

Small Business Success

July 2015



Community
Futures Newsask



15 Things You Should Do/Know to Improve Sales

Published in cooperation with [Blue Beetle Books](#)

1. Develop a step-by-step sales process from beginning to end. Know exactly how you are going to make a sale whether the potential customers come to you (retail) or whether you have to go out and meet them.
2. Selling is the act of negotiation between you and a potential customer; it is not advertising, promotion, or marketing.
3. Identify clearly who your absolute best customer will be - don't try to sell to everyone (even if you can). Look closely at the features of your product or service and the benefits it offers potential customers. Match your product with someone who needs the benefits it offers.
4. Find someone who wants or needs what you have to sell. It's pointless trying to sell to people who don't need, or don't want, what you are selling. It is a waste of time and you don't have time to waste. Selling is easy when you sell to people who want to buy. Prospecting is a vital part of selling - get it right and you will save time and increase your success rate.
5. Selling is based on relationships - sell yourself first, your company second and your product third. When was the last time you bought something from someone you didn't like?
6. Remember to promote the FAB 3 - Features, Advantages, Benefits
7. Qualify your buyer. Do they have the power to buy? Ask them. If they don't, sell them on your product to the point they are willing to help you and get them to help you reach the right person - the buyer.
8. Know as much about your market and industry as you possibly can. The more you know the more answers you will have and the more respected you will be.
 - o Know your company - if someone asks you about your company do you have the answers? Where do you stand on environmental issues within your industry? What is your approach to new technology, staffing issues etc.?

Index

15 Things You Should Do/Know to Improve Sales.....	1-2
Your Salespeople are a valuable marketing resource (Parts 1 & 2).....	2-4
Challenge 4 Communities.....	5
Cartoon	5

- Know your product or service intimately. You may think you know it but think about it from the buyer's perspective. After briefly describing your product or service to someone, ask them if they understand it and would be in a position to buy it. Do they really understand it - or are they seeing it in a different way to you? Can they see problems you can't?
 - Know your customer. Study them to the point of fully understanding their business, their market, their customers and their competition.
 - Know your competition. Don't be caught knowing less about your competition than your customers do. Carry out a strengths and weaknesses analysis.
 - Know the weakness of your product and your sales pitch. Make a list of all the objections you could possibly face.
9. Plan each sales approach. What are you trying to achieve? Is it realistic to get a sale at this juncture? Or is this just a step along the way?
 10. When making a sales presentation, sell yourself first. It's about them, not you! Discover what the customer is looking for. Match the features of your product or service to the benefits they are looking for. If you can't, why carry on selling? Ask questions and listen more than you speak. Make the sales presentation pleasurable and fun. Show a genuine interest in the welfare of the customer.
 11. Be enthusiastic and passionate, it's contagious.
 12. Practice trial closes for instance: a) Does this do everything you need it to do? b) Which version suits your needs best? c) When would need delivery by?
 13. Ask for the order. If you have done everything right up to that point and got positive responses to your trial closes, and they want and need what you have to sell, and they can afford it (or you can make it affordable) then you should have the sale.
 14. Follow up each meeting with a note or an e-mail.
 15. Never be affected by rejection. Nobody not even the best sales person in the world gets every sale. Leave on a positive note. Ask for a referral and keep the door open. Be professional. Review every contact with a potential customer or existing customer. What did you right - what could you have done better.



Your Salespeople are a valuable marketing resource (Part 1)

Published in cooperation with [Blue Beetle Books](#)

I was reading a book the other day called *Where Good Ideas Come From*, by Steven Johnson; it got me thinking about marketing ideas and how sometimes they can be so totally out of sync with the market they are meant to relate to. Johnson says that "Some environments squelch new ideas; some environments seem to breed them effortlessly."

This reminded me of the many years I spent as a sales representative in the book publishing industry, as a member of a large sales force. Twice a year we would all turn up at a major sales conference where we were told what books we would be selling later that year. Several editors would plow through the books

they had purchased the rights for, and then the marketing team would tell us how they would be promoted and publicized.

The thing is, no one ever asked us, the frontline salespeople, what the market wanted to buy. There we were calling on bookstores every day, talking to professional book buyers and members of the book-buying public, soaking up market intelligence which no one ever used. Sure, we commented on the books presented to us; I even remember telling one editor that the children's book series she had just presented was so out of touch with the market in terms of quality, price and concept that we would end up getting them all returned (in those days, bookstores could return unsold books). My input was "squelched", as was my idea of how we might make the series more palatable to the market. And yes, they all came back; in fact we actually had more copies returned than we printed, which was quite a puzzle until it was realized that some wholesalers took the opportunity to return their foreign language editions!

The lesson here is that sales and marketing are two different disciplines that should be increasingly integrated in terms of new product generation, pricing and promotion. Too often marketing departments operate in a vacuum; new products are developed as a direct result of customer surveys, or far worse, in total isolation as in "Hey guys I've got a great idea, let's make a high dose caffeine energy drink; we'll call it "Cocaine" we can make the can red and the name can be written in white powder!" It's hard to imagine that particular Las Vegas company asked its sales force what they thought, before launching its product on an unsuspecting public. Oh, and don't bother asking for it in your local grocery store, the FDA pulled it off the market pretty quickly, not that the public was buying it anyway.

We're all looking for new product ideas, something that will excite our target market and stimulate sales, or for new ways to generate excitement in what we already have. So, we trundle off to marketing and communications companies who come up with clever advertising campaigns that communicate your message to a wide audience and hopefully generate an upward swing in sales.

But, here's a pointed question; how many of you reading this have involved your sales team in developing a promotional campaign? Let me ask you another question; who knows more about the people that buy what you sell than anyone else? I'll give you two choices a) a third party communications firm or b) the people interacting with your customers every day?

Now, I'm not saying that ad agencies and the like aren't a vital partner, but they are going to be able to develop far better campaigns for you if they can hear what your sales team learns on the street.

Back in 1995, a guy called Doug Hall wrote a book called Jump Start Your Brain; now Doug is a larger than life character who has helped major corporations create and focus their marketing strategies and marketing communications better than anyone I've ever come across. He founded the Eureka Ranch which is located in Cincinnati which is fun place for corporate clients to go and dream up new products and innovative promotional campaigns. His clients include Walt Disney, Amex, Ford, Nike you name them and he's likely worked with them.

I recommend you read his book as it will make you completely rethink the way you currently come up creative ideas. Hall brings teams together at the ranch, or at other locations, and breaks every brainstorming rule in the book. Wearing ties is a hanging offense, he puts Whoopee cushions on chairs, provides water cannons to shoot, and nerf balls to throw - in short he strips all the pretentiousness away from executives within minutes of their arrival and turns them into squealing children. As quotes Mark Twain, "I think little children tend to be creative, but the more education you get, the more the inventive spark is educated out of you." At the ranch, Hall allows executives to become children again, play for a while, and simply let go.

In part 2, we'll look at how you can extract valuable marketing information out of your sales team.

Your Salespeople are a valuable marketing resource (Part 2)

Published in cooperation with [Blue Beetle Books](#)

In part one we learned that salespeople have information that is valuable to whomever is developing new product or promoting existing wares, and that the right type of environment stimulates creativity - agreed?

Okay let's do something radical to get your products or services into the fast track. Set a day aside where you can bring your sales and marketing teams together for a brainstorming session - a whole day. Now choose somewhere well away from your office or plant that has lots of space to allow freedom of movement. Go to a major toy store and buy some harmless toys that fire stuff, (ping-pong balls, nerf balls, foam bullets anything). If it is summer and part of your day can be outside buy a bunch of water shooters. Don't tell them about all the hardware, but instruct all those attending that they must wear appropriate clothes - a guideline is, what they might wear to wash the car. Warn them that anyone found wearing a tie will have it cut off. That should set the tone.



On the day, depending on numbers, you break the group into teams and have a war, no holds barred, no rules, just a huge amount of fun where everyone is on a level playing field and having fun. Once this over move to a working area, allowing people to take their weapons with them. Decide in advance what it is you want to achieve, for instance a new product range, or new improved versions of existing ones. Perhaps you might want to discover why a certain product is not selling well, or come up with catchy new media advertisement; it doesn't really matter.

If you read Hall's book he suggests lots of ways to generate ideas, but I've used this one on many occasions; is quite simple and very effective. Ensure everyone has a Sharpie pen, a bunch of post it notes and lots of small round coloured stickers.

Now, pose a question and write it on a flip chart, for instance "What could we do to sell more nerf balls?" Tell everyone they have just three minutes to write down as many ideas as they can. Warn everyone that they are not allowed to say anything negative nor positive about any idea. If they do anyone can shoot them with a nerf ball. They can however, hitchhike somebody else's idea and add to it. Ridiculous and stupid ideas should be welcomed from the outset. Each post it note must only contain one idea and the writer must hold it up, read it out loudly and hand it to a facilitator who takes it and sticks it up on a wall, or other flat surface. Don't worry if chaos breaks out - this increases creativity.

Once the three minutes are over, everyone takes a break, throwing things, shooting each other and otherwise being outrageous. Meanwhile the facilitators group like ideas together but shuffling the stickies around on the wall. Once this is complete the group is allowed to use five of their sticky dots to vote on the idea or comment they like the best. You can decide whether you will allow multiple dots on one idea, or whether people have to vote for five ideas.

Once this is over, you can go onto another product, or issue, or you can delve deeper into the one just completed. For instance once you have several ideas on how to sell more nerf balls, you might want to repeat the exercise by questioning how you might introduce the idea that got the most votes. In this way you can get group input, creativity and innovation on every step of a strategy to sell more nerf balls.

Bringing your sales and marketing teams together in a totally different environment where normal business rules cease to exist will let two worlds collide, and when that happens who knows what brilliant ideas will be unleashed.

Challenge 4 Communities 2015

4 Weeks 4 Challenges 4 Winners 4 Prizes

Community Futures Newsask is hosting our sixth annual "Challenge 4 Communities"

All community groups (service groups, neighbor groups, youth groups, etc.) are invited to submit community projects that compete for prize money. The public will decide the winners with weekly voting on the internet over a four week format beginning October 30, 2015. Rules and an application form are available on our website at cfsask.ca/newsask (click on Challenge 4 Communities)

Get involved with your community today, submit a project, and compete for prize money!

Challenge 4
Communities
2015

Cartoon

Published in cooperation with [Blue Beetle Books](#)



“Who’s just happy to be employed?!”



PO Box 357 903-99th Avenue West Tisdale, Saskatchewan S0E 1T0
Phone: 306-873-4449 Fax: 306-873-4645 admin@newsaskcfdc.ca cfsask.ca/newsask

Supported by Western Economic Diversification Canada



Western Economic
Diversification Canada

Diversification de l'économie
de l'Ouest Canada

Canada

Published in cooperation with [Blue Beetle Books](#)