



Sales and Communications: 16 Bad Habits You Can Change

Leaders seem to forget that their human assets make or break a customer's ownership experience.

"Interpersonal interaction, though sometimes not the top reason for making a purchase, is almost always the reason for not repurchasing." ~ Marshall Goldsmith, Don Brown and Bill Hawkins, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There in Sales!: How Successful Salespeople Take It to the Next Level*, (McGraw-Hill, 2011).

Creating a positive experience for customers is every employee's job, including those who work outside the sales department. Even if you have limited customer contact, your ability to influence and persuade others builds a foundation for effective interpersonal communications that lead to business success.

Unfortunately, training often overlooks key interpersonal skills for influencing others. Workers at all levels fail to understand that:

- Customer expectations for the sales experience have increased.
- Customers enjoy a broader, more competitive selection of products and services.
- Companies are falling short on customer-relationship communications by overrelying on technology and outsourcing.
- There is often misalignment between sales and service.
- The pace of customer response is accelerating, yet salesperson ramp-up is longer, more costly and more difficult.
- Workers are stressed by rising targets and quotas, but have access to fewer resources.
- Customers define value both rationally and emotionally, yet less than 25 percent of salespeople are deemed proficient in core selling competencies.

A Message from Nancy...

I have a couple of questions to ask you:

1. Is your business as successful as you think it should be?
2. Are you and your team able to pinpoint the solutions necessary to create positive changes to get where you need to go?



Proffitt Management Solutions can help...

In today's highly competitive environment, it's no surprise that *"what got you here may not get you there."* Patients, clients, and employees expect nothing less than 100% satisfaction.

At **Proffitt Management Solutions** we are fully committed to help you and your company become more focused, motivated and successful in reaching your full potential.

Find out how services such as individual or team coaching and development, motivational workshops, seminars and keynote speaking may benefit you...

www.ProffittManagement.com

You can share this article on Facebook or LinkedIn or forward to people who want to make a positive impact.

Proffitt Management Solutions
326 Maddock St.
West Palm Beach, FL
www.ProffittManagement.com
561-582-6060
info@proffittmanagement.com

Functional vs. Human Factors

“No matter who employs you or what your organization is selling or servicing, you work within two areas of responsibility; there are two sides to your job: functional and human,” write Goldsmith, Brown and Hawkins.

While this concept is simple enough, it’s worth considering these two arenas on a deeper level.

1. Your Functional Job

The functional arena of your job involves mastery of a product or service. No matter who you are, the scope of your job or your area of specialization, you must understand what your company’s products and services represent to customers. This includes:

- Features
- Benefits
- Advantages
- Results and proof of what the company does

Depending on your level of involvement and experience, you have a range of knowledge about your company and its customers. The functional side of your job stresses purpose, practice and utility. You must know procedures, policies, process and pricing. You also need to master the computers, software and data systems that run the business and measure results.

Most of this functional mastery happens without customer interaction. It’s the human side of business that attracts, retains and sustains success.

With so much product and service similarity in today’s commoditized economy, it’s critical to identify the functional requirements of your job. Master these aspects so you can focus on customer service.

2. The Human Side of Business

The human arena determines whether you win, keep or lose a customer. Companies turn over 10 percent of their customer base every year, on average. Replacing this 10 percent, as well as adding to it, is a constant challenge that requires employee talent.

Every interaction with customers represents an opportunity to provide necessary information and ensure a valuable investment. View yourself as an educator who supplies everything customers need to benefit from your business. To accomplish this, you must learn to surpass their expectations.

Connecting Through Empathy

We innately connect with others, both emotionally and physiologically, without even trying. It’s basic human nature.

Empathy allows us to understand others’ feelings, thoughts and experiences. The ability to empathize is wired into almost all human brains, and it’s a prerequisite to understanding what drives others’ intentions and motivations.

Empathy is required for all effective social interactions. So, how does it help you create a positive sales experience?

Empathy vs Ego

The intrinsic need to persuade and convince someone else - along with the resilience of ego to take the battering of rejection - has long been established as a cornerstone trait of successful salespeople. A powerful ego comes up as a strong driver of what it takes to make it in sales.

Yet ego alone is also what is failing people in sales. To get from where you are today to where you need to be in the future, you’ll need to develop a conscious maintenance of empathy.

The right balance of ego and empathy facilitates communication and boosts sales effectiveness.

The Empathy Deficit

Studies show, however, that our sense of empathy is eroding. The Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan has collected data for more than 30 years, and researchers have found that young adults are 40 percent less empathetic than their counterparts in 1979. The ability to empathize dropped steeply in 2000, and narcissism rates have skyrocketed.

Many experts speculate that these trends can be attributed to increases in Internet usage, texting, and cell-phone and computer ubiquity. Regardless of the cause, the solution lies in regaining empathy. In other words, stop playing with your Smartphone while others are talking.

Destructive Sales Habits

Goldsmith, Brown and Hawkins identify 16 negative habits that severely damage a customer’s sales experience. Eliminating even one or two can profoundly improve your sales and influencing abilities.

1. **Failure to be present:** repeated and annoying displays of behavior that indicate we'd rather be somewhere else, "some *when*" else or with someone else
2. **Vocal filler:** the overuse of unnecessary and meaningless verbal qualifiers
3. **Selling past the close:** the irresistible urge to verbalize and execute every possible step in the sales process
4. **Selective hearing:** the absence of listening in the presence of a customer
5. **Contact without purpose:** repeated, deliberate communication for no valid business reason (other than wanting to sell something)
6. **Curb qualifying:** the tendency to judge a prospect's means and motive superficially, from a distance
7. **Using tension as a tool:** also known as "sale ends Saturday"
8. **One-upping:** the constant need to top your conversational partner in an effort to show the world just how smart you are
9. **Over familiarity:** the use of inappropriately intimate gestures
10. **Withholding passion and energy:** the tendency to forget that people make decisions on the basis of emotion and later justify them with logic
11. **Explaining failure:** behaving under the erroneous belief that simply assigning blame, fault or guilt is enough to satisfy the customer
12. **Never having to say you're sorry:** an inability to apologize or accept responsibility for personal or organizational errors/injuries
13. **Throwing others under the bus:** sacrificing a colleague – often anonymous, often vulnerable and usually innocent – to cover up a functional failure
14. **Propagandizing:** overreliance on organizational rhetoric and themes
15. **Wasting energy:** taking part in organizational blame-storming and pity parties
16. **Obsessing over the numbers:** achieving revenue, profit or productivity targets at the expense of metrics of a higher calling



How to Conquer Bad Communications

It's never easy to create a new habit, but you can easily choose to stop a bad one. Here's the secret: Don't try to change everything at once. Use the *rule of three*, whereby you identify only three of your bad habits and commit to stop doing them.

Review the 16 bad sales habits cited above, and you'll find that they usually indicate an excess or deficit in either information or emotion. We usually share too much information or not enough emotion (or vice versa). Where do your behaviors fit on the spectrum?

Use this four-step action plan to neutralize bad habits:

1. **Gather data.** Notice the kinds of casual remarks others make about you. These comments contain key information that can help you improve your communications. *Ask.*
2. **Find or develop a "mute button."** Allow seven seconds of silence to pass during your next conversation. You may find that this gap helps you listen more carefully instead of mentally working on your response. Also use this time to observe your conversation partner's nonverbal communication. *Zip it.*
3. **Observe your own self-deception.** Each of us denies certain behaviors to protect ourselves from discomfort. Identify what you can do – and stop doing – to achieve even greater success. *Admit it.*
4. **Work with a trusted peer, mentor or coach.** Personal change rarely happens when we work in isolation. If it does occur, it's usually harder to sustain. Studies show that sharing plans and following up with another person lead to long-term behavioral changes. *Share it* (your action plan) *and follow up* with someone.

Follow-Up Works

While there's no doubt that training equips today's work force with better communication and customer-relationship skills, lasting change also requires coaching and follow-up. Professionals who received training, coaching and follow-up experienced 20 times more growth than those who received training alone.

The high-tech, low-touch approach to customer contact is failing miserably. Customers may prefer a brand, but they are loyal to people. Computerized customer-service systems may be convenient and cost-effective, but their inability to solve real-life problems is coming back to haunt many businesses.

Mastery of your job's functional arena allows you to enter the game, but your effectiveness in the human arena helps you stay on the field – and win.



326 Maddock St.
West Palm Beach, FL 33405
561-582-6060
info@proffittmanagement.com
www.ProffittManagement.com