

SALES SAVVY FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Essential Sales Techniques

No one knows your products or services like you do, and probably no one else can bring the passion and enthusiasm to your business that you can. There – we've already identified two of the most important qualities of successful salespeople – passion and enthusiasm!

Sales performance begins with having a great sales leader. You are the leader of your business whether you operate a one-person consulting firm, a retail store with several staff or a manufacturing business employing many people. The following 10 qualities have been identified again and again as essential to successful sales in any business.

#1 Have a Strategy

Successful sales leaders (and business owners) have a business strategy – a mindset – that is focused on growth. This strategy is built around acquiring and retaining business. They know what they want to accomplish and plan their approach, using goals that are specific and achievable. They set a time-frame in which to achieve their goals, visualize their target and take action to get there on a daily basis.

A focused mindset is well demonstrated by Danielle Wilson, owner of The Sweet Peanut Clothing Company Inc. (www.sweetpeanut.com), a Vancouver-based children's clothing store. "You have to really visualize what it is you are building," says Danielle. "Write it down and read it everyday, imagine how good it will be when your vision is fulfilled. Your vision will keep you motivated, even when you're doing inventory at one in the morning."

#2 Invest in Yourself

In tough economic times, marketing and public relations budgets are often among the first areas where businesses cut back; this is actually when most businesses need to invest more time, energy and probably budget in strategic marketing. Similarly top salespeople are continually investing in themselves. They make sure they have the tools that will support their performance such as software to effectively manage their database, sales training, and memberships in business organizations where they can network with prospects.

#3 Persistency and Consistency

It takes drive and determination to start a business, and these same qualities are essential to marketing your business. In the face of constant obstacles that entrepreneurs inevitably face, how you handle these barriers will determine your level of success. When obstacles get in the way of successful people, they look for new solutions. They are tenacious and refuse to give up.

#4 Listen and Ask

The best salespeople are always asking their existing clients and prospects questions to determine their needs, and how to best meet those needs. They never lose sight of the customer's goals, objectives, concerns and hesitations. In fact, standout salespeople not only meet the standard that satisfies their customers, they set out to exceed those standards and often succeed in delighting their customers.

#5 Be Passionate! Share Your Excitement

The more passionate you are about your business the more likely you are to succeed. This is simply because when you love what you do you are going to put more effort into your work. Small business owners who love their company exude pride when talking about their products and services, and their enthusiasm is contagious. We all want to be around people with positive energy and we tend to buy from people we like.

Beth Page, who operates her own human resources consulting business, Dream Catcher Consulting (www.dream-catcherconsulting.com) with offices in Victoria and Ottawa, is a good example. “I have a passion for helping companies and business leaders to develop an organization that involves employees and leverages the capacity of the whole person at work,” Beth says. “My work is heart-centered, focused on supporting the client, whoever they are, and whatever they are going through.”

#6 Be Responsible and Courageous

In tough economic times, obstacles to sales are magnified. It takes courage to move forward and make cold calls even in the best economy. Successful salespeople do not blame the economy, internal problems, tough competition or anything else if they fail to achieve their sales objectives. They know that ultimately their own actions are what will determine their results and they do what is necessary to succeed.

#7 Work Hard

Along with a responsible, courageous attitude, top performers work hard – there’s no way around it. They are often high energy people who work long and hard to beat out their competition. They make more calls, seek out more prospects and give more sales presentations. They don’t wait for business to come to them; they go after it. While quantity and volume of activity isn’t everything, it has consistently proven to be a common factor in the behavior of successful salespeople.

#8 Survey Your Customers

As we continue to emphasize in this series of sales articles, getting the sale is only part of the entrepreneur’s challenge – you need to stay in constant contact with your customers in order to retain them. Successful salespeople send thank-you cards, birthday greetings and anniversary cards to their clients. They schedule regular lunch or breakfast meetings to stay in touch. They send articles with helpful information and may use an email newsletter to touch a large number of people at one time. They are constantly looking for new and creative ways to keep their name top-of-mind with their customers.

#9 Demonstrate Value

In today’s highly competitive business world, the value customers associate with a product or service may be the most important reason they buy – in fact, perceived value is often a greater motivator than price. Successful salespeople know this and are constantly demonstrating the value of their product. This doesn’t mean talking at great length about every facet of your product or service. It’s about focusing on how it will benefit your prospect specifically, and presenting the features and benefits in terms your prospect will understand.

Sheila Tourond, Owner of Sooke-based RVT Publishing Inc. (www.rvtimes.com) took what was once a newsletter called The RV Times, and turned it into a flourishing magazine that has been publishing for 22 years. “My ability to know and accept that my customers’ wishes are number one is what really makes me differ from the competition,” she feels. “I listen to what they want and deliver that to the best of my ability.

Because her magazine is written in great part by the readers themselves and by people just like them, Tourond ensures readers are getting the content they want in each issue. She feels this also creates a sense of loyalty to The RV Times and to the products advertised in the magazine.

#10 Stay Committed to Growth

Successful salespeople – and small business owners – are in for the long haul. And they are always looking for a better way to reach their goals by improving their approach and honing their sales techniques and their techniques and their attitude.

This article is only a sampling of the vast amount of information available to help you develop your personal sales strategy. Marion Luna Brem, in her book *Women Make the Best Salesmen* (2005), maintains that character is the prime ingredient of leadership, and that leadership in sales or anything else begins with character. She reminds us that we are all salespeople, constantly trying to persuade

others of one thing or another in our daily lives. Her book is packed with self-proven tips on overcoming the fear of selling to using your intuition to help get that sale.

The following web links may also be helpful:

Characteristics of Top Sales Executives - <http://blog.manta.com/?p=177>

Best Qualities for Sales People - <http://www.salesweblog.com/best-qualities-for-salespeople>

Eight Effective Sales Strategies for a Tough Economy -

<http://www.businessknowhow.com/marketing/tougheconomy.htm>

Uncensored Sales Strategies - <http://www.entrepreneur.com/sales/salestechniques/article200896.html>

Are Women the Best Salespeople? - <http://www.amazon.com/Women-Make-Best-Salesmen-Started/dp/0385511639>

Around the corner or around the province, Women's Enterprise Centre is helping women start, grow, and succeed in business by offering business advisory services, business skills training, business loans, resources, publications and referrals.

Call us at 1.800.643.7014 or email inquiry@womensenterprise.ca from anywhere in BC.

All examples cited are BC business owners who have volunteered or been profiled at Women's Enterprise Centre events.