

MARKETING FOR JOB SHOPS: SUCCESSFUL SELLING

SUMMARY

Costs associated with training and maintaining a modern sales organization are perhaps higher than one might suspect. Recent studies indicate that the cost of hiring and training one salesperson exceeds \$6,000.00, and half of them leave within a year, 80% within three years. The selection of people with a good chance of success, then, is an economic necessity.

Buyers say that the first thing they look for in an outstanding salesperson is a likeable personality, knowledge comes second. Therefore, select as sales representatives people who have the traits one looks for in a friend. See people who are honest, creative, confident, self-disciplined, hard-working, enthusiastic and who like themselves. Such people are generally more likely to succeed in a difficult selling situation.

But having these characteristics won't guarantee success. In their survey of industrial buyers, "Marketing Magazine" found that the preferred salesmen also had the ability to convince the buyer that his company was more dependable and more reliable than the competition. After "selling" himself first and his knowledge about the buyer's market and the buyer's needs second, the third task is to sell the company's image. And the company must supply the ammunition to accomplish this.

RELIABLE JOB SHOPS

How does the salesperson convince the new prospect that the shop he represents is dependable and reliable? The task is especially difficult when the prospect is unable or unwilling to visit your shop, but it must be accomplished somehow. Good literature, with photos and with names of satisfied customers helps. The brochures should be honest, current, attractive, and representative of the quality image you wish to convey to the reader. Use photos of present equipment and facilities and personnel. A separate "show and tell" photo album that your sales representative can use for detailed presentation of your equipment and facilities can be a great aid to securing credibility.

Consider the possibility of using some of the latest technology available to make the selling job easier and quicker and more effective. Videotape equipment is now available that is both portable and inexpensive. Shooting a four to five minute movie on the videotape will cost five to ten thousand dollars, but it is the next best thing to actually getting your prospect in your shop. And if your shop is clean, neat, and well equipped, the video tour will be convincing.

One rather surprising revelation made by the study was the fact that buyers don't really mind spending quite a bit of time with a salesperson and that they do expect to be pressured for

quote requests or orders. They don't want their time wasted, so one must avoid discussing sports or politics or other irrelevant topics unless the buyer brings up the subject. But if you have useful information about the buyer's markets, competition, suppliers, industry, or business problems, he'll be glad to devote the time.

Buyers understand that the salesperson's job requires a bit of pressure, and they expect to do business with committed, determined people who will persevere until they get an order. They typically expect the seller to keep on selling even after a few turndowns. They expect follow-up calls and thorough service after the sale has been made.

FOLLOW THROUGH

One of the major reasons so many amateur athletes never attain the skills of the professional is the inability to follow through consistently. The golf swing, tennis shot, or about any other sport action is only half finished when the ball is struck. The superior follow-through is what often makes the difference. And so it is with superior professional salesmanship.

Having done all the preliminaries correctly, don't assume that the sale is made-not ever. On the average, it takes seven of sales calls on an industrial buyer before an order is placed.

Each call should build on the previous calls, and should quite naturally lead to the next. If the buyer provides an opportunity to make a sale partly because you are the type of person he would prefer to have as a friend, it should be simply natural to follow through.

How? By calling to thank him for spending the time, by sending him the information that was promised, by acknowledging his order or quote request, by keeping him informed about new things that might affect his business. One small shop manager, after a visit to the International Machine Tool Show, makes a point of calling his customers to talk about some of the new machines on display. And when he orders a new machine, he calls everyone who might make use of it to explain what makes it better.

CLOSING THE SALE

Much emphasis is placed on the so called art of “closing” in the various sales training programs available in seminars. For most types of selling, knowing when and how to close the sale is quite important. After all, the buyer who is shopping

for cutting tools or hardware or office furniture can buy from many sources and will often allow the likeable salesperson, from the trusted company, to close the sale. I’m not sure the job shop machining business has similar characteristics, so I feel that the emphasis on “closing” is not needed in this business.

Analyze your customer’s needs, provide a means by which these needs will be met by purchasing your services, keep in touch, and let the “close” occur naturally. There are instances when two or more prospects are competing for time on the same machine in your shop, so you must encourage one to place an order first to assure that delivery requirements will be met. But these situations are uncommon. Our industry has enough of an image problem without also becoming known for “high-pressure” salesmen.

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