

Hi

## The sales process – maximise it!

***"The fact is everyone is in sales. Whatever area you work in, you do have clients and you do need to sell."***

*Jay Abraham – marketing expert*

At this busy time of the year, sales should (in most businesses) be fairly strong, with retailers undertaking the normal pre-Christmas rush. However, it's often at this time that the opportunity to maximise sales, with a sound understanding of the sales process, is forgotten in the "busyness" of the season. The extra effort and understanding (techniques, skills, scripts, analysis, tools, personalities, knowledge) in the sales process will maximise your sales revenue (and provide that extra cream that is the increase in net profit).

***"Business is not financial science; it's about trading, buying and selling. It's about creating a product or service so good that people will pay for it."***

*Anita Roddick – founder of 'the Bodyshop'*

Once one is in front of a prospect it is with a sound understanding of the process (and this is applicable to all sales processes including corporate and technical) that lays the foundation of them becoming a purchaser/client or not.

The simplest version I believe is a six step process (shown below), moving a prospect through each stage. (It can become cyclical if the prospect has not been "closed" – you then start the cycle/process again). In some rare occasions, one may omit a stage to achieve the desired result, but fundamentally one has to move through the process to yield the sale.

1. **Preparation** (physically, mentally, emotionally, and with the right tools) -if you aren't ready to make a sale, it will be very challenging to close. One of the keys to maximising sales is knowledge of your prospect – the more information you can gather on their needs and requirements the greater the likelihood of providing them the most appropriate product/service for their needs. The other key aspect is obviously your own product knowledge.
2. **Relaxing and rapport building phase** (the discovery or needs analysis) – one has to have an affinity/connection/be relaxed/positive feeling about the other person (ever bought something from some one you didn't like on your first impression?) This is one, if not the most important part of the process; do not underestimate the skills required here. As you establish "a relationship" you then discover their needs, wants and desires to then provide the right product/service. This is one of the first parts of the process you can establish how to maximise the sale, as you discover other potential areas where you may provide the solution.
3. **Desire/educational phase** (solution/presentation) – this may also "disturb" prospects as well as to further demonstrate the need or requirement for the product or service you are selling. This is the second part of the process you can establish how to maximise the sale – ask some probing questions to identify further opportunities to up or cross

sell other products and services.

4. **Reassurance phase** – (relieving the prospects) using tools and techniques to reaffirm and relieve the prospect that they're making the right decision. Unique selling propositions often can be used here, for example: a mind blowing guarantee to use a risk reversal technique ('The Warehouse' has done this very well).
5. **Close the sale** – ask for them to become a client or to purchase, it's not that hard! Don't leave prospects hanging, **control** this phase and conversion rates will increase dramatically. Remember the biggest buying signal in the world – "how much is it?"
6. **Follow up!** – all one has to do is call back to see if they've made their decision, see how they enjoyed their product/service experience or see if they would like more? It can be one of the most profitable calls you can make.

***"I quickly learned that if I kept at it and ploughed right through the rejections I would eventually get somebody to buy my wares."***

*Charles Schwab – billionaire and founder of Charles Schwab brokerage.*

This leads to the two greatest and often most under-utilised sales techniques to instantly ramp up profits – up selling and cross selling. Considering that McDonalds made in excess of US\$30 million a day on using 6 words – "would you like fries with that?" – it's definitely worth pursuing and developing a script or strategy to ensure the sales force are increasing the average sale value.

Why though are these techniques under-utilised? Because primarily in the sales process many inexperienced sales people (and some experienced) are nervous, don't have control of the process and often forget to ask or recommend additional products/services. (Or they haven't identified any appropriate item/service to sell). Or alternatively they're so excited about having just made a sale – they forget to ask (that's where good visualisation techniques work wonders.)

Because making a purchase is an emotional experience (and generally the higher the price, the greater the level of emotional involvement); the best time to increase sales is:

- a) when prospects are most emotionally vulnerable (once they've just purchased)
- b) when prospects are comfortable with their decision (and subsequently would easily buy more) and
- c) when it's easy and convenient to conduct a financial transaction. "Retail therapy" wasn't invented because one had extra cash in their pocket – credit cards make it easier to maximise the dollar value as there's no limitation on the financial exchange (unless they're at their limit!).

So develop a sales objective ("to increase the average sales value by..."), create the strategy, methodology and products/services to achieve this, set monthly targets to measure team performance and increase your profits. It's proven and it will maximise the value of your sales process.

Your success is only limited by yourself,

Best wishes

Vaughan

