

# THE VITAL ROLE OF THE SALESPERSON

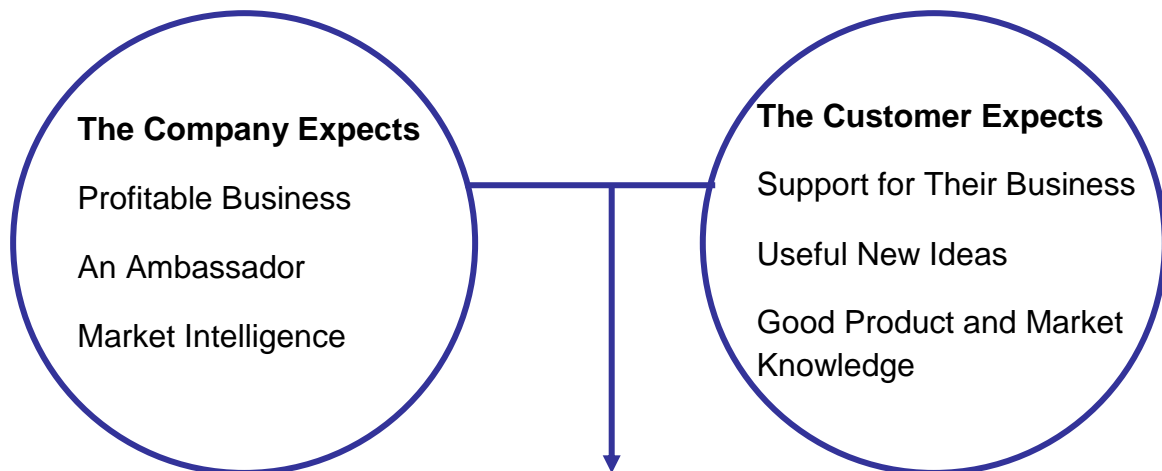
## THE COMPANY VIEW

The salesperson is employed primarily to bring in profitable business. At the same time he/she represents the company. A further role is that of the market advisor. The salesperson operates at the spearhead of business and is the eyes and ears of the company.

## THE CUSTOMER'S VIEW

Our customers are mostly in business themselves. They buy to help their business and themselves. The view that they should have of you is someone who helps them get on in their business and you do this in three ways.

1. By showing how you can further their business objectives.  
Helping them to sell more.  
Showing them how to cut costs.  
Making the job easier for them.  
etc.
2. Presenting them with ideas - which they find helpful.  
News of new techniques.  
Ways to reduce waste.  
Ideas that can help them to achieve more.
3. To understand them and their business.  
Which means you need good product knowledge.



**Which means the salesperson has to be:  
AN EFFECTIVE TWO WAY COMMUNICATOR**

## THE LEVELS OF CUSTOMER AWARENESS

Having identified customer needs it is now up to the salesperson to help the customer become aware of those needs and then to show how buying from the salesperson will satisfy them. The techniques for doing this will be discussed later.

For the present it is enough to be aware of why customers really buy and to avoid *boring* them by telling them about our products when we should be *exciting* them by letting them realise what they will gain by using our products.

Many salespeople seem to have some difficulty in applying the shifting sand of benefits to their particular prospects. It has to be recognised that customer's own perceptions of their needs does alter the way that points are presented.

Customers who go into shops have substantially identified their own needs and of course some of our customers do this as well.

Because some customers know exactly what they need to do to not fall into the trap of expecting the majority of your customers to sell themselves. You will still need to *sell benefits*.

Anyone completely sold on what we can do for them calls us and orders. If all our business could be done this way there would be no need to employ salespeople.

There are three levels of awareness:

### **Level 1 - HIGH PRIORITY**

The customer is ready to buy and merely needs to confirm a few points or negotiate some details. You will meet a few at this level but most will be at levels 2 and 3 waiting for you to convert them to the High Priority level.

### **Level 2 - MAYBE**

The customer has partially recognised needs and is interested in what you have to say. He/she may consider them satisfied by a competitor. This customer will have to be sold the benefits of buying from you before you can develop a discussion about what makes your proposition so good.

### **Level 3 - IMPLIED NEED**

At this level we can see that the customer would benefit but the customer simply does not share this view at all. Here a powerful benefit selling approach is the only way to persuade the customer that it really is in their interest to look at what we offer.

## PREPARING TO MAKE A SALE

There are three key areas to work at prior to calling on prospects.

- 1) Territory Planning and Time Management. These topics warrant a training course to themselves and will only be briefly dealt with on this programme.
- 2) General Planning and Preparation.
- 3) Specific Call Preparation.

### GENERAL PLANNING AND PREPARATION

You are aware how sensitive people are to first impressions. Over the telephone you have about 15 seconds to create the right impression. Face to face possibly 30 seconds, but not much more.

If the impression is good, credibility stays with you for some time. If it is poor - then in selling you probably do not get the chance to build up credibility as the prospect will mentally dismiss you and spend the rest of the interview getting rid of you.

Time and Money spent on making a good impression is a good investment.

In this business the difference between being a star or an average performer is not so much great flair but a willingness to pay attention to the small details and get them right.

### SPECIFIC CALL PREPARATION

At this stage one should plan the objectives for a call. This might be to take an order. Being realistic it may not be possible to get the sale - so ask yourself: "if I do not achieve my first objective what would be next best."

The next best might be: to demonstrate equipment and if you do not get this far the next best might be to agree to see a future demonstration. And if you do not get this far: the next best might be to complete a full presentation and finally to leave the door open - to be able to call again.

The planning principle just covered is that of "**Retreat Aims**" which means if you do not get the primary objective then go for the next best.

Do not give up too soon, for example if your prospect has agreed to a future demonstration a little more work and they might agree to: seeing that demonstration today.

It is rare for people who have agreed to one level to drop back to a lower level so you have nothing to lose by aiming high so long as you do not become "pushy".

## **ESTABLISHING CLIENT REQUIREMENTS USING THE ("WIN CLIENT") PROCESS**

Numerous research projects around the world have established that the skilled use of questions is the most powerful tool that the salesperson can possess. Some of this research goes back several decades and was conducted by various authorities such as the Institute of Marketing, the PA Consulting Group, the German Sales Manager's Academy, and others including extensive field work.

We can state quite categorically that salespeople who creatively use questions to establish customer requirements will outsell those who have not taken this message to heart.

There are two aspects to consider. The first is the style of questions asked, for example open or closed questions.

The second aspect, and the one considered in some depth here, is the kind of questions asked. Too many salespeople have no plan or model to follow and simply fire off a series of disjointed questions, or even worse, resort to simply telling the prospect about their offer. We have all heard the phrase "Telling is not selling" but it is not always clear as to what one should actually do. In order to fill this gap, we have evolved and created the WIN CLIENT selling process.

The selling process is basically:

- Identification of need
- Helping the prospect to recognise that need
- Showing (proving) how our product or service matches that need

Successful salespeople work at getting the prospect to understand their own needs.

How this is done is explained in the notes that follow.

It is by asking questions that the salesperson establishes the links that provide a unique solution to every prospect. Although people may buy the same product or service, their reasons for purchase may be uniquely individual.

The WIN part of the model refers to the level of prospect or client need. The prospect's perception of need will be at a level of priority. The CLIENT question model is used to find out what this is and to move the prospect from lower levels of need to a higher level of need or want.

This model considers wants as the strongest possible motivators to purchase. A need at the lowest level may simply be a desire or a wish, about which the potential client may do nothing.

At the top will be a WANTED purchase. It is interesting to note that at this level the customer does want to hear about features for they have already decided to buy, it is simply a matter of from whom, some salespeople have difficulty in recognising, in this situation, features actually become relevant benefits.

Below WANTS we have INFORMED needs. At this level the prospect may well have needs satisfied by another supplier. The salesperson can see why the buyer should purchase, however, the buyer is thinking "Why change, what is in it for me?". The buyer will need good reasons to make them change suppliers. The strategy has to be, try to move the buyer to WANT to change. This means the salesperson must "sell benefits" but what benefits apply? CLIENT questions will establish what is pertinent to the situation.

A third and lower perception of need exists. This is where the salesperson can see that the client should have the product or service but this view may not be shared by the client. In this case detailed questions are needed to try and develop the need to a higher level. The potential client will need to be given convincing reasons why they should co-operate and answer your questions, do not assume they will automatically co-operate. When you move to the point where you are describing your product or service, do not use features, only strong benefits will work, to find the purchasing hot button.

