



SELLING ISN'T ROCKET SCIENCE

By Michael Dalton Johnson

Let's face it, selling isn't rocket science. It's harder.

To penetrate space, scientists need master only the immutable laws of mathematics and physics. Simple. So simple, in fact, the basics are taught in high school.

Selling, on the other hand – prospecting, presenting, negotiating, and closing – demands understanding the complex dynamics of the human mind and how to influence the myriad emotional and intellectual forces that influence its decision-making.

“The devil's in the details,” says an old proverb. And in the profits too. Much like rocket science, when it comes to making the sale, the littlest thing can mean success or disaster.

Here are a few “little things” I have chosen from *our* new book *Top Dog Sales Secrets*. The 288 page book contains 80 sales lessons from 50 renowned sales experts. These tidbits represent a very small sampling of their ideas and wisdom.

Make Your Buyers Heroes

Even in a business-to-business sale, you need to show your prospects what's in it for them personally. How do they personally gain? Will they look good to their boss? Will they save time and effort? Will they make their customers or employees happy? There's a subtle but important difference between, “Your company will save over \$50,000 a year with our product” and “You will save your company over \$50,000 a year with our product.” People want to be heroes. Make it so.

Respect Your Buyer's Intelligence

Speak to your potential customer as if you were talking

with an intelligent, yet uninformed friend. Don't insult your prospect's intelligence with inane leading questions such as, “We all want to save time and money, right?” Instead, simply state, “Our product will save you both time and money,” and immediately follow this statement with a brief example or two. Allow the prospect to respond to your time and money-savings premise. A high-pressure “What's there to think about?” approach doesn't work in today's business environment. Your buyers are smart, and deserve your respect. Give it to them and watch your sales grow.

Create Powerful Imagery

Instead of saying to a business owner, “Your employees will really appreciate this program,” consider saying with a smile, “Your employees will stand up and applaud you for giving them this program.” Don't worry; the buyer will allow this bit of poetic license. Even though he knows his employees won't really stand up and applaud, the mental image of them doing so is powerful.

Breaking The Ice

Some telephone cold-call gurus will tell you to offer a pleasantry or two after introducing yourself. They are wrong. Avoid the opening, “How are you?” When spoken over the phone to a stranger, the phrase reeks of insincerity. You might as well scream, “I want to sell you something!” Instead, use a more businesslike opening, such as, “The reason I'm calling you this morning is to learn about your company's personnel needs, and to see if we can be of help.” Simply put, after introducing yourself, state the reason for your call. Prospects will appreciate your honesty and respect for their time and intelligence. Only ask, “How are you?” after you've progressed beyond the initial contact, and a relationship has been established.

Never Thank Anyone For Taking Your Call

This seemingly polite gesture immediately puts you in a subordinate role—and subordinates are easily dismissed. For the same reason, when you finally make contact with a difficult-to-reach prospect, never open with, “You’re a hard person to get hold of!”

Avoid Answering A Question With A Question

Again, contrary to conventional sales training wisdom, never answer a question with a question. This tactic is usually perceived by the prospect as evasive. For example, if your buyer asks, “How soon can you ship?” do not respond, “When do you need it?” This strategy diminishes your credibility. Simply tell him your average shipping time, and ask if that works for him. If it doesn’t, go to bat for him, and if possible, get it for him when he wants it.

Use Positive Spin

Persuasive speakers communicate by using positive language. Example: Instead of saying, “We can’t ship your order until next Tuesday,” say, “We can ship your order as early as next Tuesday.” What a difference! Put yourself in your listener’s shoes; which version is more appealing? The habit of using positive speech has helped me to achieve more results than I ever thought possible. You can practice this skill all the time, too. Try it with coworkers, family, and friends. You’ll begin to see things in a whole new light!

Don’t Interrogate Buyers

A recent article in a sales publication advised “intense questioning” of prospects to determine their needs. The

writer included a laundry list of questions that were both intrusive and transparent. Nobody likes a verbal strip-search. Sophisticated buyers perceive too many probing questions, especially in the first stages of the sales process, as a pitch-tailoring sales tactic—which, of course, is exactly what it is. If you get prospects talking and follow the 80/20 Rule—you listen 80% of the time and talk only 20% of the time—many of your questions will be answered before you even ask them. Sure, you still have to ask questions and seek clarification. But your fact-finding process should flow naturally in response to buyers’ comments and conversational pauses. Don’t put your prospect on the hot seat.

Mood Follows Form

When you feel in winning form, you smile, stand up straight, and walk with confidence. On some gloomy, depressing day, try this: smile, stretch, and strut. You will feel your mood begin to lighten as your physical actions mimic those of a winner. The same thing goes for your phone personality. If you sit up straight and smile, you will begin to feel self-confident and purposeful. Your voice will reflect those qualities, and you will enjoy more successful contacts with prospects and clients.

Buyers Are Like Cats (And You’re Probably A Dog!)

Just like our feline friends, buyers can be a difficult lot: suspicious, wary, finicky, independent and aloof. If you chase after one, it always runs. If you attempt to coax it, it invariably ignores you. However, if you sit quietly letting the cat take its time and make up its own mind, before you know it, it’s purring on your lap.

About the Author

Michael Dalton Johnson’s articles on sales and marketing have been widely published. He is the publisher and CEO of www.SalesDog.com. SalesDog.com’s new book *Top Dog Sales Secrets*, which Johnson edited, features sales advice from dozens of nationally renowned sales experts. One reader said, “It’s like reading the best ideas from 50 sales books all in one book.” To learn more, go to www.SalesDog.com.