. If you have a target of £250,000 a year this makes no sense. If, by breaking it down you estimate you need to make 10 sales visits a week, this becomes more achievable
23. Manage your pipeline. We only convert a percentage of potential customers into actual customers. Plan prospecting activity into your schedule. Keep topping up the pipeline
24. Analyse your customer profile. Who buys from me? Where are they based? What is the best way to identify and contact potential customers?
25. What is happening in your market? Set yourself short, medium and long term goals that reflect the way the market is changing
26. Prospecting. Put together your hit list of prospective customers; targeted at people most likely to buy your products or services. Keep the list manageable. If you are going to contact 50 people a week every 4 weeks, you need 200 prospects. Quality is better than quantity
27. Keep targeting them. Most people don't buy first time, especially if you are selling the idea of an appointment to meet you.

28. Set aside time for prospecting. It works best if it is, say, every Monday morning, or whatever day you prefer. The key is making it every week without fail. This is what the top salespeople do

29. If you are phoning your prospects write yourself a script and practise it with colleagues. When preparing a script always follow a statement with a question. This keeps you in control. "We specialise in sales and management training. Is this something you have purchased in the past?"

30. Disqualify poor quality prospects. This keeps your prospect list fresh and full of the kind of people that you really should be doing business with

31. Understand that prospecting is a numbers game. Set yourself targets for the number of people you contact each week and stick to it

32. E-mail is a great way of prospecting. It takes less time and can be very effective. Send information, or free stuff which will add value even if they don't buy. When they are ready to buy you will be at the top of their list

33. Keep accurate records of your prospecting. This is what the top salespeople do

34. When you write your sales plan begin by defining your objectives. What do you want to achieve over a defined period. Write your objectives down and make sure they are SMART

35. Remember the Pareto Principle. 80% of our business comes from 20% of our customer base. Focus first on existing business. How to keep it and grow it. Most lost business happens as a result of neglect. Build into your plan a strategy for your existing customers

36. Key ratios are another issue. This is about using historical data to plan forward. Measure everything. If your target is to book 5 appointments and you know that, historically, you have had to make an average of 6 telephone calls to get an appointment in the past, you need to prepare 30 prospects. The ratios don't always work every time, but do work over time

37. Top salespeople measure everything. If it can't be measured it can't be managed.

38. Lead times. Understand that sales activity today will generally lead to results in weeks or even months ahead. Even when you are doing well you need to be planning for future results. If you want more information on lead times send me an e-mail and I will send you a more detailed analysis

39. Keep reviewing your market. What is changing? What will the market look like in 3 years time? What can you are doing now to stay ahead of the game?

40. What resources are available to you to help you sell more? This could be anything from a lap top computer, to an opportunity to receive some training, or a sales manager who has lots of experience that you can tap into. Seek out opportunities to help you sell more

41. If you are booking appointments by phone, begin by putting together a good telephone script.

42. If you are cold calling, why not try a 3 stage process that professional telemarketing companies use. Phone call-mailshot-phone call. This approach pre warns the potential customer they are about to receive information and checks out that they are the right contact. Information is then sent out with a follow up phone call to book the appointment

43. When you call someone for the first time think about how you are going to introduce yourself. I like to give my first name then my full name. "Hello this is Sean. Sean McPheat from the Sales Training Consultancy. How can I help you?"

44. Speak slower. We say our names 3 times faster than other bits of information. If you sound relaxed it will relax your customer

45. Sell the appointment. Don't say that you are in the area next week and would like to pop in for half an hour. These people are busy. What have you got to talk about? Is it worth 30 minutes of their valuable time? What's in it for them?

46. People will naturally try to say no, unless you have struck lucky and rung at exactly the right time. Give them time to explore the issues you want to discuss. Minimise the risk of agreeing to an appointment, but sell the benefits to them. "I feel confident that if you are able to give me 20 minutes of your time you will be much better informed about the changes in legislation that will be taking place over the next 6 months"

47. Deal with objections in a positive way. Most people will say no. That's a fact. Look for the longer term. Send information. Agree a call back. Don't beat them up in order to gain a short term advantage. If they want to think, that's okay. Just make sure you agree the next steps once they have done their thinking

48. Practise dealing with the most common objections with your colleagues. There are relatively few objections. Two things to remember. Don't interrupt and don't attack your customer's belief system.

49. For more information on dealing with objections go to our website and

download free materials. There is an article on objection handling

50. If you are sending out information don't leave it too long before following it up. First class post takes no more than 2 to 3 days. A fax or e-mail arrives very quickly. Follow up once you feel they have had a chance to read the information. Don't leave it 3 weeks!

51. When asking for the appointment, ask for a specific time and day. This way you are in control of your diary. Go for an early appointment. This frees up time in your diary for later in the day

52. Confirm the appointment by e-mail. Remind them about the reason for the appointment and send an agenda for the meeting if appropriate

53. Once you have confirmed the appointment begin your planning and preparation for the meeting. Things you need to consider are your objectives, your agenda, the questions you need to ask, visual aids and finally your attitude.

54. Set objectives for the meeting that is ambitious, but realistic. Have more than one objective. "If I don't make a sale, what else could I achieve from the meeting?"

55. Prepare your questions in advance. Areas you need to cover, especially at a first meeting are: contact (the person I am meeting with), organisation (their business), decision making processes (how they make decisions, who gets involved and their timescales), current suppliers (who they buy from at the moment), competition (who else are they talking to?), problems (what issues are they facing at the moment?), needs (what are they looking for from us?) finance (what financial issues are appropriate?)

56. Building rapport. It is necessary to have some social time before we get down to business. The amount of time we spend here should be led by the customer. Different cultures have different ideas about this subject. For my views, why not send me an e-mail and we can discuss

57. Agenda. Once you have settled down reaffirm the purpose of the meeting. Here is an example: "Thank you for seeing me today Mr. Smith. As you know my name is John Smith from Toyota. I'm sure you are aware that at Toyota we have a wide range of cars in our portfolio with lots of different options. In order to see whether any of these might be of interest to you, I need to begin by asking you a few questions. Would that be okay? "

58. The agenda statement is designed to achieve 2 objectives. To get control of the meeting and to earn the right to ask questions

59. It gives the customer the chance to contribute to the meeting. The first

question we recommend is this: "Is there anything specific that you would like to talk about at this meeting?"

60. Relax. At this stage the customer is trying to work out if there is something in this for them. Try to avoid presenting too quickly. Ask questions. Get them talking about themselves and their business. People like to talk about themselves. Encourage this

61. Ask open questions early on in the meeting. Examples of open questions: How did you first hear about us? What made you decide to invest in a Personal Pension? Tell me, what is the best time for us to call and see you? Who else would benefit from being at our meeting?

62. Closed questions give us specific information. Examples of closed questions: Did you remember receiving our literature? How old are you? Do you still live at 25 London Road?

63. Follow up questions explore areas in more depth. Examples of follow up questions: So, you changed suppliers last year. Why was that? You say you weren't happy with the service. What happened? You mentioned efficiency. How important is that to you? Why?

64. Plan and prepare your questions in advance. Work out which questions have the biggest payoff for your particular business

65. Make your questions more effective by using prefacing techniques. Examples are: May I ask you.....? Could you tell me.....? I would be interested to know.....? Can we establish when.....? These phrases can make your questions more acceptable

66. Label sensitive questions by introducing them. This eliminates surprise and sounds more professional. Here is an example: "When people review their IT solutions it often involves different departments. This being the case, would this be your decision, or would you be consulting

with other departments in the organisation?"

67. Linking questions. Another way to get acceptance for questions is to refer back to a previous statement made by the customer. Here are some examples: You mentioned before that you work at ABC Limited. Do they use these products as part of their manufacturing process? You said that your company is expanding. How are you going to manage the extra volume of information being processed by your accounts department?

68. When you ask questions you will get answers. We often hear buying signals. One example could be a customer saying something like: "I have had a few problems with deliveries from my current supplier" Most salespeople respond by

presenting information. Resist the temptation and ask more questions

69. Listening is an important skill in selling. Practise your listening skills. Use a range of verbal and non-verbal techniques. Show you are interested, but try not to interrupt

70. Verbal listening skills. Asking questions, summarising and responding by making appropriate noises.

71. Non-verbal listening skills. These are the signals that show we are listening. These include eye contact, smiling, nodding, making notes, looking relaxed and making notes

72. The main learning point here is don't interrupt!

73. When we ask questions we are looking to identify certain things; Facts, opinions, needs, problems, and feelings. Sales are an emotional process. The sequence of our questions is the key to sales success and building rapport. There is some free information on asking questions and listening on our website www.salestraining.co.uk

74. When people buy things they have buying criteria. Usually there are 2 or 3 reasons for buying which are really important. Think about major purchases you have made in your life. What were the really important issues that influenced your decision to buy? These are your buying criteria

75. People have logical and emotional buying needs. Logical needs include issues surrounding finance, image and performance

76. Finance needs include value for money, return on investment and profitability

77. Image needs relate to how things look, the value of branding and the benefits from buying a recognised brand

78. Performance issues relate to productivity, efficiency and measurable standards of performance

79. Emotional needs relate to how people buy on a personal level. This means that some people buy quickly, some slowly, some like to consult with others, some like to compare alternatives and some like to make buying decisions after having done a lot of research

80. Emotional needs include power, achievement, order, safety, affiliation and recognition.

81. Emotional needs influence the speed of decision making and the amount of information people need before making a buying decision

82. When presenting information we need to focus on the issues which are really important to our client. People don't buy lots of features. They have a preferred set of features that are important to them.

83. Common features we hear are things like: "We are the market leader", "We give a great service", "You have a dedicated account manager", "We spend 20% Of our turnover on new product development". Many customers respond by saying "So what?"

84. We need to talk about advantages. "Because you have a dedicated account manager you can call and speak with a named person who understands your business" This is becoming more persuasive

85. Benefits relate to our emotional buying behaviour. People like to hear words like reassurance, confidence, reassurance and peace of mind. "Because you have a dedicated account manager you can be confident you have someone to talk to if a problem arises"

86. Practise your presentations. Role play with colleagues to make them really professional

87. Every presentation you make to your clients should be different. Every buying decision is unique. By asking questions and listening we can make our presentations totally relevant to the needs of each customer

88. Presenting price. Look and sound confident when presenting your price. Here are some tips for dealing with price: Make eye contact, be specific, and present the actual price with confidence.

89. Closing the sale. 70% of salespeople don't ask for an order, or commitment. They lack confidence. Don't be afraid to ask for the order. What is the worst thing that can happen?

90. At the time of closing the salesperson fears rejection and the buyer worries about making a mistake. The role of the salesperson is to ask for the order.

91. Don't worry about closing techniques. The only close I use is the direct close. At the appropriate time I ask: "Would you like to go ahead?" There are only 3 answers. Yes, no, or maybe. The worst response is "No"

92. Accept rejection. It is very frustrating, but is a part of selling.

93. Negotiation. "A process of bargaining by which agreement is reached

between 2, or more parties” Salespeople fear negotiations because they entail risk. We need to become more assertive and defend our pricing structure

94. Don't worry about being liked. If you have a good working relationship with your customers it can handle a bit of conflict from time to time.

95. Prepare well for your negotiations. I have some good ideas which you can have for free.

96. Preparation should include identifying objectives, information, concessions, strategy and tasks. The better we prepare, the better results we achieve

97. Look out for negotiating tactics. These are many and varied. E-mail me for more details

98. Most of what gets given away in negotiation is given away in the last 5% of the time. Be careful during the closing stages

99. Always congratulate the other side when agreement has been reached. Don't tell them they could have done better. It's not what they want to hear.

100. Finally, enjoy yourself. Selling has got to be the best job in the world.