

Selling Style Makeover

By Sarah Ripley

Ask the average salesperson today what his or her secret to a successful sale is. You will likely be the audience to yawn-worthy clichés and sales industry jargon that would confuse the best of us. Most will have a selling style ... and kid themselves with the “good” success rate.

Some will have a “trick-’em-then-kick-’em” strategy through the use of clever wording and strategic pricing. However, it might be surprising to learn that a nationwide survey revealed that “67% of all shoppers intend to return home with the item they are shopping for, but only 24% do.” (Roy H. Williams, The Wizard of Ads).

From consulting with various businesses and their salespeople over the years, I have learned that often it is not lack of enquiry (as many business owners claim is the reason for the dip in their sales), but lack of attitude, as an indifferent salesperson will not be able to gain the customer’s confidence.

The current economy demands making use of every single marketing cent spent getting your customer to contact your business in the first place. That translates to increasing your salespeople’s conversion rates and making the most of each lead and opportunity.

There is no surefire way to sell. The best salespeople are those who can take selling principles and tailor them to their customers, products/services and personality. This makes the transaction more about “me” the customer, and less about “you” the salesperson.



The following five points are key selling mistakes I see time and again with salespeople:

- 1. Treating each sale as an isolated event, with no forward thoughts on future relationships/selling opportunities. Culprits are usually the “trick-’em-then- kick-’em” salespeople who are after the quick hit and do not think of the long-term potential of a prosperous and lucrative ongoing relationship.
- 2. Overwhelming customers with industry jargon, technical aspects or information that they do not care about. Your customers’ interest in your product/service, along with anything useful you may be telling them, will be lost when you do not talk their talk.
- 3. Criticizing a customer’s previous

purchase decision with your competitor. “I wouldn’t want my competitors doing it to me, so I make a point to never do it,” said Adam Patrick, Agnew Corporate account manager. Defaming your customer and competitor challenges your credibility and integrity and, plainly, it is just low behavior.

- 4. Not transferring confidence to your customer. People buy from people they like. Most purchase decisions are made based on emotions, with logic then used to justify them. Your customers will not dive off the purchase platform with you and your word that it is safe until you have gained their trust and confidence.
- 5. Asking for big commitment too early. Marriage is rarely proposed

Table 1. Buying Style Sales Strategies

	Competitive	Methodical	Spontaneous	Humanistic
Attitude	Businesslike, power oriented	Businesslike, detail oriented	Personal, activity oriented	Personal, relationship oriented
Using Time	Disciplined, strategically paced	Disciplined, methodically paced	Spontaneous, fast paced	Open ended, slow paced
Question	What can your solution do for me?	How can your solution solve this problem?	Why is your solution best to solve the problem now?	Who has used your solution to solve my problem?
Approach	Provide rational options, probabilities and challenges	Provide hard evidence and superior service	Address immediate needs with relevant credible options	Offer testimonials and incentives

on a first date. Asking for the sale too early, before the tipping point of likeability and credibility has been reached, will have your customers retreating back into the trenches of their comfort zone of not buying.

Oddly enough, all of the above are symptoms of the same problem: a selling style that focuses on how to sell, as opposed to how the customer likes to buy.

Identifying Buying Styles

Key observations of personality traits indicate one of the four buying styles. Let's delve into that a little further.

According to Steve Clark of New School Selling Inc., "Buying styles are nothing new. Hippocrates first observed this around 460 B.C., when he first categorized the four styles of human behavior. Even though the

terms have changed over the years, social psychologists still agree that there are four distinct behavioral styles."

Their names are often interchangeable. At Wizard of Ads, we use the strategies in Table 1.

According to Clark, "Buyers have many different likes, dislikes and motivations. Top-performing sales professionals know that the key to developing trust and credibility is to expertly determine the likes, dislikes and buying styles of their prospects and to adapt their communication style to match that of their buyer."

Customers will drift between styles depending on the purchase and personal circumstances. The key to utilizing the styles to increase your conversion success is careful observation and the ability to adapt your techniques at a moment's notice.

Human nature dictates that we feel

most comfortable with the familiar. This tends to evolve into a salesperson selling in the style that they themselves would like to buy from, which, on average, equates to only one in every four people—leaving a huge gap for improvement.

The following are tips on how to begin utilizing buying styles:

- Identify which buying style you would tend to fall within.
- Review which style you have found most difficult to connect with in the past (it will likely be your polar opposite).
- Write down some key characteristics of your next 10 customers, and try to identify on paper the style within which they will fall.

With time, you will begin to gain these insights as the sales process is occurring, and hopefully adapt your

style to suit. This takes time, practice, patience and, most importantly, a bit of experimentation. Thomas Edison once said, "The art of selling goods is as difficult to acquire as any other art. The proper methods can be acquired only by multiplicity of actual experiments, and the one who tries the greatest variety of experiments will become, finally, a master of the art."

The secret to becoming better at selling, it seems, is to experiment.

Understand how every customer who walks through your door wants to buy, and watch your conversion grow. *wqp*

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