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Sales



Three ways telling the truth closes more sales

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Honest selling: Two words not often found in the same sentence, much less in the same breath. Maybe it's time for a breath of fresh air — and the intake starts with you.

Salespeople are characterized as fast-talking, self-serving and greedy individuals. They're taught closing skills and how to overcome objections. Maybe it's time to incorporate the most powerful selling skill, truth telling, into weekly and one-on-one sales meetings. This skill takes courage, introspection and personal accountability.

Here are three areas to examine and in which to apply the powerful skill of truth telling.

(1): Truth telling begins with you.

Be honest with yourself. Quit blaming the company, your prices, the boss and the economy. Are you doing everything you can to succeed in tough times?

It's not the most naturally gifted salesperson that wins business. It's the committed and disciplined salesperson that consistently wins business. Answer this yes-or-no quiz to check out the truth.

- I have read or listened to an average of two business/sales books a month for the past five years.
- I have sought advice from a mentor, my boss or a colleague.
- I slow down long enough to figure out gaps in my performance and what to do about them, i.e., I turn off all my electronics and focus.
- I give 110 percent to my job and my team.
- I am optimistic and work on positive self-talk.
- I have written down my goals with specific action steps and deadlines.

- I have increased my sales activity to compensate for longer buy cycles.
- I attend a minimum of two educational workshops each year that help me grow personally and professionally.

Be honest. Are you doing all of the above to become a true professional in sales?

(2) Tell the truth on the sales call.

In tough times, character is tested. It can be tempting to sell something you know isn't of highest value for the client, particularly if the prospect doesn't know what he doesn't know. For example, a colleague recently referred me to a project, walking away from the sale because she discovered the prospect needed sales training more than her offering of team building. She easily could have sold a day of team building. Instead, she told the CEO the truth.

She didn't close a sale that day. But she did close a relationship, and now is regarded as a trusted adviser.

Truth telling is a powerful consultative selling skill because when you tell the truth, you get the same in return.

For example, a salesperson is asked to put together a proposal, but hasn't heard real "pain" about why the prospect should switch, add or pay more. Truth telling is as simple as this: "I'd love to put together a recommendation; however, I haven't heard enough of a reason for you to change. What am I missing?" Or, "I get the feeling this issue is important, however, I am not sure it's landing in the top five priorities of things to get done at your organization. Should we back up and really figure out if you need to address this challenge at this time?"

Truth telling sets the foundation for honest dialogue. The prospect either will give you a no (saving you from writing one more practice proposal) or start selling you (and themselves) on why it's important to change, improve or switch.

(3) Be honest — do you offer something people want to buy?

Is it the economy, or has your product and service run its course?

Is it the economy, or do you just have lousy customer service?

Is it the economy, or is there another mode of delivery your customers want?

Jim Collins, author of "How The Mighty Fall," shares five stages that companies go through on their way to extinction. One stage is denial and creating cultures of denial.

Here's the truth: You might be lousy at what you do and how you do it. You may be selling a product or service no one wants or needs anymore. Or your delivery mode is outdated and inconvenient. Get out of denial and seek the truth.

Truth telling is a powerful consultative selling skill that will close business for your sales organization. Don't create a denial culture. Be honest and take a hard look at yourself, your sales process, and your product and service offerings.

It's time to close more business.

About the Author

Colleen Stanley is founder and president of SalesLeadership Inc. (SLI), a business development consulting firm specializing in sales and sales management training. SLI's team of experts focuses on small to mid-size companies that need to increase sales and want to decrease the gimmicks and game playing that often occur during the sales process. Their clients are forward-thinking, learning organizations that are beyond quick-fix, technique training.

SLI created the EI Selling System™, a unique and powerful sales program that integrates emotional intelligence skills with consultative sales skills. This system provides programs in prospecting, referral strategies, consultative sales training, sales management training, and hiring/selection.

In addition to being President of SLI, Colleen is also a popular keynote speaker, National Speakers Association Colorado Chapter President, author of 'Growing Great Sales Teams: Lessons from the Cornfield' and co-author 'Motivational Selling.'

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