

The 5 Worst Mistakes Salespeople Make

Most often, throughout my corporate sales career, I was a top producer. Much of my success was due to a willingness to learn from others, observation, and asking many, many questions.

Each time I changed sales organization, I always met with the sales manager and top producer individually to find out how the latter proved to be so successful. I wanted to be just like him. At that time, there were almost no saleswomen. The top producers always spoke to me because they assumed females were too weak to be serious competition.

1. Never Assume Anything

In today's society, we are an international community. Given our diverse backgrounds, we naturally communicate in different styles. Subsequently, some of our vocabulary differs in meaning from that of those we meet. Therefore it is imperative to question each sentence that sounds unusual to you.

Many salespeople are too embarrassed to admit that they don't understand what is being said. It will be far more embarrassing to deliver a proposal that was on the wrong track. My advice is to question anything that requires clarification.

You must always be aware of what your competition is saying about you and how you do business. It is very easy to lead a prospect down the wrong path. Therefore, you must go extra lengths to be credible and sincere.

In order to move forward in a sales cycle smoothly and swiftly, you must always question and never assume.

2. Quick-hit selling

I was able to turn my female weaknesses such as "caring too much about the prospects liking me" into my strengths. I turned "caring too much" into impeccable follow-up, delivering on promises and taking care of issues as they arose. If there was an issue between our companies, I would hold a meeting of the minds to come up with a solution that was agreeable to everyone involved.

My counterparts, on the other hand, were only interested in the quick and easy sales. When their prospects asked for brochures, or had questions about delivery, they thought it was just busy work and didn't really matter.

The truth of the matter is follow-up does matter. This one action alone demonstrates your future dedication to the client, your credibility and trustworthiness. Most often the sale will be lost by not following through. In fact, this type of salesperson is what turned the employment doors into revolving doors – in and out.

3. Lack of punctuality

In today's busy world, everyone is exceedingly busy and time is of the essence. Being on time for appointments, whether by phone, internet or in person is your first test of whether or not they can rely on you for excellent service.

Most salespeople try to ignore the fact they are late hoping it will go unnoticed. This only serves to further compound the problem. If you are going to be held up for any reason, my advice is to call well ahead of time to alert the other person. Give a new time that you can easily make and then state, *"I hope this will still be convenient for you."* By showing consideration for their time, it is far less likely they will cancel. When you do arrive for the appointment, immediately apologize and then begin your meeting on a positive note.

4. Lack of respect

Most salespeople are unaware that once they set foot within a company there are no totem poles for importance. The receptionist sometimes is the spouse of the CEO because the secretary is out ill. By being rude to the receptionist, the chance for getting to the executive level is nil. I have witnessed this happening time and again.

My favorite example is after trying for one year to sell to a Fortune 100 company at an executive level, I found my way to the people in the basement. They had more voice in the matter than anyone else, and I earned the sale at the lowest level of the chain. Hence, there are no totem poles.

5. Talk, Talk, Talk

Unfortunately most salespeople love to hear themselves talk and they are the ones who give other salespeople a bad name. When I first began Smooth Sale, A Sales Training Company, female entrepreneurs would not walk but run away from me. They figured I was just like everyone else. However, my strength was and still is relationship building. In fact, my new book is entitled, *"Nice Girls DO Get the Sale, Relationship Building That Gets Results"*.

Recently, I encountered a salesman who spoke non-stop about wanting me to advertise off-line locally rather than on the worldwide web for reasons I felt were untrue. Further compounding the problem, he asked zero questions about my business. Instead, he insisted I advertise in categories that were not an appropriate fit. He violated every relationship building rule in the book. No sale was made.

I ask you, if the salesperson is always talking, how can he or she know what their prospect's business is about, where the challenges lie and what the needs might be? It is far more important to listen and ask questions than to talk. I suggest listening and questioning 80% of each meeting, and talking only 20%. Your prospects will love you for it, and most likely award you the sale!

Elinor Stutz, CEO of Smooth Sale and Author, has transformed her highly successful sales career into a sales training company. Her clientele is comprised of Entrepreneurs Network Marketers and beginning salespeople. More information may be found at www.smoothsale.net

Smooth Sale Delivers:

Original work in the form of Professional Sales Training, Licensing of Programs, Speaking Engagements and her "Sales Tips e-zine".

"Nice Girls DO Get The Sale: Relationship Building That Gets Results" will be released by Sourcebooks this fall. The *"Smooth Selling 4-CD audio seminar"* is available now.

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