



1. Good record keeping and administration

This is essential to organised selling. Not only knowing whom your customers or prospects are but understanding them, their preferences, buying patterns, hobbies, interests, and anniversaries. As it's obviously not possible to remember everything about customers or prospects when covering a large area, the old adage of "People buy people first" is still very relevant to the salesman of today. Good attentive listening skills and professional note taking are essential to maintaining a comprehensive contact database. This database not only ensures that mailings, phone calls and follow-up visits, are made on time. It will ensure that you don't forget the smaller snippets of conversation, which can help you to communicate better with the prospect and to spot hidden agendas or opportunities. The simplest form of this can be kept on record cards although there are many excellent computer packages on the market. With administration the secret is to keep it simple, a complicated system causes confusion and consumes time. Know where samples are and have adequate levels of stock, enough to cope with delivery problems, without tying up valuable cash.

2. Time-management

Good time management involves planning and avoiding waste; learning to recognise prospects that are unlikely to buy at an early stage can eliminate wasted visits and all the preparation and journey time that involves. It is vital to allow sufficient time for each appointment, planning sales strategy looking for early buying signals and avoiding lengthy appointments when they seem to be drifting. Planning more than one route to a prospect and allowing adequate preparation time. It is also worth remembering that achieving better time management is a constant process ensuring that adequate relaxation time is taken, a minimum of 30 minutes per day of time dedicated to you.

In the meantime, keep a record of how you spend your time over a typical week, try and get it down to 15 minute intervals and then ask yourself the following questions.

- What surprises you about the way you have spent your week?
- Was there anything unusual about your week?
- How satisfied are you with the way you spend your time?
- Have you not achieved things or put anything off until next week?
- Are there any gaps where you cannot recall what you were doing?
- Did you spend time travelling or waiting for things well?
- Did you have any tasks that had deadlines and have you met them?
- Have you felt unable to cope or swamped with too many tasks this week?

Now assess the answers honestly, look back at your timetable and consider if there are any points you learn from or things you can do differently to improve both your business performance and your own quality of life, which in itself will improve conversion rates



3. Learn to deal with objections

Planning the call is essential to dealing effectively with objections. Knowing what the benefits of the products are and what open questions can start the conversation.

Unfortunately, there is no substitute for experience although I have compiled a few responses to the most common objections and set them out below. I hope it gets you started but remember, gaining experience takes time and you have to form a style to fit your personality and that of your customers. So, compile a few of your own and, should you fall foul of an objection, learn from it and deal with it better next time.

3.1 The price is too much

This is the main problem for nearly all salespeople. The secret is to sell non-price benefits and the total value of the product. Also don't lay all your benefits out for the customer too early in the sale, look on your benefits as a hand of cards

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Having found out from the customer, what the key benefit might be, deliver it. Hold back the others so you may be able to add value to the product if any dispute arises over price. However, don't overdo any determination to beat this objection, if someone really can't afford it then no matter of selling can force a purchase. Even if it did the customer is unlikely to think well of such an aggressive high-pressure salesman.

3.2 I have never heard of you

This is a common problem for many small businesses that do not have the established trading position of their larger competitors. To overcome this, it may be necessary to offer better support and higher levels of personal service. Get references and testimonials from satisfied customers and use these to bargain with your prospect.

3.3 I need time to think about it

In this situation you may find yourself having to agree with the prospect. However, be careful, as this is often not a genuine objection. Point out the benefits of purchasing now, faster delivery or installation for example, recap the benefits of your product and let the customer imagine the product and its' benefits. You should of course always try to ensure that all interested parties will be present when selling, especially to householders, as your sale will be given second-hand at a later date to any partners. It can also be an idea if, when using an order form, you complete it as you go. Sometimes a prospect can be set back by you producing the order form at the end of the sale, they can start to dwell on whether they really need it after all. If the form is completed as you work through the sale then, at the end of your closing argument you can simply ask if they have a pen and offer them the form to sign.

If all else fails, make an appointment to return as soon as possible especially if they need to consult a partner or spouse.



3.4 Friendship objections

When faced with "I buy from a friend" it may be wise to go for the smaller sale to establish yourself and get a foot in the door. Remember to keep good record cards on this prospect and to listen attentively. He will respect personal service and you may well become another friend. After all we can never have enough.

3.5 Lack of money

This is rarely a genuine objection unless you are cold calling. Stress the savings that can be made by buying your product and therefore the real cost of delay.

4. Be enthusiastic

It's infectious and it will help people to believe in your product. Vary your tone of voice, give working examples of how your product has benefited others in the prospect's situation, again this is also very much linked to how you feel and like all these points links directly to many of the others.

5. Speak with confidence

This does not mean you have to be a brilliant wit who can always break the ice. It simply involves talking fluently and confidently to your prospect. There is no substitute for practice. Try your sale on friends, ensuring that they will take the exercise seriously. Try and avoid filler words or phrases and don't let nerves to get the better of you or you will be either talking too fast or mumbling. Add from your own experience to get the best presentation possible.

6. Care for your customers

Think of ways to go the extra mile, stay in contact with them be approachable and deal with complaints honestly and promptly. The contact database plays a vital role in this so keep working on it and treasure it, remember it costs up to seven times more to get a new customer than to keep an existing one.

7. Listen attentively to the customer

Acknowledge them, show that you are interested in their problem, but never interrupt. Be sure that you have understood them correctly and if necessary, take notes. Don't be over concerned with eye contact, as people can often overdo this and become off putting, particularly to someone of the opposite sex. If you are confident, honest and natural your body language can take very good care of you. Save analysis of this for later times. Practice listening in social situations and most importantly abandon critical thoughts and concentrate on what is really being said to you.



8. First impressions

Potential customers will not know you and can only judge you on appearances. Over 70% of sales are made in first few minutes. So, think how you would expect someone in your position to appear, how they would dress? Most importantly feel good about yourself, if you feel good you will naturally come across good and looking well is an important part of that. Avoid jackhammer handshakes be firm, short and sincere.

9. Know your products

Not only your own but those of your competitors. Be aware of their strengths and weaknesses do a SWOT analysis, looking at how their strengths threaten you and your product and how by looking at their weaknesses, you can compare them to your "hand of benefits" and find opportunities for your product. Never, ever run a product or competitor down to a prospect. Simply point out the advantages of owning or using your product.

10. The ability to close a sale

Be sure of your objectives and confident enough to close. Remember you are helping the customer, so do not be afraid to ask for the signature. Never apologise for the cost of the product or be afraid to ask for payments or deposits.