

Keep The Sale

Does this sound familiar?

After dozens of phone calls and emails as well as several face-to-face meetings, you finally reach an agreement with a prospect who is intent on buying your service, product or solution.

“Whew! Another sale done,” you think to yourself.

But, wait. Before you start counting your commission it is critical that you keep the sale. Just because a prospect has agreed to move forward it does not mean that the sale will move forward, especially if you sell a complex system or solution. Dozens of things can happen to derail your efforts.

Your key contact may change companies or positions. The person you are dealing with gets cold feet, loses interest, or decides to change vendors. The company may be acquired or sold. A competitor may approach your prospect with a better offer. There is no such thing as a guaranteed sale even if you are holding a signed contract. That means you need to ensure that you keep the sale. Here are several strategies you can incorporate into your business that will help you achieve this.

1. First, send some form of acknowledgement or thank-you. I know this sounds like an elementary concept but most sales people don't think of doing this. They take the sale and move on to the next prospect. However, if you send a thank-you card immediately after you confirm the sale, you differentiate yourself you're your competition. You can also use postcards. The key is to show your new customer that you value his or her business and thanking them is just one small gesture that demonstrates this.
2. The next thing to do is regularly update your new customer. Keep them informed about things like delivery or shipment status and installation dates and schedules. If you sell a highly customized product, make sure you advise them on the progress of the development of their product. Frequency of updates will depend on several factors.
 - What does your key decision-maker expect or want? If they are detail-oriented person they will require more frequent updates than someone who is less detail-oriented. The easiest way to determine this is ask this question, “How often do you want me to send you updates?” A simple question but one that will give you tremendous insight into your customer's expectations.
 - Another factor is the length of time that occurs between the time of your agreement and when your services will be rendered or your product will be delivered. The more time that elapses between these two, the more important it is for you to update your customer. For example, in my particular business, it is not uncommon for a company to book me for a keynote speech or

training workshop up to a year in advance of their actual event. During this time, I try to send them some form of update so they know I have not forgotten about their event.

3. Send them additional information of value. This includes articles, magazine and newspaper clippings, or other information that is relevant to their business. You could send them an article that mentions a strategic move one of their competitors is about to make or an article on a topic that relates to your key contact's interests. You may come across a newspaper article about their company—clip this article and send it your client. It does not matter if they have already read the article because your gesture shows that you are paying attention to their business. And most sales people do not do this. One word of caution. Do NOT send information about your product! This is not about you! It is about giving your new customer a reason to keep the sale with you.
4. Depending on the size of the sale, you could send a book that will help them with their business. There are a multitude of books on the market today, addressing virtually every business situation. If your client enjoys reading then it makes good business sense to send them a book that will help improve their results. I have sent books to my clients that focus on communication, leadership, sales, and customer service. Attach a brief note explaining why you sent this book.

Reinforce their buying decision. The easiest way to do this is to send them testimonials from satisfied customers. An even more effective approach is to ask one of your existing clients to call your new customer. People want reassurance that they have made a sound buying decision so just imagine the impact if they heard a voice mail message from one of your clients saying how satisfied they were with your product, service or solution.

These may sound like simple concepts. However, I can guarantee that very few sales people actually use them. Integrating these strategies into your routine will not only help you differentiate yourself from your competition, you will increase your odds of keeping every sale you make.

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