



Are you Quoting? Or Selling?

As a salesperson, are you just giving quotes, or are you actually selling? An effective salesperson knows the benefits of executing thoughtfully planned presentations. Doing this properly can lead to a bigger payoff: bigger ticket sales at higher margins. This elevates the salesperson from salesclerk to sales professional.

Quoting vs. Selling

My wife and I remodeled our home over the past few years, during which time we had a lot of interaction with sales representatives from various trades. As you can imagine the experiences varied, with some being excellent and others not so much. Here are two examples that illustrate the difference between just quoting versus selling.

We needed new windows, so I contacted two companies recommended by friends. The first company's representative stopped by our house unplanned, but we were not there at the time. He assured me that my presence was unnecessary, which seemed odd, and called me later that day to rattle off prices and options based on what he assumed we needed. He emphasized price and lead times, and the quote he emailed only had the window count and a price – no specs, no brochure, no samples. His pitch focused more on him telling me what we didn't want versus asking what we did want.

The second company's representative visited our home and spent a good deal of time carefully inventorying the windows, taking care to get good measurements and noting the various types needed. When we discussed replacement, he asked many questions. What was our main reason for wanting to replace them? Energy conservation? Security?

Aesthetics? He provided samples and color swatches, along with an easily understood brochure. After listening closely to my answers (and taking written notes), he told me he would consider the information gathered from our visit and follow up in a few days with his proposal. We received his email in two days as promised, and it included detailed pricing and specifications for the replacement windows needed. Clearly, the decision to award our window contract was an easy one.

Choosing our interior decorator is another example. We were deciding between two companies that came highly recommended. The first decorator met my wife at the house and, after exchanging pleasantries, walked around to give my wife her general observations of each room. She assured my wife that she knew the latest styles and designs and had done this many times before, and asked very few questions about our decorating tastes and design criteria. The meeting ended with a conversation about her fee being based on the decorating items we purchased.

The designer we eventually chose spent time prior to meeting getting to know us in order to better understand our likes and dislikes when it came to decorating a house. She asked to see photos of our previous house so she could

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discern the styles and colors we were used to, and she told us she wanted to be paid hourly so there would be no implied pressure to purchase items at inflated prices. Her approach to the decorating process was more collaborative than sales driven.

In both examples, the common denominator of the companies that got our business was listening. Selling requires active listening skills. In the door business, we are hired to solve problems, acting as consultants as well as suppliers. As a consultant, you cannot make your best recommendations without understanding your customer's needs, which requires two-way communication. Assuming you know what your customer needs without taking the time to understand their motives, desires and opinions can take you right out of the running. As a sales professional, your customer is not only buying your product, but the overall experience you can provide. That includes your knowledge, experience and personal approach to their problem. Your customer wants to know that you are listening and will help them through the purchasing process and provide support after the purchase is made.

Quoting is quick. Selling takes time. Quoting requires only a few things like a business card with a price scrawled on the back, a brochure and maybe a hand sample of the product. Selling requires preparation and more tools. These tools should include (but are not limited to):

- Pen and paper to take notes while the customer is speaking
- Laptop or tablet with a static Internet connection to help the customer visualize the product instantly using the web or electronic brochures
- Visualization software that allows the customer to see the product on their house before they purchase
- Color swatches, samples, brochures, warranties and specification sheets
- Information about your company, including a copy of your business license
- List of three references in their area that have purchased similar products
- Software that allows you to generate a proposal for signature on the spot using either a portable printer for a hard copy or an electronic signature on your laptop or tablet

One of the most important tools is your time. Effective sales presentations require a time commitment from both the salesperson and the customer, and it is helpful to address this with the customer before setting an appointment. Rushing through your presentation sends the signal that

your customer is just the next stop of your day. Instead, the customer needs to know that you will dedicate the necessary time to assist them through the process.

Preparing to Sell

Effective presentations start with planning and preparation. Let's face it: the internet has given customers an easy way to research what they want without ever leaving home, and in many cases, they can get a price quote without ever speaking to someone. What they cannot get online is your professional expertise and consultation to help them make an educated decision. That's worth a lot when a homeowner is preparing to spend a large amount on a product, they know very little about other than price.

- ***Pre-qualify***

Spending time pre-qualifying your customer on the front end can give you quite an edge over your competition. Before visiting with the customer, have a good idea of what product they are considering. A few minutes of time on the phone prior to the appointment date will help you immensely. If they've visited manufacturer websites, ask them which ones and which models they like so you can familiarize yourself with the products prior to your meeting. Are they more interested in the product's appearance, or in its functionality? Gather color swatches, product samples and spec sheets in order to address both of these requirements. Where do they live? It is helpful to look up their address online to try getting an idea about the neighborhood architecture and maybe even a street view image of their house.

- ***Prep Your Rolling Showroom***

Since most sales appointments in the door industry take place at the job site, your vehicle is your rolling office and showroom. Stocking it with the selling tools you need is critical. Items such as product samples, color chips, brochures, proposal forms, warranty information, and photos of previous jobs are just a few of the support materials needed to provide professional sales presentations. Spend a few minutes each day taking inventory, re-stocking and properly storing these valuable selling aids.

- ***Prep Yourself***

Don't forget to prepare yourself for the sales presentation. First impressions are critical, and you only get one chance at it with each customer. Customers want to do business with people who are successful and confident (but not cocky), so you must strive to look and act the part. How you dress, your demeanor and the overall way you present yourself are powerful influences on the buying decision.

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Unfortunately, customers often have a preconceived opinion of salespeople that is often not a good one. Your job is to elevate that opinion from the moment you meet with them. Take a few minutes to look over the image you will be presenting, including your vehicle. Think of who you would want to see walking up to your front door, capture that image, and plan accordingly. Finally, you must be mentally prepared for your presentation. This is the most important part. No matter what kind of day you are having, a sales professional finds a way to relax and focus before meeting with the customer. Sometimes this is as simple as closing your eyes and taking a few deep breaths.

- **Be on time**

The easiest way to ruin your first impression is to be late. No matter how great your products and services are, tardiness sends the signal that you are not respectful of the customer's time. If you are late for the sales appointment, how can you be trusted to be on time for the installation? Practice "Lombardy Time," defined by legendary football coach Vince Lombardy told as being 15 minutes early to any team meeting or practice. This extra padding will give you a chance to gather your thoughts about your presentation and make observations about the customer's home, including architectural style, color and street appeal.

Making the Presentation

Does this sound familiar? A customer requests a price on a replacement garage door. The salesperson pulls up in the driveway, measures the door, scribbles down a price on the back of his business card, attaches it to a brochure, and hands it to you. The whole process takes less than 10 minutes because, as I said, quoting is quick and easy. In this scenario, wouldn't you expect the price to match the level of service received? Little service usually equals low price.

Selling requires you to put in more time and effort. This is especially true when you have higher quality products that give the customer good value and provide the perfect solution for their needs. Remember: people buy solutions, not just stuff. They can buy stuff at a big box store. Your knowledge and selling skills are part of the solution they are seeking, and selling this requires more time and interaction.

Professional selling is a seven-step process.

1. Establish rapport
 2. Qualify the need
 3. Select the product
 4. Presentation
 5. Reveal the price
 6. Overcome objections
 7. Close the sale
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While all seven steps are important, I believe it's the presentation that influences the purchasing decision most. Think about our previous example. How much of a presentation did that salesperson make? Effective presentations get attention but take time to do correctly. You don't have to move into your customer's home, but you do have to be prepared to present your product solution in a concise manner that makes it easy for the customer to see how it will solve their problem. Scratching down a price on a business card will not cut it if you're trying to sell higher quality products.

Your sales presentation is a four-part process that should be done in this order.

- **Sell Yourself.** Spend a few minutes summarizing how your qualifications and experience can help the customer make a successful buying decision. There is no need for chest beating or boasting, just a quick bio and your product and industry knowledge. Briefly discuss why you like selling door products. Your enthusiasm will build the customer's confidence in your ability to help them. Anticipate inevitable questions. If you've properly prepared for the meeting and researched the customer's needs, you should be able to answer many of their questions on the spot, which also builds trust in your ability as their sales rep. You are the face of the company and their personal consultant. They have to be able to trust you before they can trust your company or product. The rapport you begin building in the first five minutes will set the tone for the rest of the business relationship. Be professional but also personable.
- **Sell Your Company.** It is likely that the products you sell are similar to your competition. When you throw in big box stores, garage door products look more and more like commodities to the consumer. We all know that isn't true, but you have to convince your customer that your solution is better. Your best unique selling proposition is your company – sell it before selling the product. Come up with a "Top 10 List" of reasons why the customer should consider doing business with you that is specific to your company. The list should be specific to your company but could include items like "locally owned and operated," "custom design services," or "industry certified technicians," to reinforce the value of your business.
- **Sell Your Product.** People buy holes, not drill bits. Therefore, your presentation should focus on how your company will provide the best solution to their problem. The easiest way to do this is by matching the features and benefits of the product to their needs. For example, if the customer's attached garage faces the street and does a poor job of keeping the weather out, you need to provide a product solution that addresses energy efficiency and street appeal. Do not bombard the customer with industry jargon or specs to demonstrate your technical prowess, since this could be confusing and could make you appear to be talking down to them. Stay focused on how they see the product. Rather than pitching the door, highlight how its features will solve their problem.

Involve the customer in the selling process by giving them something to do. If possible, put the product in

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their hands so they can “kick the tires” and examine it up close. Show them color swatches so they can begin thinking about which color would look best on their house. I strongly urge using technology to illustrate what the product will look like once it is installed. If possible, use visualization software to superimpose your doors on an uploaded photo of the customer’s house. This provides the huge advantage of seeing what the door would look like on their home prior to the purchase and also is an easy way to show how various styles, colors, and options would look.

The more time the customer invests with you, the harder it will be to choose someone else. Customers want to be in charge, so make them feel like they’re making the purchasing decision with your assistance rather than just buying what you’re selling.

- **Sell Peace of Mind.** Once you’re confident that a selection has been made, it is time to focus on post-installation support. Use the product’s warranty as a selling feature. Put a copy in their hands. If your company has a labor warranty policy, give them a copy of that as well. If you use door tags or stickers for service, show them examples and explain how after-hours service works. This may seem basic, but it goes a long way to instill customer confidence in the product you are selling them. Besides that, chances are your competitor will not take the time to do this! If your company has a customer satisfaction guarantee, give it to them in writing. Many sales reps boast about this policy, but few will put it in writing. This is another way to set your company apart from the competition. By the end of your presentation, you want the customer to feel that there is no downside to choosing your company. Knowing that there will be prompt, 24/7 service available after the sale can make all the difference between your company and a lower priced option.

iPresentations

We previously discussed how a sales professional uses many tools to create compelling presentations. Using an iPad or other tablet is a powerful way to have rapid access to a variety of information the customer needs to make an informed decision about your product or service. This sales tool allows you to use an app to make your presentation, highlight your company’s website and launch a gallery of beautiful product-related photos instantly. Need to use the web to answer the customer’s question about your products

quickly? No problem. Just tap, swipe and pinch your way to the answer using the manufacturer’s website or other resource on the web. In addition to boosting your sales presentation, using a tablet affords the ability to close deals on the spot. There are many apps on the market that will allow you to quickly generate a proposal and allow the customer to accept it on the spot by signing your iPad with his or her finger. How cool is that? Your customer will be most impressed.

Summary

The title of this article is a bit of a trick question. While quoting is part of the selling process, it shouldn’t be the main focus. We work in an industry that seems to put so much emphasis on price. While that is always important, there are many other considerations to point out during a sales presentation, including style, function, durability and energy efficiency, to name a few. So many salespeople cut directly to quoting price and skip over the actual selling part, assuming they know what the customer needs and how much they’ll pay.

I have taught sales training throughout my career. One of our seminars is called “Any Idiot Can Sell Price.” This session shows how selling solely on the basis of having a low price takes very little skill. During the seminar, we discuss how selling is a science that has to be learned, practiced and polished. The aim is to move from being an order taker to a professional salesperson, selling on the basis of value versus low price.

One of the most important points in the seminar is about salespeople making assumptions, and you know what they say about assuming. When a salesperson imposes their preconceived notion about what someone will pay for a product or service, they are making a very costly assumption. How can they know this without qualifying the customer’s needs and motivations? The simple answer is that they cannot and will often undersell the customer or lose the sale altogether. Professional salespeople must work the selling process and follow the seven steps we’ve outlined each time they get the opportunity to sell. While it is easier to spit out a number when you’re asked for a quote, if you really want to create a sales experience for the customer that will maximize your chances to close the sale, practicing professional selling is what it takes.



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