



SELLING TO SENIORS

- Selling to seniors often feels like dealing with someone from another planet; they can be very frustrating to try to communicate with. Fact is, they are from another planet: the Earth as it was in the 1940s and 1950s. That's when these people developed most of their buying habits and when they formulated their expectations of salespeople. Add to this the fact that the golden years are not all that golden for most people: health is a constant worry, friends and relatives are often dead or seriously ill, and fixed incomes, which should have been enough, aren't.
- So, if your older customers often seem to have an argumentative edge about them, it's because their world has changed around them, and they're not too pleased about many of the changes. Fortunately, you can take advantage of these changes by dealing with seniors differently than most sales people do:
- Have the patience to educate them. Older folks may not like change, but they usually understand they have to adapt. At the same time, they don't like to feel stupid. They want to understand new technologies and ways of doing things so they can make the most of them.
- Let them rant if they must. An understanding moment to listen to their tale of woe will put you well ahead of other salespeople who appear not to care about their concerns.
- Remember that for most older people, loyalties run deep: loyalties to products, vendors and ways of doing things. To make them buy from you, you often must help them see how you are similar to their long-standing preferences. If the customer drives up in a Ford, chances are he has been buying Ford cars his whole life. He wants to know that you'll be around for years to come, just like his car company.
- Let your values show. Older people tend to give a larger portion of their income to charity than younger people, and they often perform a great deal of volunteer work. They tend to appreciate vendors with a heart, those that treat all people well and that have a record of giving something back to the community. Make sure your good works show.
- Finally, don't underestimate the value of trust. Most of these people learned to buy in an age where transactions were commonly made with a handshake, and people didn't need 6 locks on their front door. Make it clear that you are someone who keeps his or her word, and you've made a long-term friend - and customer.