

"STOP SELLING - START RELATING"

So you think selling in these uncertain economic times is a daunting task? Maybe you think, "If only my product or service were bigger, smaller, cheaper, broader in scope, more narrowly defined, etc., etc." that your success rate would be higher. As long as you keep focusing on what you're not, you'll soon convince yourself your competition is better than you are and far more likely to close more deals.

As you and I well know, no elaborate marketing campaign or advertising strategy will ever close a deal. The best your marketing efforts can do is to get a prospect to call you or to awaken interest in a potential buyer. While you may have won half the battle with a good marketing plan, the real challenge comes when you're face to face with a prospect. It's during this meeting that the salesperson often pulls out a seemingly genuine bag of tricks in an attempt to make a sale.

The best advice I can ever give you is to STOP SELLING! Stop trying to convince anybody of anything. In fact, maybe what you're offering isn't what the prospect wants at all. Maybe, just maybe, you're not the answer to every question asked. If you're not, you can still connect your prospect up to the right answer and ask for a referral in the process. Personally, I'd rather be remembered for helping a prospect out than for trying to cram a round peg into a square hole just to make a buck. Now I'm not telling you to pack it up and enter another line of work. Sales is a noble profession. You know it. I know it. What happens sometimes in the sales process, however, is that we lose sight of the goal: To build a relationship. Once the relationship is solid, the sale will come. Unfortunately, what I've seen happen time and again is that the salesperson truly believes the real goal is the sale and that all this relationship stuff has to be tolerated in order to get the deal done. This is clueless thinking.

Don't you think your customer knows whose agenda you have in mind? Let's be honest: It's yours! If you were really thinking of your customer, you'd be taking the time to see the buyer as a person first and as a customer second. You'd be tapping into ideas that could help your customer feel more secure in an insecure economic climate. You'd be empathizing and establishing a comfortable business relationship. If you see the customer only as a dollar sign, you're doing your competitors an immense favor: You're making every salesperson out there, excluding yourself, look worthy of the Salesperson of the Year award. In other words, you're coming across as completely self serving.

The truth of the matter is this: People buy from people they like. The question then is, "Are you likeable?" Do your customers think of you as reliable, trustworthy, and

loyal, or do they think of you as someone who's only available when the potential for business is good? Do you give equal treatment to all of your customers, regardless of account size or revenue generated? If I'm your client I want to feel special, even if I give you a miniscule amount of business. It's your job to make me feel that you care about me.

Let's face it: When you meet a potential customer for the first time, you're asking for something from a complete stranger – either for an order, an opportunity to return, or for consideration. You're largely at the mercy of someone else. If your interest in your prospect isn't readily apparent by the time you ask for the business, you might as well pack up and leave. You don't have a leg to stand on.

It's important to remember that people can sometimes be reluctant to self disclose or reveal proprietary information. Real rapport begins only when customers feel secure that the information they share won't be used against them. Be careful to nurture your relationships. Take the time to take the time. View every meeting as time well spent, as an investment in your professional future
Of course we sell. Try putting "Professional Relationship Builder" as a title on your next business card and see how that goes over. I guarantee you'd never get your foot in a prospect's door. Then again, try being only a salesperson, and you'll also never see the light of day. The trick is to give to others what they feel uncomfortable asking for but what they desperately want: A salesperson with a heart.

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