

The seven steps sale's process

How to maximize your sales

To survive in the business world, must we not constantly sell more and more and improve our market share? Even if our products and services are very attractive, what ultimately singles-us out (disregarding the price) is often a small thing, an added value and more than frequently it is the quality of our relationship with our client. Therefore the salesperson plays a very important role due to the fact he is often the first person to interface the client and our business. And, as we recognize the importance of the salesperson we can certainly try to improve his skills and his salesmanship.

Clearly defined steps have been identified and we must follow them; they will definitively enhance our odds of making a sale. Experience has shown that if you incorporate these following principles your sales will definitely improve. In this article we will summarize these steps as follows:

- 1. Developing a client relationship**
- 2. Presenting the company**
- 3. Identifying the problem**
- 4. Proposing a solution**
- 5. Taking the order**
- 6. Promoting references**
- 7. Following-up after the sale**

1. Developing a client relationship

First of all, a warm and cordial 30 seconds greeting will show your confidence and establish trust, which in turn will make your client want to listen to you. Do not miss this chance to make a good first impression. With an authentic smile, look your client in the eye and firmly shake his hand. Your appearance (clothes, hair, posture, cleanliness, shoes) and your confident attitude will definitively work in your favor. Use the next minutes to chitchat about the weather, the sport scores, a little something that caught your attention in his environment (decoration, room, special equipment etc.).

You will also want to use a different approach for each client be it the one you are soliciting or the one on the phone who as a specific question to ask. The client that will accept to listen to your sales pitch could detect the salesman in you and be somewhat on the defensive. However the client on the phone with a specific question will likely be more receptive and closer to buying your product. At the same time, you must be able to clearly qualify your client; is he the installer?, or the one who will be taking the decision?, or the one that might influence the decision? In fact and without prejudice, it is widely accepted that we do not talk to the CEO in the same manner that we would talk to the technician. We must also remember to recognize that each future client has a list of concerns, interests, expertise, competencies, technical knowledge, cultural and social affiliations that could be quite different; we must demonstrate our utmost respect for these particularities. The salesperson must

focus and adapt his presentation and style to the values of his client. He is a distinguished chameleon who easily blends in his working environment.

In developing a relationship with the client the salesperson will listen, will be receptive and attentive to all variables that he will detect in the client's working environment. Then, and this is often the trigger of the sale, the salesperson will want to really get involved ... he will use his voice, his body language, he will respect his client's space (his bubble); he will also use his listening skills to the maximum, will look his client in the eye, and put on a genuine smile. These skills will definitely contribute to a friendly and pleasant meeting. But beware! Because it will happen that sometimes you might be really concentrating on describing your product, you will forget to establish a real personal communication with your client and send him running for cover. To make you client want to hear more, you will want to ask him some pertinent questions; this will make him feel that you are listening and that you respect him.

2. Presenting the company

Our first goal was to establish a one on one trusting relationship. The goal of the second step goes a bit further; it is to use this personal trust and consolidate it with the salesperson's company. The goal now is to strategically situate your company in the global industry and highlight the advantages you have on the competition. How is your offer different? What does your company have that other companies do not? (exceptional products, after sale support, technical support, competitive prices, etc.). In general, companies will chose one of two positions: the lowest price (lower level of services) or the service option (cashable value added). A combination of different plans, agreements, service and technical support contracts could also be a possible solution.

After having situated your company and presenting your expertise, you will now want to give examples that will demonstrate the credibility of your company. Credibility as demonstrated in quality communications and the manner in which the corporate image is presented (web, publicity etc.,) the loyalty of the clientele and the reputation in the industry are the building blocs of the company.

When presenting your company, take advantage of listing (without abusing) the credible companies that you have serviced in the past. This short summary will lead you to the next step, which is to identify HIS problem; this is what your client has been waiting for; evidently prior to this you have collected and analyzed his needs. DO NOT PRESENT at this moment your products and services. First of all, your client wants to check your credibility. Then he wants you to listen to him describing his problems. He is hoping that you will find a solution for his needs. Upon analyzing them, you will have the necessary indicators to offer him a coherent and adapted solution.

3. Identifying the problem

You now have obtained the trust of your prospective client; quickly you will want to identify and show him the possible breaches and shortcomings related to security and staff management. After visiting the company and asking pertinent questions,

you will now be able to answer security concerns. As an example, what are the potential losses related to theft? How could productivity be improved?

The salesperson has many arguments in his arsenal to justify the purchase of a surveillance system. Police statistics show that more than 80% of a business's thefts are done by a member of its extended network (suppliers, clients, employees) and in 30% of the cases, employees are the culprits. Moreover, in most of the cases, the thieves had visited the business the week prior to the theft. These stats help justify the need for better security, that is, more security than traditionally used for normal in-store circulation. In other respects, productivity losses can be more easily measured by examining work attendance data. Finally, a client will always be interested in learning that other similar companies have already chosen to adopt more efficient security measures to counteract robberies and loss of productivity. At this time, you will want to talk about the companies that have experienced the same problems and the solutions that you proposed to them.

The cardinal rule in making a sale is that there has to be a need and that you must propose a solution. If your client is not convinced that he is losing money because of thefts and loss of productivity, you will not make a sale...You cannot offer a solution if you have not convinced him he has a problem.

4. Proposing a solution

The argument sustaining the solution comes from the statement made in the previous paragraph. By helping your client recognize that his thefts and losses of productivity are directly related to breaches of security, you are opening the door to making him an attractive offer that he will not be able to refuse.

In other respects, because of the relative emergence of new surveillance systems and their multiple management and automation functions (remote control, schedule management, steps to be taken after an event, etc.) many CEO's are not aware of the options available and of the advantages of using the new technologies. For them to be able to see a remote camera on a PDA (or on a cell phone) is a valuable argument for a traveling CEO, out of his office on a regular basis.

The experienced salesperson will maximize his assets by also using visual technical files, comparative charts, diagrams or animations to explain complex and abstract technical concepts. The best tool is still the surveillance system demo that will show direct display and archive consultation.

Evidently, not all salespersons will show up with a kit of cameras and DVMS's to show their client how easy it is to install and operate such a system. However a good salesperson will succeed a presentation by making the "client" software operational. He will accomplish this by using his portable PC plugged on the client's Internet connection or still by installing the "client" software that will allow him to connect to a DVMS from a remote location.

Finally, when a salesperson is proposing a solution, he must always establish the necessary context to render this project operational. At this point, you will want to reassure your client on each of these points. What do I need to start the installation? How will the equipment be installed? Who will be the installers? How long will it take?

How much will it cost? What will be the conditions (service contract, responsibilities, etc,)?

5. Taking the order

In general, it is after the design and the detailed submission has been accepted that the order is taken. Ideally you will produce two submissions; the first one, a solution comprising the basic requirements of your client. The second, in your back pocket, will be the optimal solution. The client will always want to compare similar quotations from your competitors. The best way is to answer your client initial request by proposing a solution responding to his basic needs. However, the optimal solution, the one that "you would chose" if you were in the same situation, will always include an added value which will single you out from the competition.

In other respects, if a client shows you a competitor's quotation and asks you to offer him a similar solution, it would be preferable to sit down with him and try to identify his real needs. You most certainly do not wish to cost a design made by someone else that might not respect the quality, reliability and performance standards you built your reputation on. You must keep the control of the negotiations and not let the buyer compare your products and services to those of the competitors as if the were of equal value, which is rarely the case.

Finally, when your client has accepted your submission, it is the time to complete the agreement. If the client seems to be hesitating due to financial concerns you can always offer him differed or a lease-credit solution. Encourage your client to decide by scheduling an installation timeframe. Ask him partially open questions that will push ahead the deal without adding pressure. You could ask this question: what day would you like for us to install the equipment? Would the Monday morning suit you?

6. Promoting references

Have you concluded a sale? Good for you...but did you only succeed in getting a client interested, a client that is not quite ready to buy but still wants to keep your coordinates?

This case exposes very well that a good salesperson has to have a mid and long term plan. The good impression you made will stay in the mind of a possible client even if he was not quite ready to buy when you met him. A simple trick is to promote your potential clients. Ask him for two business cards, one for your personal references and one to give to another potential client. This exchange of good procedures is good for everyone.

Finally at this point do not ask your client to refer you to a possible other client. Give him your business card and tell him that you would appreciate that he eventually refer you to a business that might be interested in your products and services.

7. Following-up after the sale

Have you had the impression that after a supplier has cashed your cheque he is not answering your calls as fast?

A good client relationship is based on the quality of the human relationship. It is important to keep, maintain and improve the quality of your relationship as well as your after sale service. When you are driving in the neighborhood, why not stop and say hello, and inquire on how he is doing, and ask him about the quality of his new installation. Use this opportunity also to ask about his suggestions for change or improvement. Send a personnel e-mail recognizing a special event of his (birthday, anniversary, holidays, etc.).

To get a sale is one thing...To insure that the client will come back and give you another order is another thing.... Never be indifferent to his comments, objections, suggestions, and barely hidden requests. Be on the lookout for small details that your clients will remember when they will need other products and services that you offer...They will remember that your attitude was very professional, that you offer quality products and that your services are better than the industry's expectations.

Jean- Pierre Desjardins, Pascal St-Cyr, Dominic Thibodeau
Sphere Video's sales force