



ARE YOU A SALES PERSON OR A CONSULTANT?

by Leigh Wallinger

There's an interesting dynamic in the business world. Many Consultants seem to find it difficult to sell, often avoiding the issue of sales for as long as possible. Similarly, there are many sales people who are trying to convince their prospects that their interests lie in more than just winning the next order. To do this, they position themselves as Consultants.

From the buying perspective, the old adage that "people buy from people they like" is probably more true today than ever before. Buyers (and consumers) are very wary of being sold something they don't want. They dislike the hard sell. They only want to deal with people with a good reputation and with people who they like.

If you are in sales, your ability to build long-term relationships is key. The underlying ingredient behind the development of trusting relationships between seller and buyer is the sales person's integrity. As a salesperson, you have to start looking for ways to help your clients and prospective clients to address their problems / issues and put much less focus on the short-term sale.

So, how easy is it for buyers to perceive you as just a sales person interested only in the next sale and the associated commission? Unfortunately for most sales people, it is surprisingly easy to convey that you are interested only in the commission.

Here are 15 signs that a buyer looks out for:

1. You give a sales pitch. You turn up for a meeting and launch into a presentation about your company, how long you've been trading, list of awards, number and location of offices. You talk about your products and services, possibly mentioning a few generic benefits along the way.
2. You send out standard emails or standard letters.
3. You give them standard presentations, using the same jokes that didn't work last time.
4. You try to pull the buyer along the buying cycle. You then find that you are at the sales closure stage, when the buyer is still evaluating alternatives.
5. You ask questions, but they are the same questions every other salesperson seems to ask. They don't help you to understand the buyer's position or give you an edge.
6. You have done no research so have no idea what the buyer's business is all about.
7. You make exaggerated claims about your product / service which are not backed up with evidence.
8. You use "hard" manipulative techniques.
9. Your presentation and brochures are full of "I", "we", "my", "our". You leave your prospect to work out how that helps them to solve their particular problems.
10. You don't address the concerns the buyer raises, instead you give long-winded responses.
11. You don't listen to the buyer and tend to respond to signs of sales resistance with statements beginning with "yes, but..."
12. You are thinking more about the order and the commission than the buyer's situation.
13. You display signs of impatience and urgency.
14. You do not make good eye contact with the buyer.
15. You don't know what makes your company different, compared to your competition

It is interesting to note that in our own lives when we buy things – a car, lounge furniture, landscape gardening and, of course, double glazing – it's the salesman who is just after another sale that really puts us off. So, what sort of sales people do we like dealing with? And what sort of sales person should we be? The answer to these questions has given birth to the concept of consultative selling.



Given the above list, it's no wonder that sales people want to portray themselves as Consultants. To do this they need to forget about their short-term need to get another quick sale and some more commission.

In particular, the sales person needs to:

1. Slow down and be much more patient.
2. Focus all their attention on the buyer, the buyer's situation, and the buyer's pain points.
3. Avoid using stock answers, standard letters and presentations. Tailor your interactions specifically for this particular buyer.
4. Ask good searching questions that make the buyer think. Try and get them to comment "that's a good question" or "nobody has ever asked that before".
5. Listen intently to the replies. Listen out for "trigger" words and phrases that you can use as a foundation to build further discussions.
6. Demonstrate the relevance and quality of your product / services by using client testimonials and having the buyer speak to your satisfied clients.
7. Follow a sales process by all means, but progress at the buyer's speed. Never try to rush things along otherwise you will instantly come across as another high-pressure salesperson.
8. Check that the buyer is with you at all times, that he / she understands what you have just said as it relates to their circumstances.
9. Draw out as many questions as you can, deal with each one and seek permission from the buyer to move on to the next step in the cycle.
10. Where appropriate, simply do the opposite to what is listed above regarding how to be viewed as a salesperson.

So, for sales people to be more successful they need to adopt the habits that successful Consultants have used for years. Be attentive, be responsive and, above all, offer real value and benefit to the buyers.

Now, back to the original question: Why do so many Consultants find the concept of selling so unpleasant, unattractive and difficult?

Given that Consultants already demonstrate many of the desired attributes and behaviours that will produce successful sales results, the answer must be that they are trying too hard to be just like sales people just looking for the next order.

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