4 Proven Sales Techniques for Introverts

Hate making the hard sell to strangers? Learn these techniques to make sales without going too far outside your comfort zone.

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Raise your hand if you're not a natural salesperson. You're introverted. You're deferential. Chatting with strangers is definitely not your favorite cup of tea; the idea of your livelihood hanging in the balance turns tea to mud in your mouth.

I was once in your shoes. I grew my first business by cold calling prospective clients from my kitchen and leaving messages on their answering machines. When they called back, I'd answer in a different voice, as if they'd reached the receptionist of a busy office.

As soon as I got my "real" self on the line, the fun began. By fun, I mean degrading terror and awkwardness. I *sucked*. It didn't matter how great a deal I was offering; each word left my mouth with the elegance of a pulled tooth.

Everything changed as I mastered a few tried-and-true techniques of sales. Anyone can master them, but the easiest way to understand them is to walk yourself through a simple scenario. Let's pretend you're selling an apple and apply the following four principles to the transaction:

1. If you scratch their back, they'll scratch yours.

You know the customer wants to buy the apple, and the customer knows you want to sell them the apple. Each of you is in a position to do the other a favor. There is a whole well of mutual good feeling to draw from, but you have to remain cool and collected to enjoy it.

The customer needs to see you as an impartial advocate. They need to know you're willing to go to bat for them. Never jump the gun and offer a deal before they specifically ask for one; wait until they outright say it or at least offer enough hints that you can be certain of the direction they're headed.

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At this point, offer to take action on their behalf. You'll ask your manager if they can get a discount on that Red Delicious. Don't act certain that you can pull it off, but convey that you'll do your damndest. If the customer feels special – that you wouldn't do this for everyone, but are making an exception in their case – they'll want to make you happy in return.

2. See them as they'd like to be seen.

Never underestimate the power of a good old-fashioned compliment. It has an interesting and predictable psychological effect, in that the person being complimented will on some level want to live up to your expectations.

"It's so refreshing, with all the fast food around, to meet people who'd rather eat healthy fruits and vegetables. It's

like seeing someone on the subway reading a book instead of staring at their phone, and it's one of the little perks of my job that I get to interact with folks like you every day."

Bam. Who *wouldn't* want to buy a delicious apple, when doing so will feed their hunger and self-esteem simultaneously? This is an especially powerful move if you can get the customer to agree with your assessment of their character as you're describing it.

3. The golden rule of sales: Shut-up and listen.

An entrepreneur who can speak about a good or service with eloquence, passion and confidence is impressive. An entrepreneur who can do all that and be totally at ease in the silence that follows is a force to be reckoned with.

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Learn to be comfortable with this silence. Let the customer think through what you've said about the apple, and then let them think some more. If they raise a concern, resist the temptation to reply at length. Keep your answer short and specific, and wait for an acknowledgment.

There are two benefits to this, and they work hand-in-hand. The first is that listening builds rapport. Rapport means connection, harmony, sympathy. The second is that silence builds pressure.

The longer you stay quiet, the greater your chances of hearing what you want to hear. It's not an easy skill — it caused me to sweat literal rings through my shirts when I was a noob — but dogged, patient practice will pay off.

4. Know what you’re selling.

It’s not enough to be just an expert on apples; you have to be an authority. Authority signals a subconscious trigger to trust and obey. Achieving it involves walking a fine line between tough but uncondescending, firm but disinterested.

The most basic way to establish authority is to achieve total expertise about what you’re selling. You have to be able to present your customer with all their options — every detail of which you know like the back of your hand — and then painstakingly assist them in selecting the one that checks all their boxes.

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What kind of apple are they looking for? There are so many varieties, and you’re familiar with them all. Some are sweet, some are sour, some are tangy. This one is perfect for a pie, that one is best in salads.

But expertise is just one half of the equation. The other half involves your attitude and bearing. It involves taking charge of the relationship. Passive, indirect challenges — “Are you sure about that Red Delicious? These Galas just arrived, and they’re amazing” — will showcase your knowledge and give you an air of assurance difficult to doubt.

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