

Aug 24, 2007 Vol. 4, 8b

Special Message:

Training Sales Reps

I must have worked the streets with different sales reps at least a thousand times. I can always spot the good ones early on, and when I do, it usually turns out to be an enjoyable day. Good sales reps soothe my soul, and I get a great deal of satisfaction watching them do their jobs, kind of like watching a master craftsman transform a stack of raw wood into a beautiful Chippendale cabinet.

On the other hand...

Some of them aren't much fun, and some really shouldn't be in sales at all.

Mostly, I've come to the conclusion that this is because of the way they've been trained. Usually, lousy sales reps have been to a seminar where they've been taught to close sales by a consultant/sales trainer who has advertised himself as a guy who can make "closers" out of sales people. Personally, I'd rather see these "salespeople" made into *salespeople*.

Without exception, the good salespeople I've worked with were heavy on the sales part, and very thin on the close. It worked this way: After the good sales rep was through talking to the prospect about his products, the prospect was "sold," and the close merely consisted of wrapping up the details.

With the poor sales reps, the sales effort was weak (sometimes nonexistent), and the close part was heavy to the point of being obnoxious – even embarrassing.

I don't think these bad reps think this behavior up on their own, it has to come from somewhere because it's so predictable – right out of a seminar. I don't know why young sales reps are taught that selling is an adversarial encounter between a rep and a prospect where somebody must win no matter what, and for the rep to win, a prospect must be tricked into buying.

As a street sales rep many of my customers were good friends that I was always happy to see. Without exception, our relationship was win/win, we BOTH got a good deal as a result of my visit.

Selling is one of the noblest of professions, without which the world would be pretty bleak. Almost everything we have comes to us through a sales effort made by someone who helped a customer get what they wanted.

So if you have to train a young sales rep, teach him or her that the customer is a friend who really wants someone to help them satisfy a need, or solve a problem. If you can convince your rep to honestly believe this and work from that premise (and stay away from "closing" seminars), they'll someday be one of those reps I'd love to work with.

Good Selling,

John White