

APPROACH

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The purpose of the Approach Step is to gain rapport with people; to put them at ease; to break their preoccupation; to get them mentally unfolding their arms; to get them comfortable with you.

Successful salespeople know to gain trust and rapport before any selling activity begins. Gaining trust and rapport should be your first step. Until you accomplish this, you should generally go no further in the sales process.

In fact, on your first contact, you should usually not show materials that make you appear to be selling anything.

Make your first contact a “get acquainted” contact. One where your only purpose is to get to know the person and begin forming a lasting relationship. Your objective in the first meeting isn’t to make a sale but to develop relationships that will ultimately lead to many sales – sales to them or the people to whom they refer you.

You’ll discover that powerful “selling” actually takes place in this “nonselling” approach.

Most people need to discover that you’re the kind of person they want to do business with before they’ll make a decision about buying from you.

For many people, the decision to buy from you depends more upon how comfortable they feel with you than how impressed they are with your product.

The main deciding factor is *you!* It’s what they *see, feel, and perceive* about you. Do they see you as a professional who wants to help them? Or, do they see you as a salesperson who wants to sell them something?

How you look, how you groom yourself, how confident you appear, what your attitude appears to be – these and other factors all influence people’s perceptions of you when you approach them.

Your nonverbal communication – what you do with your eyes, arms and hands – gives off silent messages to others. Your energy level and how you stand or sit influences people.

In approaching people, first determine their pace, tone and attitude. Immediately try to match them. Talk the same volume and speed they talk.

Carefully watch where they want you to sit. Determine the distance they want you to keep.

These ideas will help you gain rapport with people.

APPROACH ACTION GUIDES

1. Tune the world out and people in.
2. Put them at ease and make them feel important.
3. Get them talking about themselves.
4. Hold eye contact and listen to how they feel.

ADDRESSING PEOPLE WITH FIRST OR LAST NAMES

The question is often asked, “How do I know whether to call a person by his or her first or last name?”

The answer depends on several factors.

1. How much older are they than you? If they’re fifteen or more years older than you and you don’t know them well, you may choose to call them by their last names.
2. How well do you know them? This will usually answer your question.
3. Are they on a different economic level?
4. Who referred them? And how close is your referring person to them?
5. Have you ever met them before?

If, after considering these questions, you’re still unsure, you might choose to call them by their last names and then carefully see if they say, “Oh, just call us John and Mary.”

In other words, watch and listen, and they’ll usually tell you what to call them.

SUGGESTIONS ABOUT THE APPROACH STEP

When either meeting a person or calling over the telephone, it's usually good to open your visit like this.

1. Thank Person for Seeing You

"Thank you, Mr. Jones, for taking a few moments to see me..."

"I help individuals or companies (*tell benefits you help people enjoy*). What this has meant to others is... (finish sentence with a benefit statement that specific people or organizations have received). It may or may not be that I can help you. Either way, I appreciate your seeing me."

2. Ask Non-Threatening Questions

"How long have you been with this organization or company?" (if in a company setting)

"How long have you lived here?"

"How long have you known John Brown?" (referring person)

"What do you enjoy most about your work?"

"How is your business changing?"

"What does your company sell (or manufacture)?"

3. Notice Things in Their Environment

You may also ask about things you notice in their environment – pictures, trophies, furniture, art, books, momentos. Be careful that you're sincerely interested, though, as most people can detect someone who is only trying to manipulate them.

4. Discover Common Interests

In your questioning, attempt to discover common interests. What do they do on vacation? What hobbies? What sports? What teams? What social activities? What church or school? What cars do they drive?

You may not have the same interests, but you may know someone who does. This will allow you to tell your prospective client about your friends who do what they do.

All this is designed to build rapport with people. It gets them opening up to you and dropping their defenses. Obviously, you will be sensitive to a person's Behavior Style and time pressure.

Rapport is when people think you see the world the way they see it; when they think you think like they think; when they feel you feel the way they feel.

It happens on a subliminal level, not a logical one. People feel good about you. They don't know why. They just do.

5. Build Rapport

Your objective during this step is to get people saying to themselves:

"This person is a person I'd like to do business with because he or she is professional and I feel good about him or her."

As you ask a question and listen, carefully observe people's behavior. Are they pushed for time or relaxed? Are they looking at their watches or drumming their fingers on their desks? Is their body language saying, "How much longer is this going to take?" or is it saying, "Hey, relax, you can stay longer."

If they show preoccupation or their body language says, "It's time for you to go," you might want to thank them nicely and ask permission to contact them again sometime.

"Mr. Jones, I know that you're very busy, and I won't keep you.

"I work in a professional way to help people like you_____."
(tell end-result benefits you help people enjoy)

IN SUMMARY

So far you've learned how to approach people. You learned to do it in a very professional manner. You usually don't plan to sell anything; you want to gain rapport and pave the way for an in-depth interview. Your objective is to allow people to get a feel for your desire to help them fill their needs, satisfy their desires, or solve their problems.

Here are some principles that explain the reason and the power of the Approach Step:

1. Rapport is established much faster when you get people talking than when you make them listen.
2. Most people are going to be preoccupied or defensive when you approach them. They have been bombarded by salespeople before. (But not ones like you. While others are selling products or services, you're helping people enjoy end-result benefits.)
3. Spend 80% of the time listening and 20% talking.
4. Take pressure off people rather than putting it on them.
5. Do not give the appearance that you're there to sell them something.
6. Lots of selling takes place in this step, although there appears to be none taking place.
7. Impressions are formed in your approach that might last for years.
8. According to a study, people make eleven decisions about you the first seven seconds of contact.

So, remember that your first sale is to sell yourself to your prospective client. The paradox is that you sell yourself to people by not selling yourself but by allowing people to sell you on themselves. Listen to them, take note of their interests, and let them do the talking. Give feedback that you're listening. Listen to their body language. Listen to their environment. Listen to their pace, tone and attitude.

Particularly notice the Behavior Style of people as you approach. Each style wants you to approach them differently. So be sensitive to how each person wants you to approach him or her.

As you approach people, be observant. Notice mannerisms. Ask yourself, “How does this person make decisions – rapidly or slowly?”

Ask yourself, “How close do they want me to get to them? Or how distant?” Ask, “What is this person’s pace, tone or attitude?” “How open are they?” “How preoccupied are they?”

ASKING APPROACH QUESTIONS

It’s a good idea to ask nonthreatening questions during your approach. Please write down some approach questions you can ask, or often ask, people.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

It’s also important to remember the rules for using the AID,Inc.® system. They are:

1. Find out where you are with each person and begin at that point.
2. Always accomplish one step before going to the next one.
3. Don’t jump to a step without successfully completing the ones before it.

Remember, too, that the purpose of the Approach Step is to gain trust and rapport and to set up an Interview Step.

Often you'll move into the Interview Step but only when your prospective client is ready to go that far and has the time to do it.

The question some salespeople ask is, "Should I do one-call closings or two-call closings?" The answer isn't whether you close on your first call or your fourth one. The answer is to follow the AID,Inc.[®] system. Take people as far as you can without skipping steps.

Remember this important point. You don't always have to go through all the AID,Inc.[®] steps in order to sell, but your prospects or clients must go through them before they'll buy.

It's not logical, but nevertheless true, that people often decide whether they want to do business with you in the first few minutes. They often discover that they'd like to do business with you long before they learn about what you're selling!

This is why the approach is important.

MOVING FROM YOUR APPROACH TO YOUR INTERVIEW

When you have gained rapport with people, you'll want to ask a qualifying question in order to set up an interview. Your qualifying question will be in your own words that asks, "Are the benefits we give people (or organizations) with our products or services ones that you'd like to know more about or explore for yourself?"

Notice that in customer-needs-focused selling you don't ask, "Do you think you'd have a need for my product or service?" Rather you focus on their need for the *benefits* you can deliver with your product or service.

Depending on your product or service, and the nature of your business, you may want to move right into an Interview Step, or you may want to schedule a time to call or come back to get the information you need to know before you can recommend an effective solution or recommendation to the person.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT APPROACHING PEOPLE

1. People must buy you before they'll buy what you're selling.
2. Take pressure off people in your approach. Don't put it on them.
3. Approach each person with a sincere desire to help him or her.
4. First impressions are often lasting ones.
5. Dr. Albert Mehrabian, a UCLA professor, wrote this about communication effectiveness
 - a. 7% depends on words we say,
 - b. 38% depends on how we say the words, and
 - c. 55% depends on nonverbal – such as body language and gestures.

HOW YOU'LL KNOW WHEN YOU'VE DONE THIS STEP

1. People are open to you.
2. You have established a comfort level with people.
3. They are saying to you, "You're a person we'd enjoy doing business with."
4. They have responded by briefly admitting a need and a willingness to visit more with you.
5. They have a basic understanding of what you do and how you can help them.

APPROACH SELF-EVALUATION SHEET

After reading this section, please answer the following questions.

1. What have you learned about approaching people from this segment?
 - a. _____

 - b. _____

 - c. _____

 - d. _____

2. What are your strengths in this step?
 - a. _____

 - b. _____

 - c. _____

 - d. _____

3. What areas do you need to strengthen within yourself in this area?
 - a. _____

 - b. _____

 - c. _____

 - d. _____

4. Now, *before going to the next chapter*, make an appointment to visit with your manager or with the program coordinator to discuss your responses written above.