



SELLING & SALES STRATEGY PART 1

THE STAGES OF THE SALE

- A sale can usually be divided into distinct stages. Many sales companies have tried to define these stages in different ways.
- A common feature of all good selling plans is that they take into account the probable mental stages of the buyer, from the first contact to the placing of the order.

THE PROSPECT'S MENTAL STAGES

- CURIOSITY 'I wonder what this chap's got to offer?'
- INTEREST 'Sounds interesting. Tell me more.'
- CONVICTION 'Yes, it seems a good product, but so are lots of others.'
- DESIRE 'You may be right. Perhaps I do need your product. I'll think about it.'
- ACTION 'OK. You've overcome my doubts. I'll buy it.'

A TYPICAL SELLING PLAN

- To arouse curiosity - Adopt a good, business-like opening. Show him you know something about his business and his needs.
- To arouse interest - Ask him questions to reveal potential problems. Suggest you may have the means to solve them.
- To secure conviction - Tell him the benefits of your product. Relate them to his needs.
- To create desire - Compare the benefits of your proposal with his present or alternative methods. Get agreement. Show him what he's losing.
- To get action - Close the sale.

GETTING COMMITMENT

ALWAYS BE CLOSING

- Closing means getting the customer's agreement to buy or to proceed to the next stage of the sale.
- Opportunities to close can occur at any time, often quite early in negotiations.
- Take these opportunities as they occur. Early closing eliminates competition, objections, time wasting and loss of interest on the part of the buyer.
- Closing is easy and natural, once you develop the right attitude. Think in terms of benefits to the buyer. Become his partner in making the decisions.
- Good closers are alert, confident, persistent, positive, and composed. Above all, they are ethical.
- Salesmen who are good at closing use these techniques at all stages of the negotiation, such as getting appointments, or agreement to make a survey, proposal or demonstration.



BUYING SIGNALS

- Closing opportunities occur throughout the sale. An interested buyer will usually show interest by asking buying questions.
- Buying questions are requests for information about a product or service. Use them as opportunities to 'test the temperature'.
- Listen to the question. Do not appear eager. If necessary, answer it in a general way. Then ask a question in return. Wait attentively and patiently for the answer.

TRIAL CLOSING QUESTIONS

- These questions are 'trial closing' questions. By seeking partial commitment, they test the buyer's readiness to buy. They may relate to any aspect of a product or service, such as delivery, method of payment, sizes and colours.
- Trial closing questions may be posed even if the buyer has not asked a buying question.
- Ask them after getting agreement to a benefit, after answering an objection or at the end of a sales presentation.
- Avoid high-pressure tactics. Pose the questions as though they are requests for information.

HANDLING REJECTION

- If a buyer is not ready to buy, he will react to a trial closing question by refusing to answer, by asking further questions or by stating an objection.
- Do not be put off even by outright rejection. Return naturally to the sequence of your presentation as if nothing had happened.

THE ALTERNATIVE CLOSE

- This is a form of trial closing question. It offers the buyer two alternatives, either of which will commit him to a buying decision. It reduces the chance of getting a negative answer.
- Use it as an outright close after the buyer has made partial commitment to several trial closing questions.

SELF DEVELOPMENT

- Make a list of the buying questions you are likely to get at all stages of a negotiation.
- List general answers to each buying question, and appropriate trial closing questions.
- List trial closing questions to use at each stage of a sales presentation. Use alternative closing questions where appropriate.
- Practise your closing questions constantly. The more you practise, the more natural you will seem.

HANDLING OBJECTIONS

TYPES OF OBJECTIONS

- Sincere objections. They usually show that the buyer is interested. He may be saying that if you can satisfy him on this point he will be ready to go ahead.
- Insincere objections. These seem genuine but a buyer may use them to avoid giving his real objection.



- Excuses and stalls. 'I'll think about it' and 'See me after the holiday' are two examples. Like the insincere objection they may hide the real objection. The buyer is really telling you he is not yet convinced.
- Misunderstandings. They often seem like objections, but are only signs that the buyer has not understood a particular feature.
- Hidden objections. The genuine reason for not buying. Find it; resolve it; and you could be very near to getting the decision.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF OBJECTION HANDLING

- Experience and observation may help you to identify the type of objection. If not, apply the correct principles and you will usually expose it for what it is.
- Listen carefully. Show the buyer you are interested in his objection. Maintain eye contact. If he avoids eye contact, his objection may not be the real one.
- Never interrupt. Pause and reflect before answering.
- Make sure you fully understand the objection. If not, ask the buyer to explain more fully.
- Questioning the objection will sometimes expose it as insincere or invalid.
- Never give a smart answer. Do not make the buyer feel inadequate.
- Show him that the point he is making is understandable, intelligent and of great concern to you. This will increase his satisfaction — and your popularity.

THE YES, BUT METHOD

- A tactful technique. First agree the objection seems valid. Then present the other side of the question.
- Use phrases such as 'It's quite true that ... ', and 'On the other hand.'
- Having answered, make sure the buyer agrees with your answer.

RESTATE THE OBJECTION

- Re-phrase the objection. Putting it differently may make it easier to answer.
- Re-stating can often help to highlight a benefit. So paraphrase the objection so that it becomes a statement of need. Cultivate phrases like, 'What you're saying is you wouldn't change your supplier unless you could see a distinct advantage in doing so.'
- Re-stating also ensures that you have understood the objection.
- An alternative form of re-stating an objection is to re-phrase it as though it was a question.
- There is a danger that these techniques might seem glib. So use them sparingly and cultivate a thoughtful, helpful manner. Debating is not good selling.

THE BOOMERANG

- Many objections can be used to bring out a reason for buying. The boomerang technique makes use of this principle.
- The boomerang can be used aggressively; 'That's the very reason why we should go ahead.'
- More tactfully, it can resemble the 'yes, but' technique: 'I can see your point, but it's because it has this feature that I would recommend our product.'

CONCEDE THE OBJECTION

- When there is no real answer to an objection, admit it. It will then be up to you to make the benefits outweigh the disadvantages.
- If an unanswerable objection is put forward near the conclusion of a sale, concede it and attempt to close: 'I agree with you, but I still recommend we go ahead.'



THE FEEL, FELT, FOUND METHOD

- This is a neat way of using a third party to answer the objection. It is particularly effective with the timid buyer who needs reassurance.
- Its basis is: 'I can see how you feel. Many of our customers felt the same. But having used our products, they've found ...'

KNOW THE ANSWER

- Good salesmen build an armoury of answers to every objection. If they don't know the answer, they admit it, and find out.

HANDLING EXCUSES

- Excuses may include 'I'll think about it', 'I'll have to ask my colleagues' and 'we'll have to leave it for a while.'
- An excuse cannot be answered directly. You must, therefore, use it as an opportunity to uncover a real objection.
- Begin by agreeing the validity of the excuse: 'I can understand your wanting to think about it.'
- Then question fearlessly: 'May I ask which part of the proposal you need to consider?' or 'Which part do you wish to discuss with your colleagues?'
- The buyer's answer may reveal the true problem. If not, question him further on specific points.
- When he passes the buck, never be afraid to ask him his own opinion. Question him directly: 'I realise our proposal has to be agreed by the Board, but tell me, Mr. Jones, am I right in thinking that you will be recommending it?' Keep your offer to see his colleagues in reserve.

FINAL OBJECTION

- The buyer raises an objection at a time when you feel the sale should be closed.
- Pause thoughtfully. Agree the objection is important. Do not yet suggest there is an answer.
- Ask the buyer if he is happy about all the other aspects of the proposal. If he is not, you have probably found a hidden objection and can now deal with it.
- If he is happy, answer the objection and get him to confirm that he accepts your answer.
- Assume the order will now be placed and close on a minor point.

SELF DEVELOPMENT

- List all possible objections to your products, prices and services.
- Note the best answers to each.
- Marry the answers to each of the techniques and select the best to practise and commit to memory.
- Develop a judicial manner. You must never be glib, slick or superior.

When you buy on price you can never be sure. It is unwise to pay too much, but it is worse to pay too little. When you pay too much you lose a little money - that's all: but when you pay too little you sometimes lose everything, because the thing you bought is incapable of doing the thing it was bought to do. The common law of business balance prohibits paying a little and getting a lot. It can't be done! If you deal with the lowest bidder it is well to add something for the risk you run, and if you do this you will have enough to buy quality.



OPENING NEGOTIATIONS

PREPARATION

- Before meeting a buyer, prepare yourself and your sales aids.
- Set minimum and maximum objectives for the call.
- Observe and research. Learn as much as you can about the buyer, his situation and his business. Continue to observe until the moment of contact.
- Before the meeting, concentrate on assuming the right manner, bearing and attitude.
- Select and rehearse your opening remarks. Plan ways of handling every possible initial response.

THE FIRST MINUTE

- You never get a second chance to make a good first impression. The best salesmen cultivate 'threshold appeal'.
- Practise your smile, your stance and your handshake. Consider factors such as who should offer to shake hands.
- Be warm, but not over-friendly. Use the buyer's name as soon as you can. Introduce yourself by reminding him of yours.
- Establish eye contact from the outset.
- Thank him for seeing you, but do not gush. Remember you are both businessmen, meeting for mutual profit.
- Show respect for his time. Use as little small talk as possible before getting to the purpose of your visit.
- Do not neglect any aspect of courtesy. Consider if and when you should smoke, sit down, or ask permission to show products, ask questions or make notes.
- This may seem like attending a charm school. It is!

THE OPENING REMARKS

- Learn a variety of positive, business-like opening remarks for each situation. Avoid negative statements like, 'I was in the area'.
- Do not make extravagant claims. They can be irritations at most stages of a sale, but especially so at the beginning - they imply criticism of the buyer's present arrangements.
- Be modestly confident. Remember, you must first sell yourself and your company. Save the fanfares till later.
- There are many good ways of opening negotiations. Their merits depend on the status of the buyer, your previous contacts with him and the physical situation of the interview.
- One sound method is to state the purpose of your call. Do not be afraid to show from the outset that you are keen to get business.
- Try to show as soon as possible that you know something about the buyer's company or his business.
- The more topical your knowledge, the better. Most people respect a salesman who keeps up-to-date and does his homework.
- Try to relate your opening remarks to a buyer's basic needs. They are usually to gain, to save, to protect, to improve or to indulge.

THE USE OF QUESTIONS

- Generally, you should not ask searching questions until you have broken the ice, completed your introductory remarks, and established your credentials.
- Ask permission before asking questions about the buyer's situation.
- If possible, preface your early question with a statement - 'we have just introduced a new product which I think might help you to ... May I ask what you are using at present?'
- Depending on your business and your personal style, the use of an interest arousing question may be effective. But never strain for effect. If the buyer is already willing to listen, don't use a sledgehammer to crack a nut.



THE INITIAL BENEFIT STATEMENT

- This is a statement which shows that you have some knowledge of the buyer's problems and suggests that you may have the means to solve them. 'I understand that in your industry you often need to'
- The buyer's response is usually conditioned. Unless you have done your homework badly he will probably agree. This paves the way for the next stage of your presentation.

THE USE OF VISUAL AIDS

- Visual aids are usually good attention getters. But they must be selected and used carefully.
- Make sure that what you show the buyer is relevant to his needs and the opening of the negotiation.

THE CREDENTIALS PRESENTATION

- In some industries a salesman should begin negotiations with a brief presentation about his company. This should be rehearsed, economical and tailored as far as possible to the buyer's needs.

SELF DEVELOPMENT

- Practise your handshake, bearing and smile on a friendly but critical colleague.
- Prepare a checklist of points to research before the initial interview.
- List questions and statements appropriate to each type of initial interview. Learn and practise them.
- Write and learn a brief verbal and visual presentation about your company. Edit so that you can abbreviate it to any given length of time.

DEMONSTRATION - PRESENTATION

LOGICAL PROVING

- Demonstration means logical proving. It may be the end of a great deal of preparation and investigation.
- Its objective is to prove to the buyer that he cannot afford to reject your proposal.
- This applies to the demonstration of a complex product, the exposition of a service or the presentation of a proposal.
- The demonstration is often make or break. If it fails to secure an order, interest will wane. Worse still, it may have made a sale for competition.

PREPARATION

- Prepare yourself and your product. All your material must be in perfect condition and thoroughly organised.
- Make every effort to show the product in the most favourable light. Create 'product preciousness'. Consider the best way to package it, present it, light it, reveal it, or even unveil it.



THE QUALIFIED DEMONSTRATION

- The aim of a demonstration is to show a buyer how your product or service can fulfil his needs.
- Those needs should have been established and agreed beforehand. They can then be re—iterated before the demonstration.
- Have notes of those needs. You will then be able to refer to them during the presentation, relating each feature to a need and getting agreement to a benefit.
- The list of needs may be ticked off and summarised at the conclusion of the presentation. This will help you to close the sale.

KNOW YOUR DEMONSTRATION

- Learn your presentation. Practise handling your product or presentation material until you can do it blindfolded.
- At the very least, demonstrate in a logical sequence. This will make it easy to follow.
- Begin with obvious features such as appearance, if appropriate, and a general description of what the product does. This relaxes the buyer and gets him on your wavelength.
- A good sequence ensures that if you omit a feature it is by design not accident.
- Another advantage is that knowing a sequence means you can return to it if events lead you off the track.

FEATURES, ADVANTAGES AND BENEFITS

- A feature is something that can be perceived by one or more of the senses. By itself, it may be meaningless to the prospect.
- An advantage is what the feature provides. It is important, but not the whole story.
- A buyer will recognise a benefit as such only when he has been shown what it will do for him and agreed that he both needs and wants that advantage.
- Most benefits lead eventually to increased profits. In the short term, however, they may relate to other motives.
- Features are seen as benefits only when they can be shown to provide advantages in one or more of the following areas:
 - SECURITY
 - PERFORMANCE
 - APPEARANCE
 - COMFORT
 - ECONOMY
 - DURABILITY
 - STATUS
- Use every means to sell benefits eloquently. Use graphic illustrations, simple calculations, success stories and third party references.
- Get the buyer to imagine himself using the product. Paint word pictures of him and his colleagues enjoying the benefits.
- One thing is better than another only by comparison. Show the difference between the benefits of your proposal and the alternative or present methods.



GETTING AGREEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT

- Get the buyer to say 'yes' as often as possible. It
- will be harder for him to say 'no' when you ask for the order.
- Check his agreement to each important benefit.
- Practise questions and statements such as: 'How important would that be to your department?' 'I'm sure you'll find that very useful.'
- Get the buyer involved. Give him simple things to do. Let him handle the product.
- Use his figures when calculating cost savings.

ENTHUSIASM

- Enthusiasm is infectious. It will show in your voice, your expression and the words you use.
- It can take many forms, from quiet self confidence to irresistible ebullience.
- Its effect is to convince the buyer that you believe absolutely in what you are saying.

HANDLING QUESTIONS

- When a buyer brings up a point you hoped to cover later you have two options; to handle it then or defer it.
- Handling it at once presents no problem to the salesman who presents in sequence. He can easily return to his place in the structured demonstration.
- Defer only when absolutely necessary. Tell the buyer that his question is a good one, ask if you can deal with it later and make a note of it.

SELF DEVELOPMENT

- List all the important features of your product or services.
- Learn to express them in simple language – preferably the buyer's.
- Express them as benefits, using the SPACED mnemonic.
- Put them into a logical sequence. Learn that sequence.
- List existing users and third party references, including specific savings you can quote.
- Plan methods and times for getting the buyer involved.
- Practise getting his agreement to important benefits.
- Practise handling products and presentation material so that you can keep your eyes on the buyer.
- Prepare cost benefit analyses so that you can execute them like an accountant.