

Selling With Integrity

A Values-Driven Approach Increases Customer Loyalty

Why does one salesperson, with the same background and experience as another, outsell or perform at a much higher level than the first?

What are the key factors that cause customers to have high levels of satisfaction and loyalty?

In today's commoditized and highly competitive markets, establishing a competitive advantage is often less about strategies and products than the day to day actions of your sales professionals. This article focuses on insights gained through over forty years of observation and research that validates integrity ethics-based principles and underlying beliefs that help sales professionals achieve breakthrough performance.

One or more striking findings is that success has more to do with "who you are" than "what you know". Although knowledge and skills will always be requirements for sustainable success, our research has shown that, a salesperson's attitudes, beliefs and values are even more influential.

The unfortunate reality is that most people distrust salespeople – and with good reason. Year after year, surveys done by Gallup, Harris and others consistently reveal that when the general public is asked to rank professionals based on "who they trust" (most to least) salespeople are at the bottom of the list. Why? **It's all about INTEGRITY!**

Salespeople whose skills and attitudes are rooted in ethics and integrity tend to build long-term customer relationships and consistently achieve sales success.

Values-Driven Principles

Principle

1

Selling is a mutual exchange of value.

Underlying Belief: *Selling is a noble profession of creating value for others and in return being rewarded for it.*

Sales professionals who perceive what they do as creating value for people and/or organizations have a positive attitude about selling. They recognize and expect to be rewarded for creating value for others and are energized by this belief.

Principle

2

Selling is not something you do to people; it's something you do *for* and *with* them.

Underlying Belief: *Selling with Integrity is identifying and satisfying customer needs and creating value for them – not trying to sell them something.*

This principle resonates with customer-focused salespeople because it is congruent with their core values. It also increases the likelihood customers will be more committed to doing business with them.

Principle

3

Develop trust and rapport before any selling activity begins.

Underlying Belief: *The first sale you make is you!*

A potential customer must perceive you have their best interests in mind before they will buy from you. When you focus on understanding a customer's wants and needs, you break through any psychological barriers and begin to establish trust in the relationship.

Principle

4

Selling pressure is never exerted by a sales professional. It's exerted by customers when they recognize they want your products.

Underlying Belief: *Asking the "right" questions of a customer to determine if they have needs you can fill or problems you can solve is the most important sales skill of all.*

Many salespeople wrongly believe that their priority is to show excitement about what they are selling and assume that their "contagious enthusiasm" will lead to a sale. However, if a salesperson is not asking the right questions early in the sales process, they will decrease their likelihood of making a sale.

The ability to conduct a consultative interview that uncovers what is most important to a customer is the "master skill" of customer needs-focused sales professionals. By developing this skill, sales professionals can communicate the features and benefits of the products and services that will satisfy a customer's needs, rather than focusing on what they think will satisfy a customer.

Principle

5

Selling techniques give way to values-driven principles.

Underlying Belief: *People don't want to be sold, but they do want to buy!*

Salespeople that adopt a sales philosophy based on values-driven principles attract more customers. Rather than attempting to persuade someone to buy something, they focus on establishing loyal customer relationships based on creating value.

Principle

6

Truth, respect and honesty provide the basis for long-term selling success.

Underlying Belief: *People don't care what you know until they know that you care!*

The foundation of customer-centric relationships goes beyond products and services – it's a mutual exchange of value. In fact, it is a by-product of delivering on promises and creating extra value for people.

Principle

7

Values and Ethics contribute more to sales success than techniques or strategies.

Underlying Belief: *Do the right thing because it's the right thing to do!*

Customers are naturally averse to selling behaviors they perceive as manipulative. If a customer perceives that a salesperson is communicating through self-interest, they will resist moving forward.

Principle

8

Understanding wants or needs must always precede any attempt to sell.

Underlying Belief: *The more you try to understand someone's wants or needs the more likely they are to buy from you.*

A customer-centric sales professional keeps their focus on the customer by building trust throughout the sales process. Customers will naturally be more likely to do business with a sales person who genuinely cares about their wants and needs.

Principle

9

Negotiating is never manipulation. It's a strategy to work through concerns – when customers want to work them out.

Underlying Belief: *Negotiation is not an adversarial process; it's one of finding common ground and working out a "win-win" solution.*

When a sales process is guided by ethics and integrity, negotiation is viewed as an opportunity to work through problems or concerns. It is a collaborative, problem-solving process where both parties feel valued and respected and an open dialogue is encouraged to seek resolution.

Principle

10

Closing is a victory for the customer and the sales professional.

Underlying Belief: *When a customer agrees the product or service you offer can fill their needs or solve their problems, simply asking for their business is a natural outcome.*

The “close” phase of the sales process is often associated with techniques designed to get the customer to say “yes”. As such, these dynamics may create tension and undermine trust in the relationship. When salespeople internalize the principles discussed in this article, they will ask for the appropriate closing commitment with confidence.

The Bottom Line

Salespeople shouldn't overlook the power of integrity in their sales process.

Salespeople and organizations that adopt customer-centric attitudes, beliefs and values – based on the principles of ethics and integrity – will establish trusted, loyal, long-term customer relationships. Their customers will pay a premium for solutions if they experience value beyond the products or services they purchase.

Why? Because “who you are” is often far more important than “what you know”. This insight has far reaching implications for both salespeople and sales executives seeking answers to achieve competitive advantage and higher levels of success.

Please contact:

Integrity Solutions, LLC
615.385.2246 | 800.646.8347
www.integritysolutions.com