

# AGRICULTURE BUSINESS PLANNING

## Chapter 6

### Selling and Customer Record

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#### Lecture Overview

- Introduction
- Basic Sales Process
- The Development of The Selling Function
- Sales Person's General Skills
- Sales Models
- References

#### **Introduction to this chapter:**

At the previous Chapter 5, the students are encouraged to sell the products. Thus, based on the previous selling experience, it is important to equip students about selling skill and starting to make the record of the customer in order to be able to maintain the relationship.

#### **Basic Sales Process**

The history of sales over the last several decades has changed dramatically, but the most dramatic changes have come since the advent of the internet and web-based advertising. Plus, the trend towards globalization means that we have to consider ways of communicating with others who may have very different needs than the customers we have worked with before<sup>1</sup>.

Customers have changed as well. Today, we as customers expect immediate, convenient, individualized service. If one organization doesn't provide it, chances are we have another choice to turn to. So, understanding customers is vital to overcoming the competition and learning what it will take to help your customer choose your product or service rather than the competition's.

## **The Development of the Selling Function**

Main changes have occurred in the selling function over time. From the first bartering transaction to today's complex, contracted relationships, the way we interact with each other in sales transactions has changed – and will continue to change.

### **1. Sales from Simple Bartering to Profession**

The beginning of sales was simple bartering and transactions. This basic form of selling happens when products are standard and commoditized. Price and reliability are most important to the customer. When transactions will occur is unpredictable and irregular. The relationship between the salesperson and the customer is limited to the single transaction between the two of them.

As people began focusing on sales as a profession, people began to study and identify what was important in a sales relationship. They identified some of these things that were important to both the buyer and the seller:

- Continuity of the company or organization and the relationship
- Consistency in offerings and in service
- Sustainability of the product and/or service
- Understanding of the customer's real issues

To the customer, some important traits of the company they do business with were identified during this time as well. These included:

- Continuity in communications with their contacts
- Similar ways in which they want to trade with each other
- Mutual willingness to be flexible and adapt to each other

## 2. Management and Information

Starting in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the salesperson began working to add value to the customer. The selling organization could add other forms of support such as management and information to the buyer, which would in turn lead to further improvements for the customer and additional purchases from the buyer

## 3. Partnership

A natural progression of sales techniques was to move even more towards a 'partnership' with customers. This level of intricacy in the arrangement between customers and salespersons mainly began in the 1980s with the rise of 'outsourcing.' In these arrangements:

- The buyer's and seller's relationships become smooth and regular
- The seller, or supplier, is treated as a part of the customer's organization
- Especially in out-sourcing, once created, the relationship is difficult to dissolve
- May not be a legal partnership, but the relationship behaves as if it were one
- Time is required to develop this kind of partnership selling (often, years)
- Usually a great deal of cooperation that is not written or contracted but develops as part of the relationship, reinforcing the partnership

## 4. Education and Enablement

While partnership selling requires significant involvement, the education and enablement type of selling goes even further in creating the buyer's dependence on the seller as a source of information and assistance. Due to the fact that it is relatively new, not all aspects of this type of relationship are fully understood. But some of the characteristics of this type of relationship include:

- Educational activities of the seller and the seller's organization exceed those of the partnership relationship
- The seller is a facilitator, enabling the buyer to perform at a higher level through the implementation of the seller's products, services, and assistance.
- The seller educates the buyer on the buyer's business in order to help improve their understanding, development, and processes when interacting with their own customers
- Very sophisticated type of selling where the salesperson and the salesperson's organization fulfill the roles of guide and mentor for the buying organization
- Seller's involvement can actually foster significant changes in the buyer's organization through the relationship

### **Sales Person's General Skills**

**Listening skill:** As we've learned, a successful sales relationship today involves the seller being able to help the buyer identify his or his organization's true needs. The seller helps this process by being able to listen to and understand what the buyer is telling him.

Studies have shown that most listeners retain less than 50% of what they hear.

Practice the listening skill:

- Pay close attention
- Demonstrate physically that you are listening
- Check for understanding
- Don't interrupt
- Respond appropriately

**Effective communication skill:** you must be able to respond well, whether in person, over the phone, or in writing. You must be able to offer solutions to the customer's problems if the customer is ever going to buy from you or your company.

Communication skills are the tools that we use to remove the barriers to effective communication.

Remember that communication skills involve both verbal and non-verbal communication. When communicating with others, the non-verbal aspects of what we are saying are actually more important than the words that we use. In fact, if the two conflict, we will automatically believe the non-verbal communication we are receiving over the verbal.

So what do we mean by non-verbal communication? Mainly, we are referring to tone of voice and body language. Tone of voice is responsible for about 35-40 percent of the message we are sending. It involves the volume, emotion, and emphasis in our voice when we speak.

Over half of the message we are sending can be due to body language. Body language is a subconscious way that we communicate, but it is one that we recognize in others on instinct. Examples of body language include:

- Facial expressions
- The way they are standing or sitting
- Any swaying or other movement
- Gestures with their arms or hands
- Eye contact (or lack thereof)
- Breathing rate
- Swallowing or coughing
- Blushing
- Fidgeting

Basically, body language includes anything they are doing with their body besides speaking. We recognize this communication instinctively, without having to be told what it means. It is important that when you speak to a customer, your body language supports rather than contrasts what you are saying.

**Problem solving skill:** The salesperson of today is a problem-solver who works in conjunction with the customer to identify any issues that the customer has and then uses that information to offer solutions to the customer's problems or situations. The tricky part of this situation is ensuring that the problem that the customer is

attempting to solve is the actual problem that exists.

**Interpersonal skill:** Interpersonal skills are more than just communication skills. They are the ‘people skills’ that seem to come to some of us so naturally, while other of us may struggle with them. Interpersonal skills will help you to work with your customers and build rapport with them, but it will also help you to advocate for your customer with your colleagues across your organization. Interpersonal skills also help you to build the type of long-term relationships that are important

Interpersonal skills are the ‘people skills’ that help you to work with and build rapport with customers, as well as to advocate for your customer within your own organization.

in maintaining customers over time.

Some interpersonal skills include:

- Courtesy – it’s been said that good manners cost nothing, and that’s the truth. There is no reason to be anything but courteous when dealing with your customers and colleagues. It fosters relationships and shows that you care about making the other person comfortable.
- Respect for others – you’ve heard the ‘golden rule’, that you should treat others the way that you would like to be treated. But the true expression of respect is something called the ‘platinum rule’ treating others the way that they would like for you to treat them.
- Ability to see things from others’ perspectives – if you have a customer who is upset about something, you might feel as if they have overreacted at first. But you need to be able to understand how what has happened is affecting your customer.
- Perhaps to you, having the order arrive one day late is not a big deal. But to your customer, it could mean lost sales, lost productivity, embarrassment for him in dealing with his own customers, or any number of things. Your job is to understand – and express that understanding – so that the customer feels heard and acknowledged.
- Ability to understand various communication styles – each of us has a way of communicating with the world, and your customer’s could be very different from your own. These differences could create barriers to

relationship building if you don't understand how they may show up.

- For example, a person who you perceive as being rude or cold may simply be reserved or shy. Or a person you see as intrusive or forward may simply be interested in people in general and is not meaning any disrespect. This is just one form of keeping an open mind when working with others– a huge factor in interpersonal skills!

**Organization skill:** If you are going to be a success as a salesperson, you have to be well-organized. You'll have information on your own products and services to keep track of, information on your customers and their businesses, information on prospects that might become customers, and any other information that your organization might provide.

Plus, you'll have information relevant to the job itself. You'll have to keep track of any sales you make if you are paid by commission or quota. You will have information on internal promotions and procedures, as well as information on how to use any data, tools, or software that you need to use. You'll also have a calendar to keep track of involving any meetings with clients or internal support people.

So what can you do to help improve your organization skills? Here are some suggestions:

- Keep one calendar that has both business and personal appointments on it. Whether electronic or written, include the location of the meeting as well as the contact information for the person you are meeting with.
- Create a sales 'funnel' to track which stage of a sale your customers are in
- Get in the habit of creating a 'to-do' list at the end of your workday of things that you need to get done the next day. Label them in order of priority in case you aren't able to complete them all. If something doesn't get completed, move it to the next day's to-do list.
- Use a contact management system software system, if possible, which will help you keep track of when you have spoken to, sent mail to, or sent email to a customer, as well as when you need to contact them again.

**Self-motivation skill:** As a salesperson, you have to be able to motivate yourself. There will be those times that you don't want to take the next step in the sales process, or to make that phone call to the next customer. But you'll need to know how to work through those feelings and take the steps that your customers need – and that will help you be successful in your job.

Motivation requires a goal to strive for. You can get as creative as you want in the goals that you set for yourself, as long as they will help you to take the next action(s) that are necessary in moving through the sales funnel. The goals don't have to be related to your sales funnel – they could also be related to your own personal growth.

**Persuasion skill:** The most important skill in persuasion is understanding the point of view of your customers and providing information on the benefits of your offer.

As salespeople, we tend to focus on the features of our offering, when what we truly need is to focus on how the customer will benefit from our product or service.

**Customer service skill:** Customer service is not just a series of steps that you complete. It is an attitude and a way of looking at customers that enables you to provide the best level of service that you and your organization are capable of providing. Don't underestimate the power of customer service when it comes to making sales and keeping customers – many customers are willing to pay a higher price or go without certain features if they know that they have access to excellent customer service people who will be responsive and effective whenever they are needed.

**Integrity:** As in any relationship, integrity is vital in your relationships with your customers. What do we mean by integrity? A simple definition is that someone with integrity acts in accordance with their values and their commitments. This means that if you act with integrity, you will be fulfilling not only your organization's values, but your own.

When you demonstrate that you have integrity, you show that you are someone who can be trusted and that you have the best intentions for your customers. This can make you a valuable partner and a trusted colleague. It can take multiple

interactions to show that you have integrity – but, as mentioned above, you can damage your integrity with only one failed interaction. Remember that every time you work with your customer, you have an opportunity to demonstrate your integrity.

**Sales Model:** the model discussed in this chapter is AIDA modal. AIDA stands for (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action).

Attention:

Getting the attention of your customer is the first step, and is important because it sets the tone for your relationship going forward. As the saying goes, you only get a single chance to make a first impression, so be sure that you are representing yourself, your product or service, and your organization in the best possible light.

Interest:

Once you've gotten the prospect's attention, you can't hold it unless you generate some interest. You usually have about 15 seconds to create that interest in your customer.

Desire:

Once you have the prospect's interest, you need to be able to grow that interest into desire for your product or service. This requires further development of your rapport and conversations with the prospect. This is when you can learn more about what the prospect's needs are and how you can help them, plus it's the chance for you to show that you are the right choice for the product or service they need.

Action:

If you have completed the first three stages thoroughly and well, this final stage of action should flow forward easily. The customer will have a strong desire for your product or service and will believe that you are the right choice to be their provider. It now only remains for you to get the customer to take the next step.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> McPheat, S. (2010). *Basic Selling Skills*.  
<http://dl.is.vnu.edu.vn/bitstream/123456789/251/1/basic-selling-skills.pdf>