

Forgotten Sales Techniques

For the most part, sales techniques haven't changed much over time. For decades, the "close" has been the focal point of most sales training. It's often the mantra that many salespeople live by; "Get the close." Or "Close it." Yet the closing of the sale should only be the end of the first phase of the salesperson's relationship with the client.

Sales begin with prospecting, which leads to relationship building, and then to closing. Once the close is made and the sale is done, however, the second phase of the relationship begins where the sales professional and client build their relationship into one of trust and loyalty. As the trust builds, the relationship matures and the client comes to the salesperson for changes, updates, additions, or even entirely new solutions.

So after we learn ABC (Always Be Closing), what should we be doing to improve client relations and retention (or even growth) rates?

➤ **ABH - Always Be Helping**

If, instead of closing, you are helping the client find the best solution for his or her needs, you are immediately building rapport. You're fostering relevance and connections - learning about the prospect's values and needs, and then delivering benefits that match them.

Just like playing a musical instrument or skating across the ice with stick in hand is a much more complex process than might be seen by the spectator, so is selling. Sales looks easy to the layman - you have a variety of products and services you can sell, then you go out and get people to buy them. Tell them whatever they want to hear, so long as it's not illegal, and get them to buy.

The reality is much different. Most good sales professionals aren't selling product by finding clients to match the products; they're finding products to match the clients. In other words, they're not pushing product, they're pushing relationships with people. Because their goal is not to sell, it's to help people find peace of mind; security. This removes the focus from numbers and puts it on service.

This might sound altruistic, but the best sales professionals with high loyalty and retention rates are those who take this approach. These also happen to be the sales

people who make careers out of the industry instead of being 'fly-by-night-ers' who jump ship as soon as there's a better job.

The trouble is, the helpful sales professional (what we call the Problem Solver) needs a company that fosters helpfulness as the key, training that enhances techniques for finding and helping clients, and the intelligence to continue training and improving while maintaining past and present relationships.

➤ **Nostalgia vs. Modern**

Not long ago, communities were more tight-knit than they are now. People living in neighbourhoods and towns knew one another. For the sales professional, this generally made things easier as he or she could simply build a reputation for being helpful and honest in their dealings and the prospects would likely just knock on their door without cold calling or a lot of advertising.

Now, of course, in the hustle and bustle of life, many people don't know their neighbours at all and communities are united more by geography than by personal connections. So the sales professional is usually starting out blind when talking with a prospect. On the other hand, this has made many people more appreciative of the personal touches that the professional can bring - remembering things about the client, asking questions that are geared towards learning more about them, and tailoring products to meet their needs rather than pigeonholing them.

The work is in building the relationship, not closing the deal. *Focusing on ABH instead of ABC.*

It's the old way of doing things and it works.