



5 SIMPLE STEPS FOR KEEPING CLIENTS HAPPY

Stay on top of the skills your customers' value most.

By Barry Farber

Every week I spend at least five hours on the phone interviewing my client's customers. Most of this research is intended to help my clients understand their customer base and increase customer satisfaction and drive sales. There are tremendous benefits to this research that go beyond helping my customers serve theirs better. Their advice contains valuable recommendations that anyone can use to stay more customer focused. Here are five ways you can stay on top of the sales skills customers' value most:

1. Be Proactive

When I ask my clients' customers about the most important assets a salesperson can have, they often mention a proactive approach. This applies to any area of the salesperson's company that serves the customer; from the customer service department to billing.

When things go wrong it becomes the ultimate opportunity to show them that what you promised in the first place is what they will get. You build trust more easily when a problem is solved fast than if there are never any problems at all. And trust isn't just built by responding to problems, it could just be a question that needs to be answered. Each customer wants to feel like they are the most important person on your list.

2. Communicate

Whether it's before the sale, during the sale or long after the sale, communication is the glue that keeps the relationship together. Facilitate communication through statements like, "Let me see if I understand what you're saying," or, "Just to make sure we're on the right track, are these the three issues you're concerned about?"

Good communication happens when people really listen. It's also a good idea to ask your customer how they would like to be contacted after the sale and how often. Twice a week? Once a month? Every customer is different. One question I always ask when interviewing is, "Is there anything the company or salesperson is not doing that they could be doing to serve you better?" This question always collects valuable information from the customer that can keep you that account and ensure the small problems don't turn into big ones.

3. Have a Positive Attitude

This might sound like a no-brainer, but you wouldn't believe how many times I've heard customers go on and on about how important a friendly and upbeat attitude is with salespeople or anyone working at their company.

Very often, I've heard comments like, "John comes into our office and always leaves us in a better mood. He seems to know everyone who works in our department." Great salespeople seem to spread their positive attitude around. You never know who has hidden influence in the decision process or who might be promoted in the future.

4. Understand the Clients' Business

If you're not doing this, then you might as well send a product and price sheet in the mail and hope for the best. Great salespeople are able to get a handle on customers' needs by focusing on them way before the product is presented. Good salespeople seem to have a passion for asking pointed questions and really discovering what makes customers and their businesses so unique. Then the focus becomes how their product or service will address the unique needs of the customer.

5. Follow Up

Nothing magic about this one; just follow up with your customers the day after you deliver your product or solve a problem. Whether you contact your customers through email or snail mail, offer something you think they might enjoy, and offer information that would be useful to them. When you consistently follow up after a sale, you show customers that you're there for them even when they're not buying.

If you're thinking these points are just common sense, you're right. Very often, the things that customers say work the best are the things salespeople lose sight of or take for granted.

(Source: © Entrepreneur Media SA (Pty) Ltd. All rights reserved)