

A Quality We Take For Granted!

By Roger Bostdorff

A successful sales person has to have many different qualities... he/she must be Persuasive, Assertive, Intelligent, Persistent, Gregarious, Independent, and Team oriented just to name a few. However, there is one quality that may be the most important that I did not list. Can you think of what it is?

When I was a student many, many, years ago at BGSU I was in a speech class on persuasion. The class project was to sell the Professor something. The professor identified something and several members of the class were selected to attempt to sell that gadget to him.

I was the 3rd of three students selected to take a shot. What a Mickey Mouse deal. Any one could do this! The first student, who was quite nervous, stuttered and stammered around trying to sell this gadget. The 2nd student was much more confident but ran out of time. I, therefore, now understood how to be successful in this challenge. I had to be confident, enthusiastic and talk fast so that I could meet the time limitation of the process. I hit on all 3 objectives. However, as the class voted for the best I did not win. Even more importantly the Professor took all of our approaches apart by asking one simple question. "Why did he need the gadget?" None of us asked the question. In fact, none of us asked any questions. We were so busy talking that we blew right by the listening portion of the sales call.

Therefore, the quality that is missing above is listening. Are you a good listener? I have a test for you to find out. Ask yourself the following questions, or if you are a sales manager ask these questions to yourself regarding your sales team.

1. Do you spend more time talking than listening?
2. Do you come up with a response in your head BEFORE the customer finishes talking?
3. Are you eager to talk about your solution?
4. Do you daydream while your prospect is talking?
5. Do you jump in and finish the prospect's question?
6. Do you ask so many questions, the client does not have time to think and answer them?
7. Do you make a judgment about what is said before the speaker is finished?
8. Do you frequently interrupt?
9. Do you frequently answer a question with a question?
10. Are you quick to provide advice even when not asked? (Heavily male oriented here)

If you answered "no" to "8" or more of these you should consider yourself a good listener. If you did not answer "no" to "8" or more, you and I may have some room for improvement.

In sales we ask questions to better understand the needs of the customer. If we don't listen we are wasting his time and ours. Our time is too precious and so is the time of our prospects!

Good luck and good listening!

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