



Selling With Style

Remember, all customers are not alike

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Successful salespeople understand the value of uncovering customer needs and qualifying sales opportunities. Top sales performers also understand the value of understanding human behavior and adapting their selling styles to match their prospects' buying styles.

Behavioral science has proven that people buy for different reasons. A salesperson who understands basic behavioral (buying) styles and learns to use this knowledge in his (or her) sales calls will close more sales.

Some buyers like to get right to the point and some want to visit before doing business. Some like new, innovative products and other prefer proven, reliable products. Some want time to think about your proposition while others make quick decisions. Some like to negotiate and others do not. If you do not know how to tell the difference and assume all prospects buy for the same reasons, then you could be losing sales without realizing it.

For decades, sales training has focused on generalized principles that supposedly apply to all customers. If the salesperson says the right words, at the right time, people will buy.

With today's sophisticated buyers, and especially technical buyers, just knowing your product and the prospects' needs are no longer enough. You not only need to know what they need, but how they like to buy.

One unscientific way to assess a prospect's buying style is to observe his behavior. Is he talkative or quiet? Is he people-oriented or task-oriented? It also helps to ask these questions about yourself, so you understand your selling style and can adapt to the different buying styles.

Here are a few general traits of four different buying styles:

Talkative, Task-Oriented

Talkative, task-oriented people are interested in results; need to be in control; tend to buy new, leading-edge products; do not like to waste time (just hit the high points and get to the "bottom line"); and do not want too much data. Ask questions so they can tell you about their operations; stress prestige, challenge and efficiency; and emphasize results and the bottom line.

Talkative, People-Oriented

The second buying style is that of talkative, people-oriented



individuals. They are interested in relationships; need to be liked; tend to buy showy products; are friendly people who would rather talk and socialize than do detailed work; are very quick buyers (usually on the first visit); are easily stolen by your competition (so give plenty of follow-up); and do not dwell on details.

Quiet, People-Oriented

The third buying style is the quiet, people-oriented style. These people are interested in stability and the status quo; need security; tend to buy traditional products; may be somewhat shy individuals (but want to be your friend); like to talk about family and hobbies; and are very slow to make changes. They need to trust their salesperson and like to take it slow and easy. If you go too fast, you will lose the sale. You need to provide these people plenty of proof and statistics, and earn their trust and friendship.

Quiet, Task-Oriented

The fourth style is the quiet, task-oriented style. These people are interested in quality; tend to buy proven products; may be suspicious of you and your products; do not like to change to new suppliers; are reluctant to try new, innovative technology; and do not waste time with small talk (get to the point with facts and figures and answer all of their questions). Stress security if they buy now or the loss of security if they wait.

Just remember that all customers are not alike. Each customer buys in his own way, for his reasons — not yours. Each requires a different approach and responds in a different way. If you learn to interpret the different buying styles and their common tendencies, this will enable you to establish instant rapport and build better relationships that cause people to feel more at ease with you. ■

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