

Selling Myths and Realities

Like most things that aren't a hard science that can be broken down into mathematics, selling has gathered a lot of myths around itself. These myths are often a combination of what appears to be common sense, anecdotal true statements, or just plain lies that are handed down from one sales rep to the next. Some are based on a kernel of truth while others are just outright fabrications.

Let's look at some of the most popular sales myths.

Anyone can be persuaded to buy if you have the talent. This is a lie. Some people just aren't going to buy no matter what you do. They may not have the capital, may perceive no real need, or are just exceedingly resistant and are not about to change their mind just because you put a lot of time and effort into figuring out which buttons to push. Customers who need and want what you have are far more likely to buy than those you just try to badger into a purchase.

Good technique is universal and can be taught. This is sometimes true, but not every time. Most of us can probably recall salesmen (or women) who were, on the face of it, horrible at sales - they said the wrong things, acted the wrong way, looked unprofessional, etc. - yet they were top performers anyway. Some people just have a "knack" for interpersonal relations and even without the accoutrement we often think is required, they do well. That cannot be taught. On the other hand, most sales fundamentals can be taught to even the most uncharismatic of people and they'll be able to sell; perhaps not well, but they will be able to do it.

Buyers lie. The term "buyers are liars" is a common expression among salespeople and it's largely untrue. Some buyers will lie, yes, in order to negotiate a lower price or get rid of the salesperson, but for the most part, buyers are genuine people who operate honestly. The lies they are being accused of are likely not lies at all, just things the salesperson hasn't perceived correctly because he or she was too focused on the sale and didn't pay attention to the client's situation instead. Salespeople should focus on the buyer, not on themselves.

People buy based on price, every time. This is untrue. Some people do use price as their primary motivation to buy or not to buy, but most use perceived value as their reason. If they have a need, but are considering multiple options, they are less likely to use price as their sole deciding factor. Most will perceive value rather than price alone, which is why the cheapest item on the market is not always the best seller and the most expensive may be better performing still. If we all purchased items based on price alone, everyone would drive a Yugo and BMW would be out of business.

Close as fast as possible. This is another one of those myths that is based on something that appears to be common sense, but is really just a lack of understanding. Closing soon makes sense tactically, since a fast close means more opportunity to follow up other leads. The reality is that fast closes are more likely to result in faster returns or disgruntled buyers, which costs money down the road and may lose the sales rep their commission as well. Rushing a customer costs more sales than it gains and is just bad practice.

There are many more myths in sales, of course. Feel free to share some of your favorites with us.

