



Closing the Sale by Building Relationships with Customers

eBook



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Dale Carnegie said, “So if you aspire to be a good conversationalist, be an attentive listener. To be interesting, be interested. Ask questions that other persons will enjoy answering.”

It's your first meeting with a new prospect. You're excited to share all your new products and services, and you're certain that they will love everything that you have to offer. You've prepared a powerful presentation that showcases you, your company and your products. And you're poised and ready with a sales order form, determined to close a sale. CUT! Hold it right there!

You cannot prepare a customized presentation for a client without first asking open-ended questions and then actively listening to their answers. Your first meeting with a new client is the time for you to probe, and to discover and consider solutions (in your head) to their particular concerns. People like to talk. LET THEM.

Clients today are prepared. They've already been on your website. They've seen your products, your promotions and your customer reviews. They've been on your competitor's websites too, offering the same products for the same prices. But savvy sales executives are doing something that the Internet cannot do. They are building relationships. They are committed to the success of their client. They understand that enduring partnerships are the key to positive outcomes for all. A lasting business relationship is built one conversation at a time, and it all begins with attentive listening.

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Thousands of salespeople are pounding the pavements today, tired, discouraged and underpaid. Why? Because they are always thinking only of what they want. They don't realize that neither you nor I want to buy anything. If we did, we would go out and buy it.”

- Dale Carnegie



5 Steps to Building the Customer Relationship

Dale Carnegie Training is the leader in developing sales professionals that leverage relationship selling to exceed quotas, expand deals, and develop a reliable and sustainable pipeline of business.

1 Create Value

Customers want to know what you can do for them, either by solving their problems or helping them capitalize on new opportunities. To give value, you must first understand what your customers truly want. This involves active listening and questioning as stated before, but it also requires research. Once your research is completed, you should try to view things from the customer's perspective. That will help you determine where you can provide the most value. Whether you are matching the right service or adjusting an approach to meet a client preference, you should always ask yourself, "How am I providing value to the customer?"

2 Facts and Benefits

Facts and benefits are one way to provide value. However, many times sales professionals can rely too heavily on these. As part of your questioning, you should know if a customer has visited your website and reviewed your product or service. You should also vary your approach in the delivery of your product's or services. As Dale Carnegie said, "Merely stating a truth isn't enough. The truth has to be made vivid, interesting and dramatic." A great way to bring to life facts, benefits and ultimately your products solutions is to tell a story. It is much easier for your customer to retain benefits and solutions when you center them around a story. In the Dale Carnegie Sales Training program, we teach a quick and easy way to develop and deliver a story with confidence and ease.

When utilizing facts and demonstrating your organization's or product's value, remember that facts are specific, true, provable statements. And benefits are brief, clear descriptions of how customers could use and enjoy your solution or product. Sometimes you might need to back up your facts or statements with evidence. Always be prepared to do that.

3 Qualifying Questions

Be sure to handle qualifying questions with care. It is tempting to qualify the customer right away. It is important to not ask too many qualifying questions, up front or too early in the process, which can be off-putting to the potential buyer. That said, you don't want to waste your time or the customer's time on a product or solution that might not be the right fit. Take the client's perspective and frame your questions in a way that will help answer the customer's questions as well as answer your qualifying questions. This will reduce the amount of time spent setting appointments with people who are unlikely to buy or who don't have the authority.

Needs Analysis

Before you can offer your solution, you must discover what the customer truly needs. Ask questions and listen carefully to uncover the four needs areas.

- **Primary Interest:** They want to buy the results your solution provides: enhanced effectiveness, improved efficacy, safety, comfort and flexibility.
- **Buying Criteria:** If the buying criteria are not met, the sale will not advance: features, budget, approvals, support, location and quality.
- **Individual Motive:** The compelling emotional reason for the customer to make the buying decision: relationships, recognition, self-fulfillment, self-preservation and power.
- **Risk vs. Reward Consideration:** Compare the cost of no action against the payoff of action: paint a word picture.

You need to ask for the business. When you are successfully building a relationship, it will feel more like a request for partnership than a "will you buy something from me" moment. Whether it is by asking direct questions or by asking the customer to select one or two options, use a method that feels natural.

4 Gaining Commitment

Paint a Word Picture

People buy for a variety of reasons, including rational and emotional factors. A word picture is a memorable way to summarize the value of your solution while activating the buyer's emotions, creating a sense of urgency and defeating procrastination.

To successfully paint an effective word picture for your potential customer, you must:

- Remind your customers that they lack the benefit your solution provides. Get their agreement.
- Remind your customer that your solution will help them realize that benefit.
- Paint a word picture of your customer using the solution, enjoying it and benefiting from it.

The follow-up process is almost as critical as your ability to close the customer. It is much easier to retain and grow existing customers than it is to find new ones. For that fact, your service and availability need to be just as responsive as they were before the sale!

5 Follow-Up & Customer Relationship Management

Follow-ups and check-ins are also a perfect time to identify future opportunities, gain referrals and catch challenges before they become an issue.

Even the most proactive sales professional can't foresee every client challenge or fix every issue that may arise. We are all human and mistakes will inevitably happen. As a sales professional, you must have tools to effectively deal with customer issues and complaints when they arise.

Many times you will have the ability to advocate on behalf of your client, which will help you win them over and can help deepen your relationship. Dale Carnegie called this "Turning a lemon into lemonade."

Sales Professionals Guide to Dealing with a Customer Challenge

Listen: Listen for facts and resist the urge to respond too quickly. People want to make sure their concerns are being heard. This is critical.

Question: Ask questions to clarify the concern. This reinforces the point that the customer is being heard. It also helps you to better understand the root issue.

Cushion: Empathize and find a point of agreement with the person. Show you heard and understand the importance of their concern.

Address the issue: Do everything in your power to resolve the practical aspects of the complaint. You are the customer's advocate.

Offer additional help: Turn the conversation away from the complaint by asking what else you can do for the customer. Use mistakes as an opportunity to enhance the relationship and build customer loyalty.

The Customer Relationship: Relationship Selling is a long-term sales strategy that takes time and commitment, but it will go a very long way in laying the foundation for a sustainable sales pipeline that allows you to break through quotas and achieve sales.

"If salespeople can show us how their services or merchandise will help us solve our problems, they won't need to sell us. We'll buy. And customers like to feel that they are buying — not being sold." – Dale Carnegie

"To be interesting, be interested."
– Dale Carnegie