



Chapter Three ~

Selling

There are many types of sales approaches you can use. Those that work have a common denominator: identifying and satisfying your customers' needs.

Introduction

Selling is really the art of persuasion. However, effective selling is the ability to completely satisfy customer needs with both merchandise and service. It is an ability that is learned, not inherited, and is the result of conscientious study and practice.

We are persuading someone else to follow our advice and not everyone has the same ability to persuade others. Most of us need to develop our skills of persuasion in order to become professional salespeople.

Non-Verbal Selling Skills

The first area to concentrate on is your non-verbal selling skills - this is not only your personal appearance, but also your working environment. Customers make an unconscious decision about your professionalism and credibility with their first look at you. You need to be well aware of what you are saying through your non-verbal communications:

- Are you well-groomed?
- Do you look as though you use and benefit from the products you are selling?
- Do you look approachable?
- Do you look capable?

As unfair as it may seem, people judge you and make a lasting assessment before you even open your mouth. This fact was substantiated when Glamour magazine circulated five photographs of equally qualified, but differently dressed women to 60 personnel directors across the United States. To keep the focus on non-verbal selling skills, the same model was used for each photo. The differences lay in the type of clothing, the accessories, the posture and body language adopted by the model.

"Each photo rated a strong assessment ranging from "a very capable and desirable candidate" to "dowdy" and therefore not right for the position. All this was decided before the candidate had even had a chance to open her mouth!"

So what factors should you consider in giving a favourable first impression as a professional cosmetics salesperson? Industry expectations are as follows:

- Clean and well groomed.
- Professional dress appropriate to the selling environment (e.g.: A self-serve drugstore will have a different dress code from a prestigious boutique).
- Expertly applied makeup, using the store's or one of your line's products.
- Using correct techniques and wearing the new colour look featured in the company's or line's seasonal shade statement.
- Your smile.
- Your eye contact.
- Your environment.

What Helps Salespeople Sell?

Your personality has a great influence on how successful you will be in the cosmetics industry, particularly as applied to selling. You have just read about the importance of physical appearance and here are three other character traits that will help you develop a career as a successful salesperson.

Develop your interpersonal and social skills of tactfulness, courtesy and cheerfulness. When you express your appreciation for your customers' business, they will maintain loyalty to you.

Customers also like a positive attitude in salespeople. Try to leave your own problems outside the store, keep a sense of humour, be enthusiastic and show a genuine interest in each customer.

Finally, demonstrate your initiative in solving your customers' problems and the store's. This can be done by being open-minded to new ideas, by being creative in your displays and, most importantly, by increasing your product knowledge and understanding customer's requirements to provide them with a satisfying shopping experience.

Product Knowledge

With such a wide variety of cosmetic lines, products and price ranges, you must be familiar with your product lines and the competition. As a professional your product knowledge is the most important tool you have to be successful.

Product Knowledge Required By a Salesperson:

1. What are the benefits of the product?
2. Who uses it and how is it used?
3. What are the features of the product?
4. Is it a good buy for the price?
5. How is it manufactured; what processes give it value?
6. How should the product be cared for?
7. How long will the merchandise last?
8. Is it guaranteed?
9. Is the product recommended for everyone?
10. What merchandise is carried in the store?
11. Where is this merchandise located?
12. Where do I find items my store does not carry?
13. What products are "trendy", must-haves for fashion statement?
14. What does the competition carry?

Always offer excellent customer service.

How Do You Acquire This Knowledge?

- Manufacturers' booklets and literature
- Company product-knowledge seminars
- Product packaging
- Trade magazines
- Consumer publications (i.e.: fashion magazines)
- The Internet
- Actual use
- Personal shopping experiences. If you like, contact the manufacturer as if you were an ordinary customer making inquiries.

Analyzing Sales Techniques

One of the best ways to learn about sales techniques is to look at how other people sell. Since we are all customers at one time or another, we can use the experience to decide why we liked a particular salesperson and disliked another. Use this checklist to analyze the salesperson's abilities. Did the salesperson:

- Know the characteristics of the product (feature)?
- Know what it would do for you (benefits)?
- Explain how to use it?
- Tell you how to store it?
- Provide price and size ranges?
- Recommend related products?
- List the uses for the product?
- Give you a product demonstration?
- Invite you back to check on product performance/results?
- Ask questions to determine your needs?
- Let you do most of the talking?

Reasons For Failure Among Salespeople

You should also try to look for a rationale for the salesperson's behaviour, because the reasons for failure in sales are as well known as the reasons for success. Frequent ones include:

- Poor work habits (untidy, poor use of time, disorganized).
- Not self-motivated.
- Lack of self-confidence.
- Communication problems.
- No product knowledge.
- Difficulty closing the sale.

There are many sales approaches with just as many successes. Those that work have a common denominator: they are all based on satisfying needs. If you keep in mind that only a satisfied customer will deal with you again, you'll be on the right track.

According to research, 68% of customer defection takes place because customers feel poorly treated by a salesperson.*

*TARP (Technical Assistance Research Program)

Attitude

People buy from you because they have needs you can help satisfy. These needs fall into two basic types:

- Functional needs that can be satisfied through products and services.
- Personal needs that can be satisfied through your knowledge and attitude.

Let's look in more detail at the desired attitude you should have toward your customer and how you project that attitude using special skills and behaviours.

These are referred to as contact skills: the ability to let the customer feel you are genuinely interested in her and want to do as much as possible to help.

As the customer approaches your counter or office, she is saying, "I am a customer. The way you treat me will influence the way I'll treat you."

Your Customer

- Your customer is the most important person in your business.
- Your customer is not dependent on you. You are dependent on the customer.
- Your customer is not an interruption of your work. Your customer is the purpose of it.
- Your customer does you a favour when she comes in. You aren't doing the customer a favour by waiting on her.
- Your customer is part of your business - not an outsider.
- Your customer is not just money in the cash register. She is a human being with feelings, like your own.
- Your customer is a person who comes to you with her needs and wants. It is your job to satisfy them.

"Your customer deserves the most courteous attention you can give her. She is the life-blood of this and every business. She pays your salary. Without her you would have to close your doors."

Author Unknown

- Don't ever forget it!

First Impressions

Your reaction to that approaching customer will create a first impression that will make the rest of the conversation ordinary or exceptional. Customers have a number of personal needs and expectations, including:

- Being greeted in a friendly manner, shortly after entering your department.
- Receiving courteous treatment.
- Being recognized as an individual.
- Feel confident in your ability to help them.
- Feel that their concerns are important to you.
- Getting prompt attention, when required.
- Receiving expert sound advice and assistance.

You know about all of these customer expectations. They are the same expectations you have when you are the customer. If anyone were to even suggest you don't meet your own high level of expected service, you would get quite annoyed. The key lies in how you meet those expectations.

You have a lot of experience dealing with customers and as a buyer of products and services in other retail environments. Therefore, you have a great deal of expertise for evaluating the impact of certain behaviour by salespeople when they make that initial customer contact.

Building Your Image

The great difficulty in improving contact skills is that many people believe that ordinary is acceptable. They feel that they are doing their job and that's all they need to do. But by doing just a little bit more, you will see how much more pleasant your job can be. Again, for both you and your customer, it can be a satisfying experience; and customers, recognizing exceptional service, will come back again just for that reason - exceptional service.

Initial impressions are critical to customers' buying decisions. If they like you, they will like to do business with you. Very often getting people to like you involves little more than just showing them that you are listening and understanding what they say.

It is often taken for granted that salespeople listen to what's being said. However, many times they only appear to be listening closely and end up making assumptions about what the customer probably said. Unfortunately, those assumptions often turn out to be false and result in confusion, conflict and frustration.

Assessing Needs

By showing that you are listening, you can make your customers feel important because you are responding to their "personal" needs to have their problems understood. Don't forget the reason you are there: the customers' needs are creating your job. With that in mind, consider the following skills that demonstrate to your customers that you are listening.

Eye Contact

Maintain eye contact: By looking directly at someone you are telling her that she has your undivided attention and that what she is saying is important to you.

Body Language

You should observe your customer's body language in order to understand her attitude toward you and the particular subject being discussed. Body language is a good indication of the emotional state of the customer. It could be very subtle or very obvious.

Concentration

It is also important that you are able to concentrate on the customer's words. By doing this, you won't make incorrect assumptions about the customer's comments. You will be forcing yourself to wait until all the information has been given to you.

Active Listening Revisited

Most people believe that they are good listeners. In fact, experiments show that people, on an average, correctly hear less than 25% of what is said to them. Is it any wonder that the phrase "communication problems" has become a cliché?

Unfortunately, we cannot afford to be average listeners. Discussing a customer's needs requires accurate and complete information. We cannot simply hear; we must understand.

Listening and understanding have a powerful effect on customer relations. By actively trying to understand another person, we are in effect saying to that person, "What you have to say is important to me." This is one of the strongest motivators because it meets the fundamental human need for respect and self-esteem.

Clearly, if listening is so important, it should be a skill worth developing. The reason that few of us develop this skill is that we believe it happens naturally and that conscious practice is not required. The evidence from research, and from our own experiences, shows this to be a false assumption. You can develop your listening skills by:

- Concentrating on every word the customer says. Maintain eye contact and show interest through positive body language (e.g.: nodding your head). Remember to smile!
- Allowing the customer enough time to answer your questions. Do not interrupt or jump to conclusions.

Do not let the following influence your ability to listen effectively:

- Noise: How often have you been unable to hear your customers because of the noise of your surroundings (i.e.: a cash register)? Outside noise can be a barrier to your effective listening.
- Language: If a customer is particularly wordy or vague, you will have a difficult time trying to determine what her needs are. If she speaks with an accent or uses language you do not understand, there will be a barrier.
- Prejudice: Your own judgement and prejudices about people can affect your ability to hear and listen effectively. Treat every customer with respect and courtesy.

Understanding Needs

Quite often, when customers come to you, they know what they want and ask you for the product. That transaction can very easily be handled. However, some customers do not express their "needs" quite so clearly. This problem is further compounded by the new products and services that are regularly being introduced to the marketplace. It will be very difficult for you to present the right product or service to satisfy a customer if you are not sure what she/he wants or needs.

Once you know what the customer requires, you can then make the correct recommendation. In sales terms, that process is described as making implied, general, vague or uncertain needs specific, explicit and precise.

To do that you have to clarify with the customer that your understanding of her request is correct. A big part of this understanding is to use all the listening skills you reviewed earlier. In addition, there is another skill that should be used: paraphrasing.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is the technique of restating what the customer has said to you. It is not "parroting". Rather, you are restating to show understanding and receive confirmation.

The essential technique in paraphrasing is not to use the exact words as the customer, but to let that person know you correctly understand both the content and the feeling expressed.

When paraphrasing is properly used, it can save considerable time by avoiding errors through misunderstanding. It also gives the customer security knowing her concerns are being looked after.

Satisfying Needs

Satisfying the needs expressed by the customer is a straightforward approach to presenting your products and services in a way that illustrates the immediate benefits. At all times, you are trying to satisfy her. There are no tricks, no gimmicks. The customer gets exactly what she requires, and you sell a product.

Consumer Behaviour

Having examined how to become the most professional salesperson you can be, now turn your attention to your customer.

The process whereby consumers decide "whether, what, where, when, and how" to buy goods and/or services is known as consumer behaviour. The study of consumer behaviour involves an understanding of motivation, the force that causes people to behave the way they do. The stimulus may be a psychological or a physical need that drives a person to satisfy the need. These stimuli are classified in three ways:

Buying Motives

- Emotional
- Rational
- Biogenic

1) Emotional Buying Motives (Those Based on Feelings)

This category includes the impulse shopper and probably accounts for the largest percentage of cosmetics and fragrance consumers. Emotional factors include: risk, sexuality, aroma, colour, fashion and influence of family or friends. Think of classic cosmetics ads. They promise sensuality or the joy of trying something new.

The pull to be accepted and admired by family and friends is a big emotional factor in many cosmetics purchases. How often have we smelled a fragrance on someone else and just had to know what it was? How often do you take a friend along on a shopping trip and let her influence your decision to buy an item?

The whole psychological benefit of wearing cosmetics is tied in with emotional buying motives. On a down day, a new lipstick or nail enamel shade will lift spirits - remember this when you are serving your customers.

2) Rational Buying Motives (Involves Logical Thinking)

These decisions are based on analysis and judgement. This category includes comparison shoppers.

Rational factors include: economy, ease of use, effectiveness and proven track record. Consumers with these motives have thoroughly researched their purchase based on prior use, national advertising, media articles and the expert advice of a professional. Therefore, the rational shopper is a very valuable customer. She will become one of your most loyal customers, because she is not only buying your products, but also your professional advice. Many cosmetic companies are now basing their day-to-day business on the rational consumer by offering excellent service from educated salespeople.

3) Biogenic Buying Motives (Related to Physical Needs)

Fulfilled here are physical needs, such as food, drink, warmth or protection, not the quality or enhancements of our lives. These motives do not usually extend to the realm of cosmetics purchases.

Features and Benefits

In this section, we will expand on the ideas of the features and benefits sections that were introduced in Unit One.

We've seen that people buy because they have motives to do so. The sales term for these motives is "needs." The best way then, to describe your products and services is to appeal to customers' needs. That description involves knowing:

- How to present the features of products as being beneficial to your customers.
- How to tie the benefits to the explicit needs you have identified in the customer.

We have to provide information that will let the customer see what she is buying and why it will be of benefit. That "what" are the characteristics of the product or service - its features. These are the qualities all products and services have that make them unique. But the features alone won't sell the product. The customer will buy only when there's a benefit linked to her needs in doing so.

The critical skill is converting feature statements to benefit statements. At various points during the conversation, you will have opportunities to provide the customer with information about your specific products and services. Obviously, the type of information you choose to present will have a strong influence on the customer's impression of the value to her. The information presented should depend largely on the customer's needs. The customer will evaluate information provided by you against her needs and immediately begin to form various opinions that will lead to an overall decision. The more the information relates to the customer's needs, the more likely she will accept your product.

Therefore, a key challenge to you is to provide the customer with relevant data as persuasively as possible. Benefit statements will do that by outlining what those products will do for the customer. Feature statements have minimal persuasive power and, too often, very little impact on the customer. Feature statements do not indicate how this product might help the customer by satisfying a need.

In contrast, benefit statements expand far beyond simple characteristics. These statements tend to show how the features of the product or service can benefit, which means it is able to solve the customer's problem or answer her desire. By expressing these features in terms of what a product will do for the customer, the selling approach focuses on the customer's needs and wants.

A "*feature*" is any characteristic of a product or service.

A "*benefit*" is the value the customer receives from the feature.

Constructing a Benefit Statement

You should see by now that benefit statements are much more persuasive than feature statements, because they show the customer how the product's features will satisfy her needs. As a general rule, a benefit statement can be expressed in this form:

"Because of ... (a description of the feature) you will be able to ... (a solution to the problem or a satisfaction of the need)."

If the feature is: "The compact is small," a benefit is: "Because the compact is small, you will be able to carry it in your purse."

If you can translate specific features into benefits for the customer, these benefits become solutions and the probability of gaining customer acceptance will increase dramatically.

There are two skills to be learned here:

- Expressing features as benefits.
- Making sure you relate those benefits to the needs of that customer, as opposed to simply relating a list of benefit statements and hoping you might hit the right one.

Customers Buy Benefits!

18 Steps to a Professional Cosmetic Sales Exchange

1. Keep counters clean and spotless at all times.
2. Make sure you look immaculate and well groomed.
3. Smile.
4. Always acknowledge the customer's presence with a smile and eye contact.
5. Use an appropriate approach to greet the customer.
6. Communicate carefully with the customer (asking questions and listening) to discover her needs and wants.
7. Recommend the appropriate products and/or treatment.
8. Describe and demonstrate the products to the customer.
9. Explain clearly how, where and when to use the product, and how much to use for an application.
10. Stress the benefits. Link them to customer needs.
11. After demonstrating, encourage the customer to read the packaging. (This acquaints her with the product.)
12. Place the products facing and in reach of the customer at all times. This gives the customer a feeling of possession.
13. Assist the customer to make a buying decision, in other words close the sale.
14. Recognize and handle any objections the customer has.
15. Propose alternatives and give samples where necessary.
16. Write two personal charts for the customer, outlining immediate and future products/services.
17. Keep one personal chart for your records, ensuring it contains the customer's name, address and telephone number. Give the other copy to the customer for her reference.
18. Encourage your customer to return to your counter in approximately two weeks. This will permit you to have a follow up for your business.

The Approach

Every sale begins with greeting the customer and every greeting should begin with a SMILE. This sets the tone of the sale. Use the customer's name if you know it. Remembering the customer's name is flattery that goes a long way in closing a sale and developing relationships.

If possible, never say: "May I help you?" If the customer says: "No," or "I'm just looking", then you have nothing more to say. Your first 10 words are the most important words in a sale. Remember: Promptness is important. We must show customers that we are interested before they buy.

One of the hardest skills to master in professional selling is approaching and greeting the customer. Once you have learned a number of approaches, you will find that breaking down that initial barrier of uncertainty will not only make your job more fun, but more financially rewarding as well. The physical environment - such as store location, image, decor or displays - has already set the stage. Now your approach should fit the mood and prepare the customer for your sales presentation. Take a look at the following specific types of approaches.

Types of Approaches

- Conversation
- Merchandise
- Suggestion
- Premium
- Stall
- Service

Conversation Approach

Speak with your customer in a personable manner (e.g.: "Is it raining outside?" "I have been admiring your scarf."). This approach puts your customer at ease - you are not going to leap across the counter! It gives her time to examine your counter.

Merchandise Approach

If your customer is obviously interested in your products (looking at the tester unit) you may use this approach. Create a conversation around the products which your customer is obviously interested in. "What do you think of our new colour range this season?" "That is our complete skin care system - three simple steps. Let me show you." This approach leads very naturally into discovering the customer's needs.

Suggestion Approach

This approach is used when the customer is obviously interested in your products. "That shade of lipstick would look great with what you are wearing."

Premium Approach

Only use this approach when your counter is running a promotion such as GWP (Gift-With-Purchase) or PWP (Purchase-With-Purchase). "When you make a \$15 purchase at our counter today, you will receive a bonus gift at no extra charge."

Stall Approach

This is used for the customer who, after you have approached her, obviously wants time to browse. "Please feel free to browse and I will be with you in a moment."

Service Approach

The service approach is only acceptable when people are waiting in line to be served, such as during promotions, or at Christmas time, etc. "How may I help you?" "What can I show you?"

The next step in a successful sales exchange involves communication. Communication is a two-way process involving speaking and listening - questions and answers. As a salesperson, the types of questions you ask are key to the success of your sales exchange. Let's look at the two types:

Asking The Right Questions

1. Open-Ended Questions

These are used to gather a lot of information within a relatively short period of time. They are worded so that the customer is invited to reply with a lengthy answer. Open-ended questions usually cannot be answered with one word - yes or no.

Salesperson: "What colour nail enamel were you looking for?"
Customer: "I want it to match an outfit I'm wearing to my daughter's wedding.
I have the fabric with me."

Open-ended questions are generally used at the beginning of a sales exchange to gather information about the customer's needs. Key words to begin an open-ended question are "who, what, when, where, why and how". By using any of these words you do not limit your customer's reply. She will be able to respond with a description of her needs and wants.

2. Closed-Ended Questions

These ask the customer for a direct response, a choice between alternatives, or a yes or no answer. The customer's response is limited.

Salesperson: "Would you like that eyeshadow in matte or frost?"
Customer: "Frost please."

Closed-ended questions are useful in assisting the customer making a buying decision. Always remember to ask one question at a time and give the customer enough time to respond.

Product Demonstration

Another tool you have to assist in your sales presentation is product demonstration - this is the showmanship portion of the presentation. Demonstrating the product reinforces the benefits you presented to the customer. Be sure to include the following steps:

1. Always hold the product with care. If you give it value, the customer will value it also.
2. Always involve the customer in the demonstration. Allow the customer to experience the benefits first hand.
3. Always try to demonstrate the product where the customer will use it, (e.g.: foundation on face; blush on cheeks; fragrance on pulse points).
4. Always follow good hygienic practices - wash your hands before you touch a customer, use disposable applicators.

Remember that a customer should know what a product is, what it does and how to use it, before she buys. During your demonstration is the best time to suggest additional products. This is called suggestion selling, process selling or, more preferably, "system selling". When you are presenting products, try to think in systems. All cosmetic products can be grouped into systems.



Cleansing System:

- Makeup Remover
- Skin Cleanser
- Toner
- Moisturizer

Eye Makeup System:

- Eyeshadow Base
- Eyeshadow
- Eyeliner
- Mascara
- Eyebrow Colour
- Eye Makeup Remover

Blush System:

- Cream Blush
- Powder Blush
- Highlighter Powder
- Contouring Powder

Even if your customer does not wish to purchase the entire system at this time, she has something to think about and you have a focus for the next sale when she returns to your counter. This method of presenting additional products is well received by the customer. Obviously, the system must be related to the customer's need and you only continue to present products to the customer while she is receptive. Follow the customer's lead - continue with your presentation until the customer signals that the sale is over.

But what happens if the sales exchange does not go quite smoothly? How do you handle customer objections? During your sales presentation the customer will respond in one of three ways:

1) Acceptance

If you have questioned your customer effectively to determine her needs and have listened carefully to her response, you will have made the correct merchandise selection. In your benefit statement you tell the customer that this product will meet her needs and why. In most cases your customer will decide that you are right and will be ready to buy; this response is usually signified by the customer nodding her head in agreement or saying "Yes, I agree." At this point don't try to tell the customer all the other benefits of the product. She is satisfied. If you over-sell, you could kill the sale.

2) Inquisitiveness

Sometimes your customer accepts the benefit statement, but is still a little curious about the products - she has a few more points to clear up before she is ready to buy. Typical responses include: "Yes, go on." "How can I use it?" The customer is interested, but not quite sold. What you must do for the inquisitive customer is to give her what she wants: more information. Make sure, however, that the information is related to the customer's needs. You are relating more benefits to some additional needs the customer has expressed.

3) Objections

Experienced salespeople consider objections as valuable sources of feedback outlining the customer's concerns and attitudes. Feedback, in the form of a concern or objection, is usually based on one of the following:

- The customer holds a *misconception* or *misunderstanding* about one of your products or services.
- The customer perceives a problem and, in fact, there is a real *drawback* to the product or service you're recommending. (No product will ever be all things to all people.)

Misconceptions and Misunderstandings

The first situation, a misconception or misunderstanding, usually can be eliminated by a simple explanation. This type of objection is relatively easy to handle because you can quickly point out the misconception and reinforce the benefits.

Examples of this type of objection would be: "But won't that type of eye makeup cause my skin to react?" or "Soap will work just as well, won't it?"

In each case, the objection would be easily overcome by supplying the customer with the right information. Your ability to correct these kinds of misunderstandings will depend on how effectively you listen, recognize the concern and then supply the right information to eliminate the concern. Be sure to deal with that concern only and don't overkill the objection with lots of other information. Too heavy a hand can also bring rejection.

Drawbacks

The second type of objection occurs when the customer either perceives there is a problem or a real drawback does exist with a product or service. This type of objection requires you to take a more subtle approach and develop the product benefits even more clearly in the mind of your customer. An example of a drawback would be: "That's just too much money for me to spend."

This kind of statement poses a very real objection. It is difficult to eliminate and, in many cases, can only be minimized. In the process, you are not trying to alter the customer's thinking so much as determine the priority. Using this same example, you would have to find out what is a reasonable amount of money for the customer to spend. Then you would relate that to your recommendation showing that, in the long run, the customer is better off with the quality product. Point out a number of offsetting benefits, such as quality of product, longevity versus a "less expensive" brand and difference in look, all of which minimize the draw-back. The customer expects you to resolve any uncertainties she has. Having dealt with your customer's response, now you must close the sale.

Closing the Sale

A good close is not one abrupt major decision, but is the last in a series of minor decisions made throughout the sales exchange. Always follow the customer's lead. If the customer is signalling the sale is over - by opening her purse or his wallet, saying: "I will take it." - you can use the most basic method of closing a sale called "asking for the order directly". This close asks the buyer if she/he is indeed committed to buy, (e.g.: "May I ring this up for you then?" or "How would you like to pay for this?")

Do not be afraid to ask your customer for her decision. Many salespeople have lost a sale simply because they have continued to talk when they should have closed.

There are two main ways to close a sale.

1. Presume agreement - assumes that the customer has already decided to buy.
 - "Do you want to take this with you or shall I arrange delivery?"
 - "Would you prefer the splash cologne or the spray?"
 - "Would you like this gift wrapped?"
 - "Will that be cash or charge?"
2. Get agreement - make a comment or question that invites agreement from the customer.
 - "This three-step cleansing system is very quick, don't you agree."
 - "Did you realize that we have a Gift-With-Purchase promotion?"
 - "This lipstick colour matches your blouse perfectly, doesn't it?"

Avoid:

- "Do you want to buy this?" or "Have you made up your mind yet?"

If the customer does not exhibit any obvious buying signals, the following are some other common ways to attempt a close:

The Suggesting Ownership Close

This is a very subtle and effective technique. The cosmetician assumes the customer intends to buy and helps the consumer make the same decision by saying something that causes the customer to see herself using the product in the near future.

- "I am sure that when you get home you will find it matches perfectly."
- "Your husband or wife will love it."

The Alternative Close

The commitment you are requesting is simply to choose one of two alternatives. Regardless of what alternative she chooses, you have already assumed the customer is going to buy. The response must therefore indicate acceptance. For example:

- "Would you prefer to go with the mauves and pinks or would the earth tones be what you're looking for?"

An alternative close focuses the decision on how or what she will buy rather than if she will buy.

The Secondary Issue Close

Closing on a secondary issue is similar to an alternative close insofar as the commitment is based on a lesser issue, not on committing whether to buy or not buy. The difference is in the phrasing of the questions. Rather than making a choice of two, the customer agrees on a key item that says: "Go ahead". For example: "...and based on the benefits we've just reviewed, I suggest you use the water-based products. Would you like to charge that to your account or will you be paying cash today?" A positive answer to the secondary issue, "How will you be paying?" will indicate the customer has agreed to your suggestions.

The Similar Situation Close

Some customers are leaders; others like to follow. Conservative customers tend to try proven promotions. For this type of customer, a similar situation close can offer the security she is looking for in making a decision

"Many of our customers feel that the night moisturizer is the perfect option, since applying a moisturizer under their foundation makes their skin feel too oily during the day."

Following this similar situation statement, ask a commitment question such as: "Would you like to try our night moisturizer as an option or would you prefer the lighter formula for day wear?"

The Last Chance Close

This close stresses dwindling supply. It is only used if the situation truly exists, urging the buyer to purchase now to avoid missing the opportunity.

"This colour is discontinued and I have only a few left. If you don't purchase it today, I can't guarantee I'll have any left when you come back."

The Premium Close

You provide an additional incentive for the customer to buy. "If you decide to try this fragrance and your purchase is over \$20, you will receive this free gift."

Don't be afraid to close the sale - more sales are lost through hesitation. Have confidence in your ability. The goal of the selling process is to guide the customer to a decision to buy - to close the sale. The sales approach and the presentation are wasted if the sale isn't closed. Watch the customer for these signals:

- The customer looks pleased with an item and does not ask any more questions.
- The customer shows an interest and appears restless.
- The customer says something to indicate she is satisfied. (e.g.: "This is exactly what I was looking for!")

After the sale is made, you should end the conversation with: "Thank you" or "It was a pleasure serving you." If an immediate sale was not made, be courteous. Remember, your professional service will encourage the customer to return to the store.

Remember to thank the customer by name. Include a method of obtaining customer's name at the beginning of the sales interaction and try to use it during conversation. It is important to build a relationship and customer loyalty.

The end of one sale is the beginning of the next. Excellent customer service, including customer follow-up, will guarantee the growth of day-to-day business - no longer are cosmetic companies relying on promotional activities to build their business.

Customer Follow-up

Customer follow-up shows your confidence in your products and yourself! Customer follow-up means ensuring the customer is happy with her purchases, knows how to use and benefit from them and is invited back to the counter to check on her purchases and progress. This means you need some information from the customer at the time of the initial sale. Most companies have a customer registry or customer card file system. Information required is usually:

- Name and address.
- Birth date (month/day). This allows you to send the customer a card on this special day and perhaps invite her into the store for a free makeover or other consultation.
- Skin type.
- Suggested products/purchased products. These allow you to have a complete "customer history" when the customer returns. They allow you to have a "focus" when the customer is invited back to the counter.

This customer information is one of your most valuable selling tools. You can keep your customer informed of any promotional activity at your counter and make them feel as though they have a preferred customer status.

You can also use the phone to check on the customer's satisfaction with her purchase or invite her back to the counter for special events. Be sure you have the customer's permission to call and ask her for the most convenient time. And, encourage your customer to call if she has any questions. If she can call you for confirmation, it adds to your professionalism.

Increasing Sales

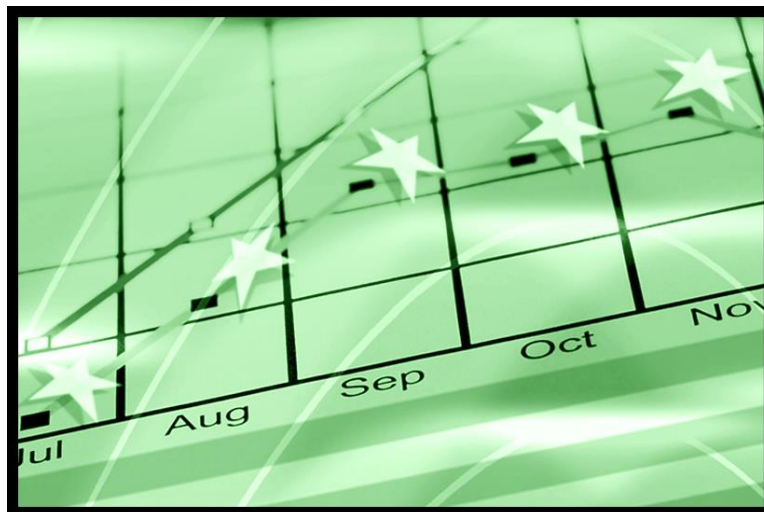
The point of all this is of course to increase sales by satisfying your customers. The following summary is something you should refer to regularly, especially during slow periods or times when you seem to be in a sales slump and you could use increased business.

1. Close more sales.
2. Use system selling.
3. Use suggestion selling:
 - Related items.
 - A larger quantity.
 - Trading up to higher-priced merchandise.
 - New or incoming merchandise.
 - Specially advertised items.
 - New or additional uses for merchandise.
 - Merchandise for future use: "Summer is coming - the selection of summer products is best right now."
4. Sell from promotional gifts, samples and product information pamphlets.
5. Develop a customer file.
6. Create activity at the counter - do makeovers; spray fragrance.
7. Always offer an alternative, never say: "Sorry, we don't carry it."
8. When products are returned, determine why. See if you can help the customer; treat her like any other customer. Sell to her - you will restore her faith.
9. Set a daily sales quota. This is very important. However, if you concentrate on offering the best possible service, your sales quota will be met with ease. In today's competitive market, customer service is the key to a successful sales career.
10. Assess customers' needs - opportunity to discover additional products a customer may require.

Learning Check

Review Questions

1. What are the questions you should ask yourself to improve your non-verbal sales communication?
2. What are the 12 questions you must be able to answer for complete product knowledge?
3. What "personal needs" will a customer likely have?
4. How do you make "implied needs" specific?
5. What three conditions stimulate buying?
6. Why are benefit statements more effective sales tools than feature statements?
7. How are benefit statements constructed?
8. What are the 18 steps to a professional sales exchange at the cosmetics counter?
9. What are the standard sales approaches?
10. What is the difference between open-ended and closed-ended questions?
11. How should you demonstrate a product?
12. What would be an example of a blush system?
13. How should you handle objections?
14. What are six ways of closing the sale?
15. What should you do for customer follow-up?
16. What are nine ways you can increase your sales?



Exercises/Assignments

1. Field Assignment: Assessment of the Salesperson

This assignment requires you to assess two different salespeople in the cosmetics retail industry and evaluate their performances using the knowledge acquired in this chapter.

Complete an assessment sheet for each salesperson. Include an in-depth evaluation, stating whether these interactions were positive or negative and why. Indicate specifically how you would have altered each sale given the circumstances. General observations should include the following:

- A) Place: Describe the shopping environment. Explain what the salesperson was doing when you entered the store/department.
- B) Personality: What was the image projected by the salesperson and how were you greeted?
- C) Probe: Did the salesperson use open-ended or close-ended questions to uncover your needs?
- D) Prescribe: Did you feel the salesperson understood your needs? Were the features of the products presented as benefits to you?
- E) Present: Were you shown the appropriate merchandise and given a demonstration? If the department did not have the exact merchandise you wanted, were substitutes shown? Was a suggestion made to purchase additional merchandise?
- F) Participate: Were you personally involved in the sale? How?
- G) Problem Solve: If you had any objections, were they dealt with successfully? How?
- H) Purchase: Based on the salesperson's presentation, would you or did you purchase? Was an attempt made to close the sale?
- I) Promote: What attempt was made to promote future business?

2. Features and Benefits

From the following fictional advertisement, list each individual feature (there are seven of them) and identify the corresponding benefit.

Introducing a new product line - Travel Buff Cosmetics. All products are packaged in clear plastic tubes so that you can see how much you've used and can throw them into a suitcase without care! In each tube we have left one-half inch space to allow for expansion of the product - handy when travelling to the tropics! You will never be faced with messy leaks in your suitcases again! And because the packaging is small and refillable, you also get economy and convenience.

All products are formulated for dry, normal/combination and oily skin types, so you can choose the system that will be most effective for your skin. And if you have sensitive skin, don't worry, Travel Buff Cosmetics are made exclusively of allergy-tested ingredients.