

Are Your Sales People Afraid Of A Little NO?

By: Mike Shannon

Sales is one of the hardest professions in the world - and the least understood. Until you address the fundamental issues messing up the minds of your salespeople, do not expect much change in the results you see. This article will highlight the following realities that negatively impact all salespeople to varying degrees:

- **Needing prospects to be their friends**
- **Emotional swings govern their lives**
- **Mistaking buyer sympathy for “understanding”**
- **Negative head trash**

Your team’s (and your) ability to control that impact will directly affect their success and your profitability.

“People buy from people they like” has been distorted by salespeople for decades into behavior that leads to no results. Fearful of losing their “relationship,” salespeople hesitate or outright refuse to ask prospects to make a decision. Rather than hear “No” and “think it over” responses that end up in deals that are lost but never closed out. Concern about what others may think or say about them keeps them from terminating sales opportunities that clog their pipeline but never result in orders. Worse yet, chasing after lost opportunities wastes precious time that should be spent prospecting for real customers. Salespeople should be taught that “No” is as bad as it gets, that it is “never personal, just business,” and that “persistence is on the call, not after the call.” Being a friend is something that salespeople must save for after 5:00 PM, not in their role as a salesperson.

Signs that point to salespeople struggling with emotions include: constant worry about the economy, reliving the past, blowing situations out of proportion, over-committing and over-promising, taking customer comments personally, and giving up at the first sign of a problem. These individuals need to learn to separate their role as a salesperson from who they are in life. No one will live or die if the sale is not

made and failure is not defined by “No.” In fact if you have people who are not hearing “No” frequently, you have sales people who are not prospecting enough to be successful. Remember, you cannot control others, just your attitude and actions. **“No” is a backdoor to success!!!**

Sales people tell me all the time that they need to “Understand their customers” so they can have a good ‘relationship.’ The problem arises

when that understanding turns into sympathy that allows them to rationalize protracted sales cycles. How can you spot that in your salespeople? Look for salespeople who,

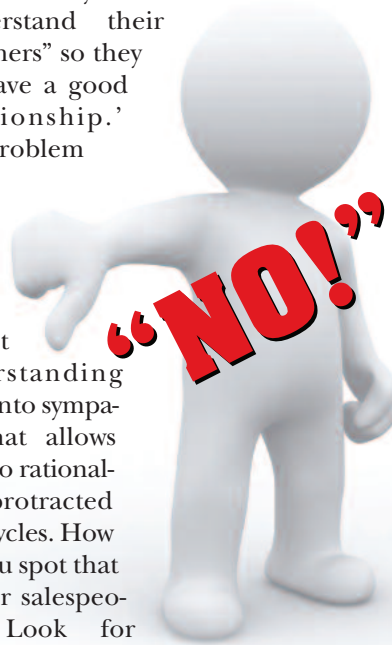
when they purchase their own products, feel that they must get three bids, check with others before they make a decision, look at something several times before they buy, and shop for the lowest price. Only decision makers can help others make a decision. Salespeople who do not place a value on their own time struggle to ask customers and prospects to do the same. There is a difference between value and price, and salespeople who do not live by that truth will erode your margins until they are the last person standing – or the deal is lost. Teach salespeople to get paid for everything they do and understand “what happens next” before they give information away. That is the only type of ‘understanding’ that will increase your revenues and profit!

No one likes to be “sold.” The implication

of that fact is that no one likes “sales people.” Imagine walking out the door every morning knowing that people do not like you before they have ever met you! Billions of dollars worth of products and services are purchased every month in our economy, so buying decisions are being made. Yet the people who are on the asking side of that transaction struggle daily with their role as the sales person. Some of the voices they hear inside their head include: “My prospects will only buy if I have the lowest price,” “It is OK for them to think it over,” and “I don’t deserve to win.” The reality is nothing happens until someone makes a decision to buy, and the person who helps them make the right decision for the right reasons should be commended! Train sales people to ask the client “how do we get around that,” “let’s pretend we could solve that problem – what would the solution look like,” or “what were you hoping I would say.” Then clients will tell others that your salesperson helped solve a problem, not that they were “sold.”

Most companies never invest in sales training. You are probably part of the majority who, despite recognizing several of these symptoms, cannot develop a belief that your people can improve their selling skills. However, if you do train, do not stop at product and tactical selling. Permanent improvement will never happen until their internal wiring gets fixed. Although the guts to make it in sales may be something that is “born,” successful salespeople can be “made!”

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