

What Customers Want to Know About Salespeople Before They Buy

By
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They may not say anything, but don't be fooled. You're not home free, no matter how long you've been in the business or how good you are at sales. Customers look you over and check you out. Here's what they're thinking, "Is this someone I want to do business with?"

It's a funny thing about customers. They not only know they need you, but they want to believe you'll treat them right, that you'll take care of them. So, if this is how you want to be viewed, get yourself prepared. A good way to start is by answering the questions customers ask themselves about salespeople.

Will my salesperson take time to listen to what I'm saying?

If "I'm a good listener" is your answer, don't be too sure. "The greatest problem with communication is we don't listen to understand. We listen to reply," says Roy T. Bennett, the author of *The Light in the Heart*. If we are figuring out what we want to say next, we won't get it.

Will my salesperson give me options?

Some in sales believe that choices confuse customers, so they stick with a single solution. Yet, options stimulate discussion and keep customers involved. Rather than letting customers slip away, talking about choices builds trust and certainty.

Will the salesperson ask me questions to make sure I understand what is being proposed?

Salespeople often assume that people know more about what they're buying than they do. Customers can be too embarrassed to say, "I don't understand what you're saying." No salesperson ever spoke too simply or too clearly.

Will the salesperson give me both the pros and cons of what they are selling?

The smart salesperson knows that there's no perfect solution. There are always pluses and minuses. Everything has drawbacks and customers respond positively to the salesperson who is transparent when presenting. If they're 80% or 90% OK, most customers will say they can live with that.

Will the salesperson push me to sign the order?

This is where things can get dicey—the tension between wanting to get the order and not wanting to pressure the customer. Too much either way can kill a sale. Summarizing what customers like about what they're buying and why they see it as a good fit gives them “permission” to move forward.

Will the salesperson provide me with customer references?

While this may not be necessary for every sale it's a helpful tool for creating confidence. Having a list of satisfied customers who are willing to share their experience creates confidence and trust.

What type of support can I count on after the sale?

It's so easy to be so focused on making a sale that we can forget that this is a top-of-mind concern for many customers. It comes up because they've had bad experiences in the past. Not only providing contact information, but introducing them personally to a go-to person provides reassurance.

Can you tell me something about yourself?

Even though most customers may not ask a salesperson this question, don't think it isn't on their mind. For some reason, we feel better knowing about those we are doing business with. It makes it more personal and puts us at ease.

What's my recourse if I'm not satisfied with my purchase?

No one wants to do battle if a problem arises. They don't expect to be ignored or given the run around. They want to be dealt with fairly. Yet, as we all know, horror stories and one-star reviews abound. The best solution is to anticipate the issue and make clear the path forward—in writing.

What will happen if working with you isn't a good fit?

Think about it. There's no law that says random customer/salesperson pairings are a match made in heaven or anywhere else for that matter. That's absurd! Yet, we assume that in some magical way they are. Anticipate the question and have your answer ready. It will create confidence.

What type of guarantee or warranty comes with my purchase?

Concerns about guarantees and warranties are a sensitive issue, particularly since the Internet serves as a public platform for expressing real or self-serving complaints. On top of that, there's often a lack of transparency. Smart companies spell out the coverage clearly in writing. Because words make a difference, savvy salespeople go over it with customers to clarify the terminology,

Why should I do business with you?

This is an endless loop playing behind all these customer questions. It's the 800-lb. gorilla in the room and it can even supersede the importance of the purchase in the customer's mind. It boils down to this: “I want to know why I should give you my money?”

What's the whole package, not just what I'm purchasing or even the price? I want to feel good about what I'm doing." A word to the wise, if you want to make more and better sales, have a short but compelling answer to the question, "Why should I do business with you?"

The old saying, "Keep your eye on the ball," is certainly true if you're selling. But even more to the point is keep your mind focused on what's going on in the customer's head.

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