

Why Customers Hate Sales People

By Roger Bostdorff

Just prior to graduating from college (a long time ago) my father asked me if I had lined up a job as of yet. My dad was a small plumbing, heating and electrical contractor. I explained that I had indeed secured a job with IBM. He then asked me what I would be doing. I answered that I was going to be a salesman for IBM. My father's reaction was classic, "You went to college for 4 years and you are going to be a 'g?# d\$#& salesman"? Now you must understand that my father's exposure to salespeople was not very positive. I later got back into his good graces when someone he knew explained that IBM was a great company and that the salesman for that company was NOT like the salesman that my father had encountered during his career. I used to kid my Dad later by asking him if he knew how to tell if a salesman was lying? His lips are moving.

Why does the term salesman have such a negative connotation with some folks? I came across the top 7 reasons why customers hate salespeople by Kelley Robertson.

1. Not listening. This was the most cited reason customers dislike salespeople. Too many salespeople neglect to listen to what their customers or prospects say, which means they fail to address the key issues that their customer has emphasized. I remember one interaction I had with a couple of salespeople a few years ago. One of them asked some great questions to learn more about my particular situation. However, his counterpart did not listen to my responses. As a result, his solution did not address my business challenges and buying requirements. In fact, his presentation was so far off base, I abruptly called an end to the meeting. Time is a precious commodity for people and when you don't listen you disrespect your prospect.

2. Talking too much. It still amazes me how many salespeople think that telling is selling. I see this in virtually every type of sales environment, from B2B to B2C to retail. My personal belief is that your prospect or customer should do most of the talking in a sales conversation. Salespeople react to this idea with, "But if they're doing all the talking, how can I sell my product?" The key is to let your customer do enough talking so that you can properly present a solution to their problem or situation.

3. Lack of knowledge. In today's information-rich world, there is no reason for a salesperson to lack knowledge about the products and services they sell. I was recently impressed by the person who gave us an estimate on a new roof for our house. He knew his products and was able to speak intelligently about them. I know that the life-cycles of many products are very short and that many companies introduce new products at an alarming rate; however, if you don't know enough about your products, you are going to lose your customer's respect—and, in all likelihood, the sale. Do yourself a favor and invest the necessary time learning about your products and services.

4. Lack of follow-up. Many sales people say they will do something then fail to follow through. This ranges from promising to get information to taking care of a problem or concern. Many people use this as a barometer before they make a final buying decision. Here's how:

A potential customer asks for a particular piece of information and the sales person promises to deliver it by a certain date. The deadline passes and the prospect has to call and remind the salesperson. Because the sale has not been finalized, warning signals sound in the customer's mind. After all, if the sales person is this slow to respond BEFORE the sale is made (the courting stage), how long will it take him to respond AFTER the sale?

Lack of follow up results in lost sales. A person contacts two or three companies about a particular item or project. All three submit a quote but only one makes the effort to follow up. Who is more likely going to get the sale?

5. Lying. "I don't care about the customer, and I'll tell them anything I have to in order to get the sale." Believe it or not, I heard this comment from a participant in one of my sales training workshops. Unfortunately, the number of salespeople who lie or intentionally mislead their customers is staggering. This behavior includes overstating the

capabilities of your product, stretching the truth or giving people the wrong information. Almost everyone has bought a product from someone who was less than truthful, and, as a result, has become more skeptical with their buying decisions.

6. Failing to understand their needs. This is an extension of the first two reasons customers dislike salespeople. When a sales rep talks too much and listens too little, they don't get a full understanding of their prospect's situation. I have worked and interacted with thousands of salespeople over the years, both as a trainer and a buyer. I can state without hesitation that a mere 20% of them actually take the time to understand their customer's needs, situation, concerns, etc. And it's this group of individuals who are the most successful.

7. Refusal to take "no" for an answer. Almost everyone in sales knows the importance of persistence. However, there is a fine line between persistence and stalking. While you shouldn't drop your efforts after the first "no," it is critical to recognize that you won't gain anything by pressuring people. In many cases, the reason someone says declines your offer is because they don't see the value in your product/service, or because they are not a highly-qualified prospect.

Sales is really pretty simple. You must get the customer to talk about his issues or concerns. You must listen when the client talks. I mean really listen!! Craft a good solution that will address or solve his issues and/or challenges, and then do what you say you are going to do when you say you are going to do it.

If you have sales personnel this is the creed that they need to live by. If sales are lagging at your organization maybe someone needs to analyze your team and their sales process.

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