



BSBSLS408 Present, secure and support sales solutions

Learner Guide



Prepare for sales presentation

An effective presentation should:

- Focus on the benefits of my products/services and they will relate to meeting the needs of the customer/prospect/client.
- Commence with the most important benefits and continue in descending order of importance but only referring to relevant benefits.
- Include a very brief background summary of the organisation
- Include only appropriate and customised illustrations and graphics
- Include opportunities for the client/customer/prospect to engage in conversation.
- Aim to finish with a powerful conclusion which illustrates/reinforces the benefits

Make the presentation relevant:

- Do not trap yourself into making a standard presentation and repeat the same thing in every presentation and hope that something in this one will occur to make it different!
- Show exactly how your product or service solves the customer's specific problems.
- Get to the point and stay there!
- Know what your key points are and learn how to make them quickly.

Be animated and use your voice:

Make a statement with enthusiasm and credibility by showing you are excited! A common mistake when someone is familiar with the product or service is to rattle off the details in parrot fashion; monotone presentations will quickly lose the interest of your customer/client/prospect.

Review product information:

Product knowledge or familiarity with your product/service is critical at the presentation point as you certainly do not want to give an impression that this is day one at the job, even if it is!!

What is product knowledge?

Product knowledge is having accurate and informative details of a product/service features and benefits.

Features:

- Features are physical, tangible, measurable characteristics of a product/service.
- You can see, hear, smell, feel or taste them.
- Other features include the brand, what it's made of and price.
- Features answer the question "what is it?"

Features are easy to determine because they are usually obvious, appearing on the packaging or label or readily observable.

To ensure familiarity with products and services include background, functionality, purpose and some additional areas likely to be raised:

- The product's purpose
- How the product/service works
- How the product is developed/manufactured
- How the product is checked for quality
- How the product/service is delivered
- How the product is maintained and serviced
- How long the product is likely to last (including any warranties)
- How the product compares to similar products/services you may have on offer
- How the product/service compares to competitor's product/service
- The products strengths and limitations (the capability of the product to deliver benefits to clients)
- Which other products or services might complement this product or service

Benefits:

While features tell a customer/client/prospect what the product or service is they don't sell it to the client.

Benefits sell it. Hence the saying: sales features tell; benefits sell.

- Benefits provide the answer to the client's question "what's in it for me to buy this product?"
- Benefits contain the advantage that a product characteristic or feature can deliver to a specific client.

Identify sales tactics, and assess and choose options that meet needs and preferences of the prospect

Given the objective of any small business is to survive in their marketplace, the company are always looking for that "edge" to get the sale.

Some sales tactics may be right for your business, but they need to be explored for a variety of pitfalls, not the least being ethics!

Areas to question on employing tactics that you do not already use:

- The first question to address is "why?"
- Knowing why you are doing this will assist in giving you the actual direction to complete the sales tactic.
- What specifically would you like to see in order for a sale to be produced?

Think about your target prospect/customer or client.

- Who are they?
- How do they like to be engaged?
- What are your business goals?
- What is your budget?

What am I selling?

It may be a product, service or advice that is your core commodity or it is a combination

Knowing what you're selling will allow you to see what tactics will be best suited to attract sales and give you value for time, energy, skills and money spent

What is MY point of difference?

Understanding and identifying your point of difference early on helps you define the right sales tactic.

- Perhaps establishing an identity through company blogs and social media would be a useful tactic
- Demonstrating your ability to research further into your product or service can show a point of difference
- You may have more insight into statistics, facts and figures
- Attention to detail – you may offer to conduct additional research prior to meeting with customers or prospects to define another point of difference

Sales solutions?

Sales solutions involve the use of various customer interaction methods providing the sales force access to a larger potential customer/client/prospect base through various communication methods.

Some include:

- Direct field sales (door to door and business to business)
- Market knowledge
- Quality assurance procedure
- Compliance management
- Record keeping
- Recruiting process
- Ongoing training.

What you can do to make considerations for the variety of sales solutions is to:

- Sit down and discuss your business and your sales challenges with your team.
- Determine what could be causing these issues.
- Determine which, if any, of your suggested list of solutions is appropriate, taking into consideration your time and budget constraints.

For example, if the sales solution agreed upon is more training or sales delivery coaching, set a date for the program.

Make sure you agree on deliverables and outcomes, so that when the program is completed, you will be able to measure the success of your investment.

Prepare to meet buyer needs:

Typically, the issue of preparing to meet buyer needs with a sales ready solution becomes important in two situations:

- 1) There is a new product or service to launch and it is essential that sales targets are met and preferably exceeded.
- 2) The product or service has already been launched but sales are disappointing and corrective action is required.



A sales solution strategy employing tactics, sales information and materials that will work for both the sales team and any additional sales channels the company may develop

Identify and select sales aids (collateral)

Marketing, collateral and sales tools/aids are an essential adjunct to the success of the sales function.

- Sales aids are often referred to as collateral materials that assist or clarify/explain your product or service and convey the benefits to prospective buyers.

They may be:

- A database record
- A brochure
- An advertisement
- A graphic illustration
- A website
- A PowerPoint presentation.

Sales aids provide customers/prospects with a visual impression of your company as well as the product and as such the use of sales aids should leave a lasting impression.

When issuing sales aids such as brochures, website addresses or other collateral the manner in which you present it and yourself should be professional and reliable.

Sales aids are the instruments used by sales people to close the sale or make the final pitch in achieving this.

Collateral is usually addressed initially through design and collaboration between sales and creative staff to:

- Achieve winning designs
- Formulate marketing messages that resonate with your customers and prospects
- Manage collateral materials through sound production
- Investigate the most economical way of achieving this
- It doesn't have to cost a bundle to have professional-looking sales aids to add to your presentation.

It is also worth the effort to review existing sales aids or collateral as familiarity can give you a false impression of effectiveness.

What you and your sales team may think are relevant or current, in terms of design, is not necessarily what the customer or more importantly the prospect will see.

Plan promotional sales aids material – ideas:

- Business flyers
- Newsletters
- Media releases
- Internet advertising.

Plan action sales aids:

- Telemarketing
- Appointment setting skills
- Use thank you notes for business calls
- Follow-up calls.

Plan the plan:

- Strategic planning
- Marketing and sales management workshops
- Business development seminars

- Public relations and media management workshops
- Operational management assessments.

Identify alternatives for prospects and assess in relation to anticipated buyer needs

Prepare for a sales presentation:

To isolate alternatives for prospects, be they current or follow up would be a matter of making assessments of what has been detailed in the session and then isolate maybe one or two specific methods of presentation and enlarge on that for prospects.

As a prospect is a person or company that you are expecting to do business with in the future, concentrate on areas that would suit future customer presentations rather than existing ones.

Before the sales presentation:

Prospects want to know your presentation has been tailored for them. To do this, you must do your research and prepare ahead of time.

You should:

- Learn your prospect's goal for the presentation
- What is the prospect hoping to achieve as a result of the presentation
- Do they want to learn something new
- Evaluate your product or service.

Even if it's a first discussion with a prospect and you have never spoken with them before, often your prospect will share detailed thoughts about why they would like to speak with you.

Understand your goals for the presentation:

- What do you want the prospect to do
- Are you prepared should the prospect be ready to sign an agreement
- Needs to arrange follow-up meetings
- Plan to achieve an impact of solving a particular problem for the prospect

Prospecting through Telemarketing:

Telemarketing is especially useful when the prospects for a small business are located in hard-to-reach places, or when many identified prospects must be contacted in order to find one interested in making a purchase.

Although telemarketing can be used as a stand-alone operation, it often works best as part of an overall marketing effort.

If your company has telemarketing as a strategic plan for prospects, consider:

- Which products and services are prospects to be told about.
- Do you want to use telemarketing to increase volume through new prospect sales or just establish new prospects by using a particular product or service as a 'lead-in.'



For example: A company might send introductory information through email, then follow-up with a telemarketing call to assess the prospect's interest, and finally send a salesperson to visit.

Telemarketing can be either inbound or outbound in scope:

- Inbound telemarketing consists of taking incoming telephone calls usually generated by your advertising, direct mail/email or catalogues.
- It may be just answering sales leads and questions, not taking sales orders.
- Staff working in the area of telemarketing for 'prospects' may not be trained as much as sales staff because the customer already has shown an interest by calling in.
- Telemarketing in this instance is used to qualify certain prospects, define the market scope overall or in a territory or generate new business

Outbound telemarketing:

- Can be aimed directly at the prospect, in this instance.

For example:

- A home repair business may call people in the community to search for prospects.
- It can be part of a business-to-business marketing campaign.

If the outbound telemarketing is focused on gaining sales results, the company would need to ensure staff used for this are well trained on product knowledge, as more actual selling is involved than with inbound operations.

Telemarketing is used for:

- Selling
- Generating leads
- Gathering information
- Improving customer service.

Use your web site more effectively

- Make sure your site collects the contact information of your interested prospects 24/7.
- Done correctly, the internet can pull in lots of new prospective customers with very little effort. The key to using a website is delivering the right message to the right people and following up with them.
- Your site has to be effective, the copy has to be right, and it must be visible in the search engines so people can find you.

Business to Business

- LinkedIn would be the main social media outlet for prospecting business to business as it engages with decision makers.
- For other companies this might be Twitter, Facebook pages or a combination of all.
- Build up a personal brand online that will position you in the minds of prospects.
- Online presence can identify key decision makers, prospect online, listen for leads and gain introductions
- Build up a strategic contact list

When it comes to identifying alternatives for prospects and assess them in relation to anticipated buyer needs you can make a list of the many areas discussed and as suggested expand on the ones you think would work best for you and your organisation.

- Exchange business cards at networking events
- Speak at professional meetings
- Use LinkedIn to answer network prospects
- Use the internet to ask questions, search for decision-makers in target companies
- Use blogs to join discussions in your prospects groups
- Listen and respond to prospects on Twitter and Facebook
- Prospect contacts through your main website
- Use keyword-targeted Google adwords
- Ask your best customers for prospect referrals.

Present sales solution

Controlling your own body language. One person's body language unconsciously influences how the other person in a sales meeting feels. You can influence the way customers feel through body language.

Try to use a non-verbal vocabulary that is generally understood to convey positive messages. If the customer is a good reader of body language, you are ahead. If the customer is not, you have not lost anything:

- Speak with familiar language
- Maintain good posture, sitting erect but not stiff
- Hands should be visible and open
- Avoid closed gestures, such as crossing your arms across your chest
- Smile
- Maintain eye contact, particularly while the customer is speaking
- Avoid staring, look away occasionally

Focus your attention on the customer:

- Avoid fidgeting or letting your eyes wander while the customer is speaking
- These actions will draw the customer's attention away from the conversation and suggest you would rather be somewhere else
- Nod your head in agreement which is a positive sign but do it convincingly and in appropriate places.
- Occasionally express agreement verbally to reinforce nods

Reflect the customer's language:

- Make customers feel more comfortable at first by matching their body language.

For example:

- If the customer's body language is very open, match it.
- If it is reserved or nervous, tone down your enthusiasm a bit to make the customer more comfortable.
- If the customer prefers to maintain some distance, avoid moving too closely.

During the meeting, if you think a more positive voice tone would help to create a supportive selling environment gradually change your verbal address to be more positive in order to influence the way the customer feels.

Listening skills

Good communication is certainly necessary, but, when discussed it is usually about the talking part, not always the listening part.

- There is a misconception that if a person speaks well, it means that he or she has good communication skills.
- A sales situation is all about communication, the buyer talks, the buyer listens, the seller talks and the seller listens. It is a specialised communication situation.

Given this specialisation and relative complexity you cannot sell your products and services unless you understand what the customer needs.

Understanding comes only through listening:

- In any sales cycle, you should ask short questions and keep listening.
- Listening happens through both your eyes and ears because you keep observing what is happening.
- Listening is a most important skill in selling.
- Listening allows you to understand your customers' needs and wants.

Ineffective listening can damage relationships and deteriorate the trust that you have with your customers, clients and prospects. The price of poor listening can be lost selling opportunities.

Some don'ts to what you may think is listening:

- Don't do something else while the customer/client is talking
- Don't be thinking about your next call or how much commission you will get if you make this sale, just listen!
- Don't interrupt the conversation so that you can spit something out, listen!
- Don't fake listening to the client just so you can get in your comments, listen!
- Try not to be distracted by background noise or other distractions that will hinder your ability to listen.

Make the client feel heard:

This type of quality goes beyond becoming just a better listener as it involves ensuring that the person to whom you are listening actually feels heard.

- To make someone feel heard, clarify what the customer has said during the sales conversation.
- Rephrase their comments or questions in your own words.
- If you need more information clarify this by asking:
- "For my own understanding what you are saying is ..."
- "To further clarify this ..."
- "What I am hearing is ..."
- "Help me understand ..."
- "Tell me more ..."

Become a solution-oriented listener:

- Focus on listening for a solution to the points being discussed rather than focus on the problem

Listen for what is not said:

- Many conversations contain more important information than what is said. If you sense that the client is sending conflicting messages, ask a question to explore the meaning behind the words and the message that you think the client is trying to communicate.

Listen for information:

- When you listen for information, you are looking under the words to explore the implied meaning behind them. This prevents you from wrongly prejudging or misinterpreting the message that the client is communicating to you.

Listening is a learned and practiced skill that will open up new selling opportunities that you may have never noticed. It allows you to receive and process valuable information that might have been missed or neglected otherwise. So, invest the time needed to sharpen your listening skills.

Open-ended questions:

- Open ended questions are one of the most important tools for those who sell, as long as you listen!
- They help you gather information, qualify sales opportunities, and establish rapport, trust and credibility.
- Many sales training techniques include a set of prepared open ended questions as a guide for the sales team.

Open ended questions are those that are answered by more than a simple yes or no; questions where the prospect/customer/client gets directly involved in the sales discussion.

The key here is to ask the question and let the prospect/customer give you their answer:

- No leading.
- No prompting
- No interrupting.

Here are some generic open ended questions but you should create several additional questions specific to your company/industry.

Open ended questions:

- What prompted you/ your company to look into this?
- What are your expectations/ requirements for this product/ service?
- What process did you go through to determine your needs?
- How do you see this happening?
- What is it that you'd like to see accomplished?
- Who have you had success with in the past?
- Who have you had difficulties with in the past?
- Can you help me understand that a little better?
- What does that mean?
- How does that process work now?
- What challenges does that process create?
- What challenges has that created in the past?
- What are the best things about that process?
- What other items should we discuss?
- What do you see as the next action steps?
- What is your timeline for implementing/ purchasing this type of service/ product?
- What other data points should we know before moving forward?
- What budget has been established for this?
- What are your thoughts?
- Who else is involved in this decision?
- What could make this no longer a priority?
- What's changed since we last talked?
- What concerns do you have?

A closed question in contrast would ask the customer/client/prospect to make choices among a set of pre-determined facts.

- "How would you like to pay, cash or cheque?"
- "When is best for you, Tuesday or Thursday?"
- "Would you like to go ahead with the standard option or is the deluxe option better for you?"

Mastering open and closed questions:

The easy way to remember the difference is that if you want to open up a conversation you ask open-ended questions and if you want to close down a conversation you use close-ended questions.

Adjust presentation to match needs and preferences of buyer

Researching customer needs:

- Obtain information on your customers to ensure customer needs are understood.
- Once you have identified what you need to know about your customers you can start gathering the information for your presentation.

Where sources of information can be found:

- Your customer records will tell you which customers have purchased from you.
- Records will tell you their purchasing habits of products/services.
- Records will tell you not only what they purchased but when they placed their orders and how much they spend.
- If the current data doesn't provide you with this information, then:
 - Conduct face-to-face or telephone interviews
 - Conduct online surveys or in group discussions
 - Email and online surveys to customers is a good interactive method.

Other sources of free customer information include:

- Business contacts
- Local business reference libraries
- Your local authority, business association or chamber of commerce
- The internet.

Customer needs can be widespread, Some of your research may be hard to pinpoint exact needs.

Look at:

Your competition:

- When researching the needs and preferences of the customer to include data on competitors.
- This information will invariably influence your decision on a final presentation especially when offering new products and services.

Ideally, you will have a point of advantage, not just price but in features that makes it stand out in the marketplace and will help you stand out from the competition.

Competitive intelligence:

- How your customer needs are currently met.
- Why customers choose your product or service rather than your competitors.
- What risks or to what level of gaining market share are you prepared to take?

Avoid giving common knowledge during the sales presentation

- Prior to the presentation, ask if anything has changed since your original presentation if you have already conducted one.
- It makes little sense to present a sales pitch that is no longer relevant to the client.
- Consider that you may cancel a presentation altogether based on feedback and research!

Use persuasive communication techniques to secure buyer interest

Persuasive communication:

One of your sales essentials is communicating. To communicate is to be understood. Another essential is to be believed as the communication in terms of a sales presentation is designed to affect our audiences with our messages, beliefs in our products and our company.

Persuasion is the communicative act that carries out both these goals:

Persuasive communication: Building rapport.

- One of the best ways to achieve successful persuasion is by building rapport with your customer/client/prospect.
- Rapport can mean different things to different people. For some, it could mean chatting with them every day over lunch, over the phone or over the net. For others, it could mean agreeing with them during a meeting.

Persuasion influences any person the way they think, act and feel.

- Persuasive skills used in sales are the ability to convey to others that they understand their concerns, needs and position to solve those issues.
- Persuasion can be classified into informal persuasion and formal persuasion.

Formal persuasive communication:

- Formal persuasive communication flows upward and downward in an organisational structure, such as a project team, a sales force or a committee.
- Formal communication generally takes place within a framework of rules, such as a sales strategy.
- For business purposes, formal persuasive communication should not be manipulative or unethical in its application.

- A certain level of authority is exercised in putting across ideas in a formal manner to persuade people that it is the right direction forward.

Informal persuasive communication:

- In informal persuasive communication, asking the right questions, discussing options and communicating specific ideas in a professional manner is an effective way to persuade others to make a decision, as in sales or marketing.
- The manner in which the persuasive questions are asked and used for the purpose of identifying the benefits of a product or service needs is most important.
- Informal persuasive approaches to a client can help a particular product or service meet those needs.
- To be persuasive in informal communication, avoiding ambiguity helps to deliver a clear message that people can understand and relate to.

Persuasive communication is not aggressive or forceful!

- Every day consumers are subjected to a broad range of persuasive communication.
- Advertising is one of the most obvious examples and is a multi-billion dollar industry focused on persuading someone to act – to buy – to get involved – to sign up.
- Advertising messages come in many forms, television, radio, direct mail newspapers and magazines.
- Social media is becoming a powerful persuasive sales tool.

What does this mean for persuasive communication techniques to secure buyer interest?

- It means planning how you are going to communicate your persuasive message is more important than ever whether it is as personal as a letter or as broad as a presentation to sell your product or service.
- Developing a plan or outline is important to achieve success with persuasive communication.
- It means establishing your credibility. Credibility comes from expertise and relationships. Knowledgeable and well informed sales people demonstrate that they can be trusted.
- Frame your selling goals in a way that identifies common ground with those you intend to persuade.
- It is a process of identifying mutual benefits as you clearly present a persuasive and tangible benefit of your product or service to the customer.
- If no shared advantages are apparent, it is better to adjust your presentation/tactic, until you find a shared advantage.

The 'persuasive' sales person:

- The best sales people who use persuasive communication closely study the issues that matter to their customers/clients/prospects.
- They use conversations, meetings and other forms of dialogue to collect essential information.
- They are good at listening.
- They test their ideas with trusted contacts and question the people they will later be persuading.

Often this process requires a shift in presentation or plans before they even start persuading. It is through this, inquisitive approach that sales people using persuasion develop tactics that appeal to their audience.

Reinforce your position:

- Persuasive sales people supplement data with examples, stories, metaphors and analogies to make their positions come alive.
- Vivid word pictures lend a compelling and tangible quality to the persuader's point of view.

Connect emotionally with your customers:

Although your training and skills lean towards reasoning and the presentation of facts as the major decision making process for the customer, emotion does play an important part.

Persuasive communication, because it is usually animated and powerful, involves the emotions of both the sales person and the customer. Customers are responsive to these emotions and may show their own emotional commitment to the presentation and the benefits identified, rather than through cold case reasoning.

The emotions of trust, feeling of comfort and a willingness to cooperate are all activated by the emotional persuasive delivery by the sales person.

Action:

Try persuading the buyer/customer/client to take a single, specific action. Too often we assume our customers will know what to focus on once we have shown them the presentation and expect them to change their thinking or direction.

We fail to persuade customers if we don't clearly explain what we want them to do.

Other times, we may give a customer several options for action but may ask them to do several things leaving them unsure about which action should be the priority.

Effective persuasion requires us to simplify the message and recommend one clear action for customers to take.

- Clearly emphasize how the customer will benefit from taking the recommended action.
- It must be based on reality; if the benefits you suggest in your presentation sounds too good to be true, it will be seen as a lie and your credibility will be zero!
- Do not use persuasive communication as a method of self-serving. Always consider the customers point of view and to be sure the presentation recommendation is truly in the customer's best interest.
- This balanced approach will be appreciated and will allow the customer to be more open to what you are suggesting in your presentation.

Obtain and present proof of benefits through product purchase

Proof of benefits may include:

- Anecdotes and examples
- Comparisons
- Statistics
- Testimonials

Anecdotes and examples

The astute sales person often uses anecdotes and examples in a sales presentation which illustrate to the customer/client/prospect the point they are trying to make by reference to another similar buyer, with similar challenges, and the fact the company was able to help them resolve the issues or challenges



A good way of training to use anecdotes and examples is to encourage sales staff to share their most powerful experiences, stories and anecdotes with their team and members of staff to help gauge the reactions

- Build a pool of stories – some call it an 'anecdote database.'
- Average sales performers are often better placed to conduct business-to-business issues with senior decision makers by using anecdotes and examples. It can give a sense of credibility and winning the customers trust

Comparisons

Showing your customer/client/prospect that you bring value to the table in a simple, professional manner can be highlighted by engaging with comparisons, such as:

- Comparison tables
- Compare illustrations and graphics
- Compare business flowcharts.

Using comparison charts and tables are great for comparing your business results with those of your competitors

- Customers, clients and prospects alike can all easily understand and compare what they are getting if they do business with you
- Show them the benefits by using similar situations, experiences, stories and case studies by comparison

Statistics

- Statistics generally work as supporting evidence, similar to comparisons but have more factual background
- Use industry based statistics to compare or feature against the customer/prospect's own data
- Use the statistics to drive the benefits and show the facts of what the customer would receive if they choose your product or service, based on the statistics
- Do not overwhelm your customer with statistics as too much data will invariably turn them off!
- Make sure any charts, figures or data base projections are legitimate. The more legitimacy you present the more credibility you will have
- Be careful of making unfounded 'generalisations' which may hold their interest, but your customers will only remember the specifics

Testimonials:

Adding testimonials to the presentation mix is probably one of the most effective ways of establishing credibility.

So why are testimonials so effective?

- Testimonials build trust.
- If past and current customers are happy and pleased to have purchased your products or services, the great service you have provided personally and enjoy dealing with your company they will have no hesitation in telling their associates or detailing a testimonial if you ask for one.
- A testimonial has an instant and recognisable positive experience with your products and company.
- Testimonials are not a sales pitch, as they are not written in your voice, but they stand out in your presentation as candid and unbiased accounts of how well your product or service works and the professional manner in which you conduct your business.
- Testimonials can overcome scepticism, should that be present in your presentation.
- A good testimonial can have the ability to convert the tough customer to at least listen to the remainder of your story!

Some benefits of using testimonials:

- A new prospect may come to you by referral from one of your existing customers.
- A good testimonial received by a new prospect can pre-condition them to do business with you.
- You may not need to 'sell' in the same manner with existing testimonials or convince prospects that your product or service will provide the benefit they seek.
- Your ability to deliver can be verified by the person giving the referral.
- Testimonials are FREE!
- Be careful to not pay for testimonials by asking someone for their quotes, as this will often lead to offending some customers.
- Put your customers' testimonials on your web page and other social or professional networks.
- If you have a newsletter that you publish, put an ad in the newsletter that contains the testimony and some information about your service or product.
- How to get good testimonials:
- Some satisfied customers will occasionally call or email you and express their appreciation without any prompting from you. Ask them to put it in writing as a formal testimonial.
- If you have been in business for some time you probably already have a file of these comments. It is good management to review them and make sure they are not "dated."
- If your business is brand new, try approaching some business associates for a personal testimonial on your integrity, personal qualities and business experience.
- Don't wait too long after commencing business to approach your customers.
- Contact or send your new customers or clients a personal note asking what they liked best about your product or service.

Identify and assess verbal and non-verbal buying signals

Verbal buying signals of the prospect may include:

- Confirmations
- Questions
- Statements of requirement.

Non-verbal buying signals of the prospect may include:

- Close examination of the product
- Moving closer to where a product is to be installed
- Smiling and nodding.

Verbal buying signals:

- It will pay to be attentive and looking out for the buying signals that customers use in a variety of circumstances.
- It is most beneficial in the sales process to spot and react to buying signals. If the signal takes the form of a question, answer it briefly, but move the conversation towards making suggestions.
- These signals can be misinterpreted so you have to be careful.
- The customer or prospect may just be seeking clarification, but at least they are still engaging in conversation with you.
- Is it just conversation or are they signalling they are ready to buy?

Verbal signals can fall into several areas:

- Repeating a question that has already been fully answered and generally acknowledging that it has been, e.g., "How much did you say it costs?"
- The customer expressing a positive statement that indicates working with you, e.g., "I could see you on Thursday", "How often would we need to meet face to face?", "We may need to involve the design department".
- Asking for a sample, "Can I try it for a month and see if it works?", "I'll need to see it in action"
- Making positive statement like, "That looks really good", "Who could say no to that?"
- Any statement or question about money usually indicates that the resistance has been removed and the sales process has now moved to the top of the decision list.
- Any statement or question about timing, e.g. "When can we start?", "It will need to be as soon as this Thursday", "Can't we do it in two weeks?" If this type of signal arrives as a question, you can legitimately avoid answering it by asking back, "When would it be best for you?"
- Asking a colleague who is in the room as they have already made their mind up but want to confirm their decision, e.g., "What do you think"?
- If the customer asks for a references or for a personal contact with a satisfied client, the decision has been made they just want to ensure they don't seem to be a pushover.
- Non-verbal buying signals:
 - Spending time concentrating on just one of your products or samples.
 - Changes of body state, moving stance, gestures, style of speech, etc.
 - Getting out their 'pen', literally or metaphorically.
 - Open body language.

Types of not-buying signals:

- Unwillingness to enter into commitments
- Messages and e-mails go unanswered
- "I really like your suggestion but I need to Before we can go ahead", "we'd really like you to help us but we just need a bit more time/have some other priorities to deal with first"
- Avoiding eye contact when you meet
- Playing with your product samples or looking at many without ever concentrating on one
- Physically moving around a lot and not paying much attention to the meeting.

Maintain the right distance:

From the moment you greet customers, watch where they stand. This will tell you how close to approach. If they back away a bit after the handshake, maintain a greater distance.

- People have a comfort zone for how close they want other people to come; only people they feel very comfortable with are allowed to penetrate within a certain distance. Follow these guidelines to maintain a comfortable distance.
- Don't tower over the customer. If you are much taller than the customer, be especially careful to keep a comfortable distance. Once you are seated and the customer communicates more openness, you can begin to approach more closely.
- Be careful about touching. A firm, brief handshake is always acceptable for greeting someone you do not know well. Other touching is uncomfortable for many people.
- Move closer together at an appropriate time. This is valuable in strengthening the positive relationship. But when you move closer to the customer, do it for a reason, e.g., you can move closer to the customer to look at a document together, like a brochure.

Use probing to identify source of buyer resistance

Source of buyer resistance may include:

- Company resistance
- No perceived need
- Price resistance
- Salesperson resistance
- Service dissatisfaction
- Timing issues
- Uncertainty about the product

Probing:

When seeking more detail to identify a source of a customer's resistance to buy, there are a number of questions you could use depending on what they are saying and what you want to discover.

Ask for clarification.

- When the customer uses unclear language, or vague words in your conversation it is logical to ask for more detail.

o What exactly did you mean by -----?

o Could you tell me more about -----?

Purpose:

- Sometimes a customer may indicate or state something that is unclear on its purpose.
- Ask the customer to justify their statement or dig further for underlying causes.

o Why did you say that?

o What were you thinking about when you said -----?

Other areas of probing will assist you in gaining the source of buyer resistance or potential resistance.

You can check that they are giving you a full and accurate account by probing for more detail.

One of the most effective ways of getting more detail is simply by asking the same question again. You can use the same words or you can rephrase the question.

When they have not given you enough information about something, ask them to tell you more.

Who? When? What? Where? Why? How? These are all probing questions that can help you dig down into further detail.

Answer questions before they are asked:

Being prepared by having most questions answered first through copy or advance information in forms of emails, website pages or other means, will hopefully minimise any negative questions and answer their concerns before he or she has the chance to voice their opposition.

- You need to identify and thoroughly understand the profile of your customers market.
- Analyse all the information you have already compiled on your existing customers.
- All of this data presents a clearer picture of those people likely to buy your products or services.
- Create a list of FAQs that answer all the questions that this customer demographic might have.

Probing to identify source of buyer resistance:

Need Awareness:

- The starting point of most sales success is to assist the customer in recognising that purchasing your products or services satisfies the need in their business.
- The acceptance of this need or not can be interrupted by encountering a problem.

No perceived need:

- Break the resistance of 'no need' by aligning your marketing with the current needs and wants of your market or prompted by your customers own marketing
- Use market research of your own in the form of surveys, focus groups, and informal interviews to determine your potential buyer's needs which will reduce buyer resistance if you are constantly identifying the wrong customers!

Information search:

- It is easy for your customer to research their purchasing needs online as it is for you to research the same needs and place on your website, for example, information that provides added educational data about your products and services
- You can add to the information pool on your products by offering a product education seminar to your marketing mix
- Seminars have the environment and potential to shape your customers buying behaviour and meet information and learning shortfalls that may avoid future resistance
- You must offer a true educational experience to the customer to succeed, not just a meet and greet!

Check options:

- After an information search, the customer can evaluate all the available options. Options include desired and critical features, pricing and company credibility
- Trust and credibility can be low in some companies so make sure you are covered by testimonials or other validation evidence
- Instead of maintaining your company as being #1, especially if the customer is being negative towards you on that point, try a third party validation. Have others sing your praises to establish an independent view to enhance your trust and credibility.
- Price resistance:
- Price objections can be an opportunity to sell the value of the product or service.
- Price/value = cost. Cost is the comparison of what is received to the money paid
- Value is what the customer/prospect sees the product doing for them (needs!)
- Compare your product's features, advantages, and benefits to those of the product presently in use.
- Determine if the buyer would benefit more from a lower-priced product.

DON'T

- Apologise for the price
- Make the price the focal point of your sales presentation
- Become defensive

Closing the Sale

Initiate formal close to sales process following one or more trial closes

Formal close may include:

- Inducement
- Narrative close
- Offering alternative choices
- Salesperson request to the prospect to agree to purchase the product or service
- Summary of product benefits.



Closing a sale is the most often used description of one of the final stages in a selling process and often also appears as the most difficult!

- Sales people can be persuasive, assertive, knowledgeable, friendly and every other sales technique, but without the sale it's only a PR exercise!
- Closing the sales should be financial success for you and satisfaction for your customers.
- Anyone can take an order or fulfil a need for a product through existing policies but making the most of a sale and getting customers to come back to you takes some practice and skill in closing.

Closing the sales is not closing the door!

Getting a customer or prospect to say, "Yes" to the sale process as we have said, can be one of the most difficult things to do, or it can be as easy as merely asking for the order.

If you have taken the necessary steps and completed the groundwork, then you may find closing the sale an easier process to finalise.

Closing signals and process:

- Once you observe buying signals, stop selling and close the sale.
- If you miss this observation and continue with your sales approach, you are likely to signal back to the customer that you are not paying attention and the sales may go cold.

Processes:

a) Close the sale process by asking if the customer would like to make the purchase. This is the most simple and straightforward way of closing.

b) Customers generally like to have choices which put them in a controlling position. You can use this to your advantage by saying, "Which of these choices would you like, A or B?" With this close, you are likely to make a sale of one kind or another. Even if you are selling a single product, you can still offer choices of colour, delivery or variable terms by offering an alternate choice. Suggest using questions like, "Would you like it in blue or grey?"

c) Put the customer in a situation where they are not given the option to refuse the sale. If they answer with either of the options you've given them, then you've made the sale.

d) Close the sale process by adding or offering an accessory or free item to the product or service to add a benefit to what the customer is interested in; for example "Let me add (XYX item) to the (product) which will give you additional..." If they accept the additional item then you have made the sale, on the original product.

e) Close the sales process by firstly asking the customer if they have any additional questions, if the answer is no, then indicate on the contract or sales authorisation where the customer needs to sign, pass the document over and say, "if you will just authorise this, I can get this started right away". The word "authorise" is less threatening than the word sign, so customers are more likely to sign when asked.

f) Closing the sale is not closing the door and follow-up is essential in creating in the mind of the customer that they will look at your company for future business. Offer to follow up on any perceived assistance that might be needed with the particular product or service, especially with new and complex software.

Negotiate conditions of agreement, outline a summary of agreement to buyer, and confirm buyer's decision

Conditions may include:

- Client loyalty
- Delivery
- Length of contract
- Payment options
- Price.

Elements of a contract or agreement:

For a legally enforceable contract to be formed, a number of elements must exist:

- a) There must be an offer by one party and its acceptance by the other
- b) The parties must intend to create a legal relationship with enforceable terms
- c) There must be valuable consideration
- d) There must be certainty as to key terms
- e) The parties must be competent to make a legally binding agreement
- f) The matters agreed must be for a lawful purpose.

Prepare and complete sales documents, and process and monitor client order

Purchase Order Forms:

- Help you to tell a supplier exactly what it is that you wish to purchase from them
- Using a purchase order form, you can clearly specify the delivery details, account information and order details for your supplier
- Once completed, this form is issued to monitor the suppliers fulfilment of the order
- By specifying the items you want to procure, on a Purchase Order Form, you can ensure you have clearly communicated your request to the supplier.

The purchase order form helps you identify the:

- Purchase details and requested delivery date
- Delivery details for the items purchased
- Billing and supplier information
- Quantity and unit price of each item
- Total price of the purchase.

Identify and present cross-selling and up-selling opportunities to buyer

- When you cross-sell, you offer the customer a product or service related to whatever they are already buying.
- Up-selling positions higher priced products in a good/better/best progression. Both methods of encouraging clients to spend a little more can dramatically boost your sales.
- Many cross-selling opportunities arise naturally
- To gain the extra sale, you might simply have to mention that the other products or services are available.
- Stay relevant. If you overload customers with too many unrelated cross-selling suggestions they will lose interest quickly.
- One way to facilitate cross-selling and up-selling success is to state specific recommendations from professionals, experts or other customers.

- The approach to cross-selling must be built around serving the customer, not just more selling; for example, you might describe how the additional products or services would complement the original purchase and further solve the customer's problem or enhance their needs.
- Cross-selling and up-selling can occur at different times, depending on the products and services you are selling. In some cases, the best time is while a customer is handling a sample or inspecting the product.
- Leverage the cross-selling potential through your website. Position cross-selling in places where customers and clients can educate themselves on the depth and variety of what your business offers.

The key to successful cross-selling and up-selling is to focus your efforts on meeting the customer's needs, rather than simply pushing more products and services. This is one area of start-up marketing where you may need to do a little experimentation in order to find just the right balance, but you need to make cross selling a key component of your list of sales techniques.

Post-sale contact:

- As previously mentioned, the close of the sale is not the closing of the door, as effective and sincere sales follow up will bring you more sales.
- Remember the 80/20 rule; you will likely get 80% of your sales revenue from 20% of your customers.
- Follow up also doesn't mean you must bend over backwards and jump through hoops at a customer's whim.
- While you should always provide your clients with a value that is greater than the money they paid, you will still perform a service.
- Continue to sell.
- Make yourself available.
- Become a liaison for everything.
- Customer satisfaction.
- Customer retention and loyalty.
- Reset customer expectations as needed.

Ensure agreed expectations have been met:

Measuring customer satisfaction is a critical strategic weapon that can bring increased market share and increased profits.

Product assessment and satisfaction:

- Customer satisfaction measurement must be undertaken with an understanding of the gap between customer expectations and product performance perceptions.
- Satisfaction itself can refer to a number of different facts of the relationship with a customer. For example, it can refer to any or all of the following:
 - Satisfaction with the quality of the particular product or service just received
 - Satisfaction with an ongoing business relationship
 - Satisfaction with the price-performance ratio of a product or service
 - Satisfaction because a product/service met or exceeded the customer's expectations.

Exceptional service:

- The type of service you provide to your customers is crucial to your business success. For many customers, after-sales service is what makes one supplier stand out from another, often more than product or price.
- Be specific about your customer service elements so the customer knows what to expect.
- Find out what expectations your customers have so you do not have to guess or assume.
- Check from time to time that the customer's expectations are still being met or exceeded.
- Ensure employees know what the customer service standards are.
- Be practical as something will go wrong at some time. You can't be perfect.
- Be careful if you always over deliver as this will be your customer's new service standard.
- Make sure you compare your business with your competitors. Get someone to test their customer service.

Provide technical assistance:

Almost every technical support problem has two solutions.

1) The superficial and immediate solution is just to solve the customer's problem.

2) You can usually find a deeper solution or a way to prevent this particular problem from ever happening again, that's great customer service!

Technical knowledge is important in providing that level of support, but good customer services skills might just be more important. If people don't feel comfortable coming to you for help, they won't.

- Be careful not to appear patronising as you will likely be asked the most obvious of questions by some customers.
- Be observant as if a particular issue is repeated frequently it is likely to be part of a larger issue?
- Access appropriate additional after-sales support:
- There could also be a need for additional customer training if the product or service is of a complex nature.
- Don't jump to 'conclusions' on the problem before the customer has had time to explain what the issue is.
- Problems tend to come in stages, especially with say, software, as the user finds issues after enabling functions that don't necessarily appear at the first use.
- Listen clearly to the problem as many technical issues may only need a small correction or explanation to the customer.
- Ensure your company has a policy to react promptly to technical support, record accurately the details and send only qualified person to attend to the problem.
- Be honest with your assessment and admit if you are not qualified to answer all the questions. Seek additional support from your organisation.
- Don't preach! Most customers only want you to fix the issue not give them a lesson in what great technical knowledge you may have in your toolbox; just give the facts.

Ensure contact is made with the buyer post-sale:

- After the sale, check for problems:
- Order received incomplete
- Service issue
- Technical problem.
- Create scripts:
- Have prepared scripts for staff to handle post sale inquiry
- Each problem can be unique and the process individual
- Staff should be trained to handle post service calls with urgency and response.

Are your frontline sales people trained to solve basic post sales problems?

- If so, ensure they know the limits of how far to go to resolve a problem.
- Have you trained sales staff in ownership and self motivation tactics to handle problems in the territory?
- Make sure the correct person handles it.
- Do your sales people listen attentively and know when to apply information to the resolution.

Process:

- Does the company process ensure the sales staff or support staff are communicating the next steps to the customer and explaining how the problem will be resolved?
- Ensure there is a sense of urgency to the resolution process to give the customer a sense of confidence their issues is being resolved.
- Do sales and post service staff keep commitments no matter how small?

Use feedback solicitation regarding sales process and product satisfaction

Feedback:

- Customer feedback and similar contact programmes are good ways of increasing communication with your customers
- They can represent great opportunities to listen to your customers and to let them know more about what you can offer or if problems should exist
- Customer feedback can provide you with detailed information about how your business is perceived
- Feedback is often gathered using questionnaires, on your website, in person, over the telephone or by post.



Once you have it, reviewed it and made an assessment as to its relevancy to the particular area in question, provide easy access to the results with the appropriate staff or personnel.

- Record and analyse all feedback, compliments and suggestions.
- Use plain language in all communications back to customers and to personnel with whom you review this information. Technical jargon sounds like an excuse!
- Set and monitor targets with staff and personnel to address feedback, be it good or bad.
- Keep customers informed of the feedback status so they appreciate you taking the feedback seriously.

Reviewing customer feedback – measure your customer service levels:

Where possible, put systems in place to assess your performance in customer service feedback.

Identify Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which you can extract from feedback and then respond to customer's expectations.

For example:

- The number of queries or complaints about your products or services
- The number of complaints about your employees
- The number of damaged or faulty goods returned
- Average order-fulfilment times
- The number of contacts with a customer each month
- The volume of marketing material sent out and responses generated
- Time taken from order to delivery.

When communicating feedback in consultation with the appropriate personnel, a manager should ensure:

- That focus is on a particular behaviour – and be specific rather than being general.
- Feedback is job related and aim to improve work practices not criticise anyone personally.
- The feedback is focused on goal setting objectives.
- When providing the feedback, it is most effective when there is a short gap between the personnel behaviour and the receipt of that feedback.
- For the feedback to be effective, make sure that the recipient understands the feedback properly.
- Not to mention the factors which are not in control of the recipient.

Methods:

- It's worth remembering that it costs about five times more to attract a new customer than to keep an existing one.
- The simplest way to find out what people want from your service or product is to ask them.
- It's good to get feedback straight from your customers and clients by visiting them and asking the questions directly.
- Of course this is getting less and less popular as sales teams are being reduced in number and also customers are time poor in most cases and will restrict personal visits to an absolute minimum.

- It is critical however, to use a variety of methods and to take the time to get customer feedback.
- While getting feedback could be just a tick box or a form on your website, there are now many low-cost approaches to getting customer input and making the process user friendly and technically compatible with what most people are using in the business world.
- One of the most popular tools for online surveys is SurveyMonkey, as they provide a free or low-cost for advanced surveys that have a natural fit for a small business on a budget.

Address and resolve service problems and difficulties identified through feedback

Let the respondents know:

- It is important to complete the cycle of any survey or feedback by letting the respondents know what you have learned.
- Don't consider it to be too private and confidential, although you obviously do not want the competition to know everything.
- Summaries and pertinent feedback points are all that needs to be disclosed.
- The important thing is that you are acknowledging the respondents as important people and not just survey 'dummies'.

If part of the feedback you received was a difficulty of contacting a sales person or service staff member and it was impossible to know who else they could contact directly then:

- Your reply to the customer or respondent in this case would not jeopardise your competition by creating a detailed contact form online, on your website or printed that includes a small picture of the staff, their contact details, roles and areas they apply service.
- Advise the customers or respondents about this service explaining that this was something you learned during the recent survey, so you are addressing this and providing a more suitable means of making contact to the right staff person.

Client Loyalty

Offer and implement additional sales solutions and benefits to clients when opportunities arise

Client loyalty strategies may include:

- Client clubs
- Client reward schemes
- Credit or discount facilities
- Formal letter of thanks
- Handwritten note thanking the client
- Offering promotional items
- Phone call thanking the client for the business.

Strategy:

A client loyalty strategy is the direction and scope that your organisation wishes to engage to fulfil customer/client expectations.

The strategy would be designed to achieve a major issue or an overall objective.

Focus your marketing on existing clients:

- Your current customers have already overcome certain hurdles to doing business with you and are more likely to buy from you again. The 80/20 rule (you will get 80% of your sales from 20% of your customers) applies.

Be consistent in your approach:

- Treat all customers with consistency to attention, sales and benefits.

Follow through on your commitments:



- If you promise to send customers and clients and especially prospects, information or to follow up on an action, make sure you do it! You will gain loyalty and trust by doing what you say you will do.

Allow yourself to connect with them:

- Ask questions of your customers and clients that will encourage a feeling of shared understanding. You will gain loyalty and trust by 'connecting'.

Position yourself as a resource: Loyalty and trust develop from the beginning and proceeds through the relationship as a resource for your customers and clients to reply upon. Share resources. With this form of loyalty established you can make useful recommendations to customers on a range of other resources both within the industry and personally.

Reward customers for being loyal:

- Send them a handwritten thank you note when you get a referral.
- Mention them or do a feature in your company newsletter or on your website or social media posts.
- Often customers and clients simply want to be recognised and appreciated.

Suggestions on loyalty programs:

- Welcome packs via E-mail. You could split your welcome pack into a series of automated emails over a short period that would guide the customer through the process of using the new product or service.
- Send a free gift in the form of an article or special report.

Say thank you and congratulations with e-cards: E-cards are an animated greeting card that is sent via email. You can automate e-cards to be sent to your customers on special occasions, such as their birthday, the anniversary of them becoming your client, Easter and Christmas, etc.

Loyalty programs can have pitfalls:

- Customers may see no value in joining a loyalty program because they may see the overall program lacking substance or credibility.
- A perception could be the actual rewards offered through a particular loyalty program lack any real value.
- The program may be perceived as giving personal attention, whereas the program is designed for mass use.
- A loyalty program may produce too much spam and junk e-mails jamming up mailboxes