



Article Reprint

Succeeding in Sales by Steven Howard

Not every one is cut out for a career, or even an assignment in sales. Additionally, it is often difficult for people to make the switch from "Customer Service Officer," a role with an emphasis on serving the customer, to that of "Customer Sales Representative" and a need to be a professional sales person.

However, in today's world, where customers have numerous choices of service and product providers, an organization without a sales culture featuring a core of well-trained, highly motivated sales professionals, is not going to be as successful as it would with these two ingredients.

Selling is a people business. So what does it take to be successful in selling?

A partial, and admittedly by no means complete, list of personal criteria for succeeding in selling includes:

- 1. Customer Focus and Concern** – a successful sales person will build relationships based on trust, honesty, integrity, and concern for his customers. You have to be able to understand, from your customer's perspective, the needs, wants and desires of each individual customer. What are their key needs, wants, desires and how can you and your organization satisfy these either cost efficiently or through adding value (or both)?
- 2. Loyalty to the Needs of the Customer** – having the ability to be an internal advocate and fighter for the customer, and being able to lead (directly or indirectly) internal teams and processes towards the absolute satisfaction of your customers.
- 3. Accepting and Learning from Rejection** – everyone in sales experiences rejection. A sales person cannot take rejection personally, but must use each instance as a learning experience. Those who allow sales rejections to upset them personally and emotionally are likely to carry these emotions into their personal lives. An unhappy or emotionally distraught person is unlikely to find success in a sales career.
- 4. Understanding the Value of Selling** – customers today cannot be expected to know all there is about our products. When they need more information, they turn to our sales

forces to help educate them. This is why consultative selling approaches, rather than the old fashioned hard sell approaches, are working best in so many industries. Selling is a value-added process, when it is done right. Each sales person needs to be a critical component in this value adding job function.

5. Being a Constant Student – successful sales people are not born, they are well trained and tend to be constant learners. A desire to constantly upgrade skills is a key criterion for success, resulting in a self-propelled drive to read, listen to audio recordings, or watch video tapes, from other successful sales people and about things that impact their customers and their customers' products.

6. Believing in yourself, your products and your services – customers can easily tell when a sales person does not fully believe in the products and services they are selling. Success requires a complete belief in what you are selling, including full confidence and belief in one's own consultative selling ability.

7. Commitment – at a minimum, a three-level commitment is required: a) a commitment to continuing trying, no matter what the odds or what your recent experiences have been, b) a commitment to focus on the needs of the customer, not the needs of one's own organization, and c) a commitment to one's self to constantly upgrade skills and to constantly monitor one's own motivation requirements.

8. Goal Setter – the old adage that "what gets measured gets accomplished" is very true in sales. A successful sales person will set his/her own stretch goals, ones that focus on the selling process (number of attempts/calls, hours spent upgrading skills, etc.) as well as on outcomes (sales, success ratios, etc.).

9. Honesty and Trustworthiness – one cannot build a long-term career in sales without being fully honest and trusted. As in criteria number one above, client relationships must be built on honesty, integrity, trust, and a true concern for one's customers. After all, customers prefer to purchase from those they can trust.

10. Keeping Outgoing Personality Under Control – many people think they will be good at selling because they have an outgoing personality and they enjoy interacting with people. While it's true that an extrovert has many tendencies and qualities of a good sales person, it is also important to remember that one of the most critical selling skills is that of listening. An outgoing personality that asks interesting questions is far more likely to be successful in sales than a person who likes to talk about themselves and/or their products and services.

11. Enthusiasm – last, but certainly not least, is to have positive enthusiasm for one's job, products, company, and even life in general. Positive and enthusiastic people are so much more pleasant to deal with that we all find ourselves buying from them just because the sales/buying experience has been so enjoyable.

There are many more personal criteria required for being successful in sales, but this list is a good start. And without these 11 criteria as one's core personal competencies, all other personal attributes will not lead to the kind of success one is capable of achieving.

The Author

Steven Howard is a Melbourne-based marketing consultant, author, conference speaker, and Non-Executive Director in both the profit and non-profit fields.

Visit his web site, www.howard-marketing.com for valuable information and links on marketing, customer retention, branding, and corporate image management or to sign up for his free weekly newsletter The Monday Morning Marketing Memo and his marketing blog.

He is a positioning specialist, whose 30-year marketing and sales career in Asia and Australia has covered a wide variety of fields, ranging from consumer electronics to publishing and from a national airline to personal financial products.

He is President of Howard Marketing Services, which provides consultancy and project management services in the areas of Marketing Management, Product Development, Positioning Strategies, Customer Retention Strategies, New Product Launches, Event Management and Brand Management.

He consults on a regular basis to companies in the financial services, industrial products, consumer products, restaurants, petroleum, publishing and hospitality fields.

Contact details

Phone: (61-3) 5428-1388

Fax: (61-3) 5428-1399

E-mail: steven@howard-marketing.com

Website: <http://www.howard-marketing.com>

Blog: <http://www.howard-marketing.com/marketingblog>

Free Newsletter: Receive Steven Howard's free weekly marketing newsletter, the **Monday Morning Marking Memo**, by subscribing at www.howard-marketing.com.