
Why Do So Many Salespeople Fail To Get It?

by BILL BROOKS

What do you say to your prospects and customers? Better yet, what should you be saying? Far too many salespeople simply don't get "it." But what is "it," anyway?

"It" is the one, single thing you can say to drive or destroy any sale. "It," by the way, is not what most salespeople think it is. "It" is not:

- Small talk.
- Salespeak.
- Closing maneuvers.
- Pseudo trust-building, transparent small talk.

"It" is not even glittering presentations, knock'em dead PowerPoint presentations or well-rehearsed "pitches." Instead, here is what "it" is:

- Salespeople should not ask any questions or utter one word to a prospect that does not bring value into the interchange between the salesperson and the prospect.

What, exactly, does that mean? How about some examples

of the most common violations of this precept? Here they are:

- The salesperson who asks questions of the prospect that clearly show that there has been no homework done to learn about the prospect's needs, agenda, problems, challenges or dreams.
 - The salesperson who asks a prospect a question and then answers it for them.
 - The salesperson who meets the prospect and then proceeds to download every imaginable feature, benefit, cost comparison and pricing structure known to the human race.
 - The salesperson who talks to hear himself or herself talk.
- Enough said about the bad stuff, though. Let's take a hard look at "the right stuff." What are the things you should say or do that truly do bring value to the relationship?
- Only address issues that you're totally confident and knowledgeable about.

- Only ask questions that you're well grounded in and confident with regard to what the answers will likely be.
- Say as little as possible when first approaching any prospect. Let them do the talking.
- Customize every presentation to address only those exact benefits that the prospect is in need of and have verbalized that they would like to have.
- Ask questions to make sure your presentation is on target — and then redirect the presentation to be precisely what your prospect needs to see — before proceeding too far off target.
- Learn to be comfortable with silence — don't try to fill it up with meaningless words for the sake of conversation.
- Understand that the more you talk, the greater the chance for error on your part and/or confusion or objection on the part of your prospect.

Two questions might be of great value here. They are:

- Why do salespeople talk too much?
- Why do they ask and say the wrong things?

The answer to the first question might be that they believe

Ask questions to make sure your presentation is on target....

the outdated law that says, "Great salespeople have the gift of gab." Maybe they operate under the mistaken belief that if they keep a strong volley of verbiage flying at the prospect they will never be questioned about their product knowledge — or lack of it. Unfortunately, both beliefs are wrong and badly in need of an overhaul.

The answer to the second question is really pretty simple. Lots of salespeople ask the wrong things because they fail to gather enough data before they get in front of a prospect. Quite often, they also simply don't know how to ask the right questions. Perhaps this is a training issue — maybe even a lack of self-confidence. In either case, it's a problem.

Saying the wrong things is not so easy to analyze. Failure to listen, an insensitivity to the real issues, improperly applied knowledge, an inability to understand and subsequently communicate the real issues related to why someone would want to buy their product or service — the list is virtually endless. Bottom line. What does this really boil down to anyway? Get "it" and you'll sell well. Failure to get "it" means lots of misery. So work hard to say or ask nothing that doesn't add great value to the sale, relationship or long-term value of you, your product or service, to your customer. Master this and you will be ahead of the curve. Fail to do so and you could be a casualty of sales.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Bill Brooks is CEO of The Brooks Group, an international sales training and business growth firm based in Greensboro, North Carolina. For more information

visit www.thebrooksgroup.com. If you would like to receive The Brooks Group's free e-mail monthly Sales or Sales Management newsletter, e-mail Barbara@thebrooksgroup.com or call The Brooks Group at (336) 282-6303.