



Selling Is About Helping People

What did you want to be when you grew up?

When you were a young child do you remember people asking you what you wanted to be when you grew up? Do you remember what you said? If you have your own children and ask them this same question, what will they say? The typical answer from an average kid is something like doctor, lawyer, teacher, policeman, fireman, and the like. What do these professions have in common? They all help people. A child might even say an athlete, who helps people by entertaining them. Or even an astronaut, who helps people by furthering the progress of mankind as a whole. Although in the latest news, I'm not sure that animal-abusing athletes and drunken astronauts are good role models these days, but I digress.

I don't know if children mention these professions because they are conditioned by their parents and TV, or if deep down inside they are predisposed to helping people and know that these jobs will allow them to do that. Funny how life changes people as they grow older. Ask any teenager what they want to be and I'll bet you the list is totally different than their pre-pubescent one. Ask any adult if what they are doing now is what they said they wanted to be when they grew up and most will say no. I know this is a fact for many sales people because I ask my students this question when I do sales training. In fact, very few sales people say they actually planned to be in sales. Sales people frequently got into sales by accident or through some unplanned event, as opposed to a designed career move or through a university degree on the subject (which rarely exist). But now that they are in sales, here comes the hard part – Do they STILL want to help people? If you are in sales, do YOU want to help your customers?

I've met many sales people over the years and I have found that far too many of them don't know that they are, or should be, in the business of helping people. Yet, sales is, in fact, a job that should help people, just like a doctor, lawyer, teacher, nurse, astronaut, etc. Sales reps who never learned this valuable lesson, or just plain forgot it, focus more on making the sale than on what the customer needs. By doing so, they neglect the needs of the customer and direct their energies toward closing the deal and earning their commission. This is the worst way to sell. Today, customers are smarter, wiser and more informed. They are looking for a business partner who can help them make intelligent decisions for themselves and their business. If your focus is on making money, hitting your quota or going to the President's Club, you will stand out like a sore thumb in a very negative way.

The basic concept of sales is quite simple – deliver quality products or services that match what the customer needs at a fair price. The hard part is all the up-front work that is necessary to get to this final goal. What customers want from sales people today is fairly straight forward. They want, and need, to be helped. Here are a few ideas on how you can help your customers.

1. Be a value-added problem solver. When a prospect hear's a sales person give their "pitch", which is pretty much a dump of all their features, what they are really hearing is someone who only cares about themselves and what's best for them. What they want is someone they can rely on who is genuinely interested in helping solve the customer's problems. By providing help, advice and consultation to your customers, you put yourself in that position. Once you build that level of trust, they will keep coming to you for advice. More importantly, they'll keep coming to you to buy your product or service. Help them solve their problems.

2. Be interested in their bottom line. If your customer senses that your motivation is to earn a larger commission or hit your quarterly quota or qualify for some sort of sales contest, you're history. What customers want is someone who is interested in the customer's bottom line, not the sales person's. By building trust and a relationship the customer may, in fact, care about what you get out of the sale as well. But that cannot be your focus or goal. They're not there to serve your needs. They are there to get help solving their problems and improving their bottom line. Statements such as, "It doesn't matter to me how many widgets you purchase or when you actually make the purchase. It's more important that our widgets solve your problem and you get what you need," go much further than saying "I really could use this order by the end of the month so I make my quota."

3. Be easy to do business with. We've all had the "joy" of dealing with companies who've mastered the art of putting the pain in making a sale. They run you around in circles, cause avoidable and unnecessary delays in the transaction, have nonsensical contract terms, and more. And all you want to do is give them your hard-earned money to buy their product. Many companies need to streamline and simplify the way they transact and interact with their clients. You must be easy to do business with. Get rid of roadblocks, delays, silly requirements ("You can't upgrade your service unless you first do..."), stupid return policies, and anything that makes it difficult and frustrating to deal with you. Help them do business with you the easiest way possible.

4. Help them make decisions. Customers don't want to be sold to, but they do want help making decisions. Here's a real tough one – Help them make the right decisions. How? Educate them, be honest with them (even if you recommend purchasing a product you do not carry), show them alternatives, stop confusing them with industry terms and rhetoric, and see idea #3 above. If you do these things and more, you'll also position yourself as a value-added problem solver (see idea #1). Don't simply tell them what to do, help them in the decision making process with good advice and counsel.

5. Be part of their team. You might not get invited to be this close to your customer or their business, but it is a worthwhile effort to try to be considered part of their team. This is a result of all the previous ideas. Once you build trust and establish a relationship with your client, you start to become part of their team, their business “family”. You get invited to meetings that outsiders would usually never attend. You get introduced to other members of the family. You get asked your advice on things you don’t even offer. You get treated like, well, family. This is a rare but wonderful opportunity that is a worthwhile goal for all sales people. Being part of your customer’s team will help make your customer more loyal to you and your company.

Follow this advice and you will be a true helper. You’ll rank right up there with doctors, lawyers, teachers, policemen, firemen, and all those other proud professions that help people. Who knows, maybe some day when a child is asked what he wants to be when he grows up, he’ll say he wants to be a salesman.

Good luck and good selling!

Russ Lombardo
(702) 655-5652
russ@PeakSalesConsulting.com
www.PeakSalesConsulting.com

Russ Lombardo is President of **PEAK Sales Consulting, LLC** (www.peaksalesconsulting.com) and an experienced CRM and Sales consultant, trainer, writer, speaker and radio show host. Russ works with businesses to help improve their customer acquisition and retention for increased revenue and success. Russ is author of the books, “CyberSelling”, “CRM For The Common Man” and “Smart Marketing.” He can be reached at **702-655-5652** and email at **russ@peaksalesconsulting.com**.