

Selling The Arrangement - Part 3

Find a Need and Fill It

In a study comparing exceptional sales representatives with moderate performers, it was found that customers see exceptional sales representatives as those who exchange information rather than as individuals who pitch products. What differentiates high performers is their effort at presenting product benefits.

Exceptional sales people resist the urge to unleash a blast of product claims before they learn what the customer wants. Your success in selling increases with the number of customer needs you uncover and respond to. The best way to find out what these needs are is to ask questions and listen carefully.

What Are the Six Most Important Words in Selling?

FIND A NEED AND FILL IT.

Make that short sentence your selling strategy and your sales career will be off to a great start. This phrase forces you to do three things.

1. Ask questions
2. Listen
3. Show how your product fills the customer's specific needs

Open-Ended Questions:

The best kinds of questions for identifying customer needs are open-ended questions. These must be answered with an explanation rather than just a yes or no.

The answer to "Are the flowers for a dinner party?" will be yes or no and require more questions. An open-ended question such as "Where will you be using the flowers?" will generate much more information about the customer's needs.

Try The 5 Ws, How and If Formula:

Who - What - Where - When - Why - How - If

Start your questions with these words to get informative answers about your customers' needs. Take a moment now to write down three or four open-ended questions, beginning with each of the above words. It is better to plan some of these questions now rather than wait until you are face-to-face with the customers.

Closed Questions:

These stimulate an either/or or yes-no response. They can be helpful when you want to force a decision between two positive alternatives. Say "Do you prefer the red or the white ones?" rather than "Will you take these?" which could be answered with a no.

Closed questions can cause trouble when used like this in greeting a customer: "May I help you?" or "May I have a few minutes of your time?" These invite a yes or no response and frequently result in the conversation being terminated. If the answer is no you've created a hurdle that could have been avoided. A simple hello would be much more helpful in greeting your customers.

Use Statements That Work Like Questions:

This technique is particularly effective in drawing information from a customer who offers an objection or complaint. Just restate the objection in the customer's words and look expectantly for an explanation: "The design isn't what you'd like" or "You don't care for this combination of flowers." This can help flush out hidden concerns and objections that you can deal with effectively.

Directive Questions:

These are helpful after a customer says "No" to your proposal.

- "We do agree that you need the services of designers who have special expertise in wedding work, don't we?"
- "Can we agree that you'll be making a substantial investment in this wedding and that controlling costs is important?"

Directive questions such as these direct the customer to areas of agreement. They are designed to get a Yes response and reopen a discussion that had been terminated with a final No. Directive questions give you a second - and third - chance to close the sale.

Ask Permission To Question:

Sometimes we may feel uncomfortable about asking a lot of questions. We may be afraid the customer might resent it. A good way to break the ice and relieve the tension is simply to say, "In order for me to determine how I can best be of service to you, would you mind if I get your answers to a few questions?" You'll almost always get a Yes because you're demonstrating a sincere interest in your customer. Then you can go ahead confidently and ask the questions.

Questions That Work For You:

- "If you were to consider choosing another florist other than the one you're using, what are some of the things you might be looking for?"
- "What is your current florist doing that you're not completely satisfied with?"
- "Why are those things important to you?"
- "If we could do all the things you want done and not do the things you don't want done, could we compete for your business?"

We all have our own personal selling style. The questions above may trigger your thoughts in developing a list of questions that fit your personal selling style. I urge you to make a list and memorize your favorite key questions so you can start using them tomorrow. It's a great way to *FIND A NEED AND FILL IT.*

