



The BIG Lie of Selling

It's been talked about for 100 years: closing the sale! Sales trainers have made buckets of money teaching it to sales people who couldn't make much money with it, but made lots of prospects angry doing it. It's closing. How do you feel when you get "closed"? The alternative-of-choice close. The sharp-angled close. The impending-event close. The "about-how-much-too-much" close. Close early and close often, they'd say. Do whatever you have to do. Say whatever you have to say. Do that "hoodoo" that you do so well. Just bring back a signed contract!

It's not about closing (if it ever was). In "the show" it's all about opening! Opening doors and opening relationships and opening minds to change.

Become known as an opener. A professional interviewer looking for permission to proceed. It will separate you as uncommon, not like all the other plastic pretenders who are only interested in "what will it take to get your business today?" Pulleezzze ...

How long will you have it even if you get it? Believe me when I tell you someone will be asking the "what will it take" question as soon as you leave or your prospect does. Get better or get used to getting beaten by better questions and better performers.

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boring blah, blah, blah ... that they will, of course, need to think about. How can you stand out in a marketplace today of sales-sameness? How do you establish yourself as a professional selling performer? How skilled are you at asking questions that set you apart? How well do you listen? How do you create real value for the customer? How can you position yourself as a resource to them and to the organization? Welcome to "The Now Economy." Where no one cares about how good you used to be. What customers are asking now is "How good will you be next week?"

This marketplace is all about thinking and performing differently when it comes to selling. Selling is all about "revenue generation" and revenue generation is more than just selling. Confused? Don't be. When you think like an owner you will know that profits are better than wages. Profits are better than sales! That means when you sell something, you should know how you, and the organization, will profit. What's the gross profit? Is it good business for the company (and you) or is it just a sale?

After taking over a sales operation at a media company a number of years ago, I met with a group of experienced selling professionals who had not made a sales goal in 18 months. When I asked them why, they had a great list of reasons. Which soon began to sound like a list of excuses, and at the top of that list? "Our goals are unrealistic!" And what do you base that on?" I asked. "Simple. We haven't made goals in a year-and-a-half!" Oh. So that's how it works. The inmates rationalizing the asylum.

My job was to create understanding that the goal is the target and what was unrealistic was "the how." How they were doing it was not only not going to get us to goal, moreover it was killing profits when they did sell something.

For 27 days or so each month they struggled to sell advertising, usually what could be sold by default. In other words, it was a specific issue or time of the year when the advertiser or agency had already decided to be in the magazine no matter who the sales person was. Then the last three days of the month became a mad scramble to sell the space left over, or what's called "remnant" space. How

do you suppose remnant space is priced? Bargain basement. Close-out. Fire-sale. No profit. And this staff had conditioned lots of advertisers to wait for this remnant sale every issue. Not only did the advertisers buy the space at deep discounts, but by waiting until the close of the issue it created a chaotic condition for production to finish the magazine, turn out proofs, etc. In three days each month they were selling any profits that had been created the first 27 days of the month and conditioning the market to resist the published rates in the knowledge that the fire-sale would soon arrive ... again.

No profits. No making goals. But lots of sales were made in those final few days. Sound like an employee discount sale? One day soon it has to end. Then what? Selling Lesson: All sales are not revenue generation for the company. Over the next 12 months, we set nine of the top 10 advertising records in the 20-year history of the organization.

That's why I say it's not about sale training! It's about understanding and creating revenue generation company-wide. Not only did we have to change the mind and actions of the sales team, but I had to win back credibility and trust from editorial and production and management and other departments who saw what sales had become.

Any sales trainer could have come in there and taught them how to sell more, and without changing some of the infrastructure they would have sold themselves into oblivion and continued to lose trust all over the building and the marketplace.

Think profits. Think better questions. Think opening not closing ... think! Opening the show is a big part of closing any transaction and making sure the customer experiences value and a great feeling about his or her decision to buy.

For my short list of other selling myths and more selling truth, e-mail me. To your uncommon success.

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