

Grow Your Business Sales

Remember: those who fail
to plan, plan to fail!

Sales

Are you in business, but often think to yourself that you're not in sales – perhaps you can't stand selling and have decided that you can't sell? If this is the case, then you need to take a good hard look at yourself.

Great businesses understand their customers

guess what? If you're in business, you're in sales. Now some might reply with, 'But I'm a doctor, I'm not in sales'. Wrong. Everyone who runs a business is in sales. The trouble with lots of professional people is that they don't understand that very notion and as a result they often give inadequate service to their clients.

Sure, in areas such as medicine, many people don't like to attach the sales tag. But here are two suggestions to counter this. One is that the word 'sales' is often associated with meanings such as, 'I'm being sold something I don't want here. I'm going to be ripped off'.

These are connotations that shouldn't go with the word 'sales'. For too long, we've associated the word with 'salesman' with used car salesman and the first thing that often comes into your mind is 'con man'.

If your firm is to grow and prosper, you

must continually bring in new business and look after existing clients – and this means knowing how to sell.

Knowing how to sell means that you need to listen to your customers (clients, patients ... same thing), understand their needs and then tailor your products and services to give them the greatest satisfaction.

Can everyone be taught to sell? Lots of people can do a pitch – which mainly requires an ability to communicate.

The tough part is closing the deal and getting the sale. Good sellers insist there is an exhilarating buzz from closing the sale. Here are some tips to help give you that 'buzz'. Closing the sale effectively requires mastering all steps in the selling process.

- **The value in being 'something to someone' rather than 'everything to everyone'.**

The way forward

- 1. Know your product or service intimately.** You can't effectively sell if you don't understand what you're selling. Learn as much as you can about the product/service you're selling. Literally take your product to pieces and understand its intricacies – what can it do for your customer? How is it better than its competition? What warranty is on the product? What's its shelf life? What is the return on investment for the purchaser? Develop a checklist of information about your product/service and train any person selling it so they have the same understanding as you do.
- 2. Understand your customer needs and wants.** If you want repeat business, don't just 'flog' your product to a customer if you know that it's not what they really want. You will do damage to your brand and your reputation. They won't return and they won't recommend you to others. If you're selling a technical product and your customer isn't savvy with the language, make sure you translate the qualities of your product or service into everyday language – don't confuse a customer. Let your customer know that you want to be their reliable, consistent and steady partner.
- 3. Have absolute belief about the quality of what you're selling.** If you don't believe in what you're selling, how can you expect anyone else to?
- 4. Do the hard work then ask for hard questions.** Simply ask the customer if they would like to buy your product. Don't try any tricky techniques. Simply ask them if there is anything else they require to help them make their decision, and if they have all the information they need, then ask them if they would like to commit to your product or service.

Lift your game

One of the greatest and most common characteristics of sensational small business owners is an ability to recognise their weaknesses and seek outside help or do training to build up their skill set.

Selling does require skill – and if it's not currently your skill set, either get some training or read as much as you can to lift your game in this important area.

The other problem is time, but no matter how busy your schedule, you must set block out time each week or month to meet with both prospective clients and current clients. It's much easier to sell to clients you already deal with, and it's unlikely they're using all your services.

Do they know about the complete range of services you offer? Don't assume they do, or that they will ask for them automatically. Instead, it's your responsibility to research clients' and prospects' need, and make appropriate recommendations to them. This behind the scenes work is all part of your sales – and subsequently, marketing – strategy.