Small Business Owners Can Become Better Sales People

Many entrepreneurs struggle with the sales responsibilities that come with owning a business. I met a small business owner recently who was “stuck” because the business had stalled I had bring up this reminder that selling skills don’t come naturally for everyone. But if you’re a business-to-business (B2B) small business owner, they’re essential if you want to successfully build relationships with potential customers and generate interest in your products and services.

Fortunately, with some concentrated effort and attention, you can improve your sales skills and boost your confidence when talking with prospects about your company’s offerings. Here are some tips for Business-to-Business owners who want to become better sales people.

- **Open the door to a conversation rather than jumping right into a sales pitch.**
  Learn to be better listener. By talking less and giving the customer room to discuss their challenges, you can build trust and demonstrate you’re there to help rather than drone on and on about what you’re selling.

- **Focus on solving problems.**
  If you can demonstrate how your products and services will save time, reduce work, cut costs, etc., people will be more apt to listen and learn more about what your company offers. In other words, what can your company do to solve their hot button problem.

- **Make customer service a priority.**
  Remember that keeping your existing customers happy is one of the best ways to attract new customers. Word of mouth will always be one of the most effective sales tactics.

- **Focus on upselling.**
  Existing customers who already know your value are an easier sell than convincing new prospects to buy from you. Take opportunities to leverage your relationships with satisfied customers and see if there are additional challenges you can help them overcome.
• **Expand your network**

Maybe your small business sales are in a rut, or maybe you’re feeling less passionate about your business than you used to, one of the best things to do is to go meet some new people and expand your network. Go beyond the usual suspects of posting on LinkedIn or attending conferences in your industry – think creatively about what kind of learning experiences and networking opportunities you would most like to have. Is there some new industry that you’d like to sell to? Some new geographic area that you’d like to do business in? Are there any business leaders or speakers or writers whose work you admire, who you would like to meet or work with? Reach out. Get outside your usual circles, and expand your reach to new areas of the business world. Not only will you make new sales, but often the new energy and inspiration of expanding your network will also help you get more excited about your existing business.

• **Realize that not all leads are good leads.**

You’ll waste time and lose motivation if you chase leads that aren’t a good fit for your solutions. Set criteria (minimum net income, number of employees, etc.) for identifying whether or not a lead is a viable prospect before you spend time trying to nurture the relationship.

• **Realize it takes time.**

Sales cycles vary depending on the type of product or service and the audience. For example, selling B2B big-ticket technology products will nearly always have a longer sales cycle than selling office stationary. Patience is key. Don’t expect to close a sale on the first or second contact with prospects. B2B selling often requires multiple conversations before customers will sign on the dotted line.

If you’re interested in improving your sales skills, seek help from various business articles, webinars or a mentor.

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