



November 27, 2008

Tough times can allow you to show your worth in sales

Ed Brenegar

Real Life Leadership

Question: I'm considering taking a sales job. What I want to know is this: Can I be successful selling during difficult economic times? How can I be successful in sales when credit is tight and everyone is holding onto their cash?

Answer: There are two ways to look at your question.

The obvious one is that regardless of what you do, you are trying to persuade people with your ideas and your example as a professional. In other words, we are all salespeople all the time in a broad sense. However, taking a sales position with a company requires a clear understanding of what is required to be successful.

I asked Meridith Elliot Powell, a sales strategist, about your question.

"I think right now is one of the most exciting times to be in sales," she told me. "During tough economic times, customers really need you. Your job is to help them understand why. In sales, when you take the time to understand what you do, why you are doing it and how to do it, then you uncover the value you bring to the table and how, through sales, you can truly help people. It is important to learn early that sales is not about 'talking people into' buying your product or service. It is about first understanding your customers' need and then helping them understand how you can add value."

Powell is absolutely correct.

The salespeople who will succeed during this time of economic disruption are those who are committed to developing a long-term relationship with their customers and clients.

You can succeed in sales by demonstrating that you are a person in whom people can place their trust and confidence. They trust you to be honest, straightforward and caring in your dealings with them. Confidence comes from being knowledgeable and competent to deliver on your commitments.

Powell also told me about the importance of having a personal sales strategy: "You need to invest the time to uncover the answers to questions like: What distinguishes you? Why should someone buy from you? What value and benefit does your product or service offer to a customer? How do you communicate both of these concepts clearly and quickly so customers understand this early on in the sales process? How do you find and connect with potential customers? What goes into a good sales call? How to listen; how to develop follow-up plans and a healthy sales pipeline — and the list goes on.

"Success in selling is simple, but it is not easy," she continued. "Like everything else in life, long-term success takes consistency and work."

Remember that sales is both a relationship development process and a strategy implementation process. Master both, and you'll be successful, regardless of the economic climate. Be the person in whom customers and clients can give their trust and confidence, and you'll find success in sales.

Leadership workshops

What: Lessons in Leadership workshops

Where: Grove Park Inn

Date: Jan. 20

Cost: \$39 (includes box dinner between afternoon and evening sessions)

More information: www.wncleaders.com/
