
Personal Credibility Is Essential To Sales Success

by BILL BROOKS

The value system of our society has shifted dramatically during the last two decades. The new values demand a totally different approach to selling than those that were in favor under previous value systems. These value shifts have occurred not only for buyers, but for sellers as well. Value-based selling demands a new value structure. As Bob Dylan sang years and years ago, the times they are a-changing! And I think that you and I can both agree that times are really changing!

When I first entered the direct sales business, I was told that the way to sell was through manipulation, intimidation and domination. Our antiquated training taught that the best way to get appointments was to stretch the truth about the purpose of the calls, that the best way to make add-on sales was to pressure our customers, and that selling was totally a numbers game. The old game plan was to hit an area quickly, talk fast and set prospects up for "the kill." The Golden Rule took on a new twist, rephrased to say, "Do unto others, then get out."

Unfortunately, that once popular approach to sales is still used by some misguided salespeople. Only a short time ago, one of the most popular sales training books was *Selling Through Intimidation*. High-pressure tactics, trick closes and speed-talking techniques were the foundation of far too many sales organizations.

Surviving Into the Next Millennium

Organizations that trust their futures to outdated techniques will not survive the value-based demands

of the 21st Century. Salespeople who trust their careers to those same outdated methods will languish right along with the companies that espouse them. Only salespeople and organizations who trust their careers and business success to their personal credibility will thrive.

This idea contrasts markedly with the old-school philosophy that sought out people who had the personality for sales. A good personality for sales may well produce short-range sales success, but today's demanding and busy customers are unlikely to place their faith solely in a winning sales personality. A reputation for honesty must be built on a level deeper than personality. Long-range sales success will rely on the credibility one has as a person.

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Today's and tomorrow's successful salesperson will not rely on making single sales nor on tricking customers into buying, but on a multi-faceted strategy of long-range, repeat business and customer referrals, grounded in a reputation as an honest and highly credible person.

Credibility Unlocks the Door to Success

Since we know that lots of people tend to get tense in crowds, it follows that crowded marketplaces also make buyers tense. The greatest personal challenge you face today is overcoming the tension that exists in a crowded selling environment.

Behavioral psychologists have a term known as territorial imperative. Most graphically evident in lower animals, it is nonetheless true with humans: Virtually every living creature marks out an area that he or she will defend against all intruders. When that personal space is invaded, its owner examines the intruder carefully to determine if it is friend or foe. Only when one trusts the intruder will he or she relax. Without credibility, you will remain an untrusted intruder.

If your credibility can transform this natural tension into trust, you will break through its resistance and close the sale. Failure to establish credibility with your prospects will reduce you to merely another face in the bustling crowds of salespeople they see daily. Your credibility is the key to your prospects' view of you as an honorable person. And, in the final analysis, honor, integrity, virtue, commitment and honesty are not values of the past to be cast aside. Instead, they are the ingredients of a successful career — yours, mine and anyone else who aspires to be a real pro.

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