
The Top Sales Blunders

by KELLEY ROBERTSON

We all make mistakes when selling our product or service. Here are the most common mistakes people make. I have to admit I have made many of the mistakes listed in this article, even though I have been teaching this stuff for almost a decade. I hope you can learn from them.

- **Allowing a prospect to lead the sales process** — The best way to control the sales interaction is to ask questions. This is also the best way of learning whether or not your product or service meets the needs of your prospect. Quality questions that uncover specific issues, problems or corporate objectives are essential in helping you establish yourself as an expert.
- **Not completing pre-meeting research** — After several weeks of voice mail I finally connected with my prospect and scheduled a meeting. Unfortunately, I entered the meeting without first researching the company. Instead

of presenting a solution to an existing problem, I spent the entire meeting learning fundamental information, which to senior executives is a complete waste of time. This approach is one of the most common mistakes. I have received countless phone calls from salespeople hawking their wares and trying to sell me stuff I have no need for. As a sole proprietor, I do not need a complex phone system, additional employees, or an automated payroll system. Invest the time learning about your prospect before you call them and before you try to schedule a meeting.

- **Talking too much** — Too many salespeople talk too much during the sales interaction. They espouse about their product, its features, their service, and so on. When I first bought carpet for my home, I recall speaking to a salesperson who told me how long he had been in the business, how smart he was, how good his carpets were, etc. But this dialogue did nothing to convince me that I should buy from him. Instead, I left the store thinking that he did not care about my specific needs. A friend of mine is in the advertising business and often talks to prospects who initially request a quote for a specific advertising job. Instead of talking at great length about the ad agency's experience and qualifications, he gets the

potential client talking about her business. By doing this, he is able to determine the most effective strategy for that prospect.

- **Giving the prospect information that is irrelevant** — When I worked in the corporate world, I was subjected to countless presentations where the salesperson shared information that was completely meaningless to me. I don't care about your financial backing or who your clients are. Make the most of your presentation by telling me how I will benefit from your product or service until I know how your product or service relates to my specific situation.
- **Not being prepared** — I remember calling a prospect expecting to receive his voice mail. That meant I was completely unprepared when he answered the call himself. Instead of asking him a series of qualifying questions I simply responded to his questions, allowing him to control the sale. Unfortunately, I didn't progress any further than that initial call. When you make a cold call or attend a meeting with a prospect, it is critical that you are prepared. This means having all relevant information at your fingertips, including pricing, testimonials, samples and a list of questions you need to ask. I suggest creating a checklist of the vital information you will need and reviewing this list before you make your call. You have

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exactly one opportunity to make a great first impression, and you will not make it if you are not prepared.

• **Neglecting to ask for the sale** — I recall a participant in one of my workshops expressing interest in my book. I told him to look through it, but at no time did I ask for the sale. Later, I heard him express this observation to other participants in the program. If you sell a product or service, you have the obligation to ask the customer for a commitment, particularly if you have invested time assessing their needs and know that your product or service will solve a problem. Many people are concerned with coming across as

pushy, but as long as you ask for the sale in a non-threatening, confident manner, people will usually respond favorably.

• **Failing to prospect** — This is one of the most common mistakes independent businesses make. When business is good, many people stop prospecting, thinking that the flow of business will continue. However, the most successful salespeople prospect all the time. They schedule prospecting time in their agenda every week.

Even the most seasoned sales professional makes mistakes from time to time. Avoid these blunders and increase the likelihood of closing the sale.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



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