



Sales Effectiveness: Closing the Sale by Building Relationships with Customers

Learning Guide



Closing the Sale by Building Relationships with Customers

Dale Carnegie said, “So if you aspire to be a good conversationalist, be an attentive listener. To be interesting, be interested. Ask questions that other persons will enjoy answering.”

It's your first meeting with a new prospect. You're excited to share all your new products and services, and you're sure they will like what you have to offer. You've prepared a powerful presentation that showcases you, your company and your products. And you're poised and ready with everything you could possibly need to close a sale. CUT! Hold it right there!

You cannot prepare a customized presentation for a client without first asking open-ended questions and then actively listening to their answers. Your first meeting with a new client is the time for you to probe, and to discover and consider solutions (in your head) to their particular concerns. People like to talk. LET THEM.

Clients today are prepared. They've already been on your website. They've seen your products, your promotions and your customer reviews. They've been on your competitor's websites too, offering the same products for the same prices. But savvy sales executives are doing something that the Internet cannot do: they are building relationships. They are committed to the success of their client. They understand that enduring partnerships are the key to positive outcomes for everyone. A lasting business relationship is built one conversation at a time, and it all begins with attentive listening.



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Thousands of salespeople are pounding the pavements today, tired, discouraged and underpaid. Why? Because they are always thinking only of what they want. They don't realize that neither you nor I want to buy anything. If we did, we would go out and buy it.”

- Dale Carnegie

5 Steps to Building the Customer Relationship

Dale Carnegie Training is the leader in developing sales professionals who can leverage relationship selling to exceed quotas, expand deals, and develop a reliable and sustainable pipeline of business.

1 Create Value

Customers want to know what you can do for them, whether that is solving their problems or helping them capitalize on new opportunities. To provide value, you must first understand what your customers truly want. This involves active listening, as stated before, but also intelligent questions. Intelligent questions require research. You owe it to your prospect, who has committed the time to talk with you. The depth of your research depends on your industry and the size and complexity of the potential sale – but in this age of information, there is no excuse for not having done it. Once your research is completed, you're in a better position to view things from the customer's perspective. That will help you determine where you can provide the most value.

2 Facts and Benefits

Facts and benefits are one way to provide value, but many times sales professionals rely too heavily on them. As a result of your intelligent questions and active listening, you should understand whether a customer has visited your website, what they've learned and what their initial impression is. You can then tailor your approach in delivering additional information about your products or services to respect the prospect's time and add to – not repeat – what they already know. As Dale Carnegie said, "Merely stating a truth isn't enough. The truth has to be made vivid, interesting and dramatic." A great way to bring to life the facts, benefits and solutions your product or service offers is to tell a story – and it also makes it much easier for your customer to remember. In the Dale Carnegie Sales Training program, we teach a quick and easy way to develop and deliver a story with confidence and ease.

Remember that facts are specific, true, provable statements and benefits are brief, clear descriptions of how customers could use and enjoy your solution or product. Always be prepared to back up your facts or statements with evidence.

3 Qualifying Questions

Handle qualifying questions with care. While it may be tempting to qualify the customer right away, it's important to not ask qualifying questions too early in the process because it can be off-putting to the potential buyer. That said, you don't want to waste your time - or the customer's - on a product or solution that simply isn't the right fit. Think about things from the client's perspective and frame your questions in a way that will help answer the customer's questions as well as your own. This will reduce the amount of time spent setting appointments with people who are unlikely to buy.

Needs Analysis

Before you offer your solution, discover what the customer truly needs. Ask questions and listen carefully to uncover their needs in the four key areas.

- **Primary Interest:** They want to buy the results your solution provides: enhanced effectiveness, improved efficacy, safety, comfort and flexibility, etc.
- **Buying Criteria:** If the buying criteria are not met, the sale will not advance: features, budget, approvals, support, location and quality.
- **Individual Motive:** The compelling emotional reason for the customer to make the buying decision: relationships, recognition, self-fulfillment, self-preservation and power.
- **Risk vs. Reward Consideration:** Compare the cost of no action against the payoff of action: paint a word picture.

4 Gaining Commitment

Paint a Word Picture

People buy for a variety of reasons, including rational and emotional factors. A word picture is a memorable way to summarize the value of your solution while activating the buyer's emotions, creating a sense of urgency and defeating procrastination.

To successfully paint an effective word picture for your potential customer, you must:

- Remind your customers that they lack the benefit your solution provides. Get their agreement.
- Remind your customer that your solution will help them realize that benefit.
- Paint a word picture of your customer using the solution, enjoying it and benefiting from it.
- When you are successfully building a relationship, asking for the business will feel more like a request for partnership than a "will you buy something from me" moment. Whether it is by asking direct questions or by asking the customer to select one or two options, use a method that feels natural.

The follow-up process is almost as critical as your ability to close the customer. It is much easier to retain and grow existing customers than it is to find new ones. For that fact, your service and availability need to be just as responsive as they were before the sale!

5 Follow-Up & Customer Relationship Management

Follow-ups and check-ins are also a perfect time to identify future opportunities, get referrals and catch challenges before they become an issue.

Even the most proactive sales professional can't foresee every client challenge or fix every issue that may arise. We are all human and mistakes will inevitably happen. As a sales professional, you must have the tools to effectively deal with customer issues and complaints when they arise.

Advocating on behalf of your client will help deepen your relationship. Dale Carnegie called this "Turning a lemon into lemonade."

Dealing with Complaints and Challenges

Listen: Listen for facts and resist the urge to respond too quickly. People want to make sure their concerns are being heard. This is critical.

Question: Ask questions to clarify the concern. This reinforces that the customer is being heard. It also helps you to better understand the root issue.

Cushion: Empathize and find a point of agreement with the person. Show you heard and understand the importance of their concern.

Address the issue: Do everything in your power to resolve the practical aspects of the complaint. You are the customer's advocate.

Offer additional help: Turn the conversation away from the complaint by asking what else you can do for the customer. Use mistakes as an opportunity to enhance the relationship and build customer loyalty.

The Customer Relationship

Relationship Selling is a long-term sales strategy that takes time and commitment, but it will go a very long way in laying the foundation for a sustainable sales pipeline and achieving consistent sales success.

"If salespeople can show us how their services or merchandise will help us solve our problems, they won't need to sell us. We'll buy. And customers like to feel that they are buying — not being sold." – Dale Carnegie

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Uncover a sales approach that aligns you and your team to a shared process so that you can exceed your quota, expand your deal size and build sustainable, long-lasting client relationships. www.dalecarnegie.com