

23 Ways To Improve Your Sales Performance

by
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Too many salespeople either fail completely or never really succeed because they think that selling is about them. It isn't. It's about customers—and customers only. Here are 23 ways to improve your sales performance by getting better focused on customers:

1. Look for the demons and dreams. In other words, be alert to a customer's hopes and fears—what they want to gain and what they don't want to lose. That's what they care about, not a sales pitch.

2. Be present. Far too many salespeople are not really there when they're with customers. Sure, they're talking and seemingly involved, but they come across as if they're more interested in making the sale than they are on understanding and satisfying their customers—*and customers know it.*

3. Bring it to life. Paint a picture of what the purchase can mean to the customer, the difference it will make, and the satisfaction it will give them. In other words, bring it to life so it's real and compelling.

4. Keep it simple. Many salespeople lose sales by using jargon and trying to impress customers with their knowledge. Although it takes work, the pros make their sales messages simple, clear, and easy to grasp.

5. Respond now. Now, not later. Doing it now makes a powerful impression. Others wait until it's "convenient," or they "get around to it" (if they ever do). Does it work? A KIA customer doesn't stop talking about a dealership service manager who responded to his email in 3 minutes. Now *that* makes a difference.

6. Use customer comments. It can be a customer's experience with service, a helpful answer to a question, or how much someone appreciated having a problem solved. A customer's voice has far more value than your own words.

7. Benefit from social media. Focus on LinkedIn and Facebook. Position yourself as an expert, not a salesperson. Offer helpful and timely information, answers questions, and ask for comments. You'll create confidence and build relationships.

8. Stay in touch. Not only do customers want to hear from you, staying in touch lets them know you care. If you're emailing, make sure the content is interesting, helpful, and useful, and *not* a sales pitch.

9. Blog. Today, it's all about connecting with customers and prospects. And sharing your experiences, knowledge, and ideas is the best way to do it. Let them know how your knowledge and experience can benefit them.

10. Say thank you. Of course you thank customers when you get an order. That's expected, so don't stop there. Surprise them by following up with a phone call or email message a few days later. It's not only polite, but it also makes them feel good about doing business with you.

11. Take a break. Nothing bothers customers more than listening to a salesperson going on and on without giving them an opportunity to ask a question or to clarify something they didn't understand.

12. Help out. Do something that's unnecessary or unexpected. Even though a customer has a problem unrelated to you, don't ignore it. See it as an opportunity to offer suggestions. There are also times when making the right referral will be appreciated, so pass it along.

13. Be patient. Remember, meetings with customers belong to them—not you. Showing them patience is the best way to put them at ease and make them feel comfortable. That's when they open up and share their thoughts with you.

14. Stay current. Whether it's technology, sales skills, or product knowledge, it doesn't take long for salespeople to fall behind and get out of sync with their company and their customers—and it shows.

15. Deliver a compelling message. Salespeople turn-off customers if their messages are garbled, confusing, and don't make sense. Sales messages are always works in progress, so spend time honing, shaping, and refining them until they're compelling and memorable.

16. Check constantly. It's a huge mistake to assume that what you say to customers clicks with them. To make sure you and your customers are in sync, ask follow up questions: Did I answer your questions? Is something not clear? Is there anything that bothers you?

17. Offer choices. Customers worry about what they buy. They don't want to make a mistake. So, give them options. This will give them confidence that they've made the right choice. Three is the magic number, neither too few, nor too many.

18. Slow down. Speaking too fast leaves customers in the dust. Take time and let your message sink in. The goal is to engage your customer so you're by their side, not way out in front with them trying to keep up.

19. Ask what's missing. It's easy to leave something out that's important to a customer. Don't close a conversation or a presentation without asking if there's anything you missed.

20. Walk away. You can't satisfy every customer, no matter what you do. Sure, there are those who push you to see how far they can get—even though it's never enough. Don't take the bait; it's time to walk away.

21. Be accurate. Exaggerate or misrepresent at your peril. There's no place to hide; sooner or later customers figure it out and that's the end. Be scrupulously accurate and back up what you say.

22. Follow through. Here's how one man described a late colleague: "There was a level of trust with Frank because he was a follow-through individual." That's what you want them to say about you.

23. Be yourself. When you brag, you blow it.

The ways to improve your sales performance aren't complicated. It's all quite simple: *get focused on the customer.*

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