



The 25 Sales Habits of Highly Successful Salespeople

2nd Edition

Stephan Schiffman
[Adams Media](#), 1994
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Fix up your sales skills by cultivating only 25 habits. It's only a few little things, but can you change your habits?

Recommendation

Noted sales trainer - and the head genius of cold calling - Stephan Schiffman succinctly describes 25 effective sales techniques. Each tip gets a short chapter with a nugget of advice, an example or two and a pat on the back to send you out the door charged up and ready to go. It doesn't matter if you've heard some of these common sense ideas before because Schiffman's compilation is so on-target, lively and encouraging. This little volume reminds you of leading sales techniques - or habits, as Schiffman calls them - that will build your customer base and increase your sales. If you're in the business of one on one product or service sales, this will boost your communications, planning, knowledge, rainmaking, visibility and confidence. Schiffman tells you to ask people what they do and help them do it better by selling into their priorities. Seems clear enough to *getAbstract.com*, given that the author doesn't only write - he also sells.

In this summary, you will learn

- 25 tips on increasing your selling skills

Take-Aways

- Old selling tricks don't work anymore; customers want value, information and trust
- Focus on helping your customers do what they do better and solving problems.
- Ask important, real questions about the prospects' business in the past, now and in the future, so you can suggest solutions to their problems and meet their needs.
- Keep each prospect informed about where you are in the sales cycle as you move from the initial contact to close.
- Find the most suitable customers by creating a profile of your past most satisfied customers; focus most of your attention on them.
- When new prospects call for information, don't rush to close a sale; focus on building a trusting relationship first for long-term success.
- Think of yourself as a consultant.
- Take notes when you meet with a customer and follow up the next day.

- Learn what your customer wants and needs; then create a customized written plan.
- Always be ready to ask for the next appointment and for referrals. Talk with pride about what you are doing.

Summary

“First and most important, you must remember that your prospects are more value-conscious and information-conscious than ever.”

“Don’t focus so much on ‘needs.’ The key to selling in today’s fast-paced environment is to ask people what they do, how they do it, when and where they do it, why they do it that way, and how you can help them do it better.”

“Today’s successful salesperson is willing to think ahead. That means consistently looking for the next step in the sales process. That means prospecting for tomorrow - and maintaining a prospect base, even if you’re given an existing account base.”

Sales: Getting to be a Habit

To succeed in today’s competitive selling environment, incorporate 25 good habits into your sales routine. Value-conscious consumers are more aware of what they are getting from a salesperson than ever. Don’t use old selling tricks. Rather, emphasize helping customers do their work better and resolve their problems. Build enduring relationships based on trust, not just the image of trust. Be truly caring, since customers will see through fake concern. Make real promises you can deliver. These sales habits affect key areas: using communication skills, planning and strategizing thoughtfully, sharing knowledge, seeking leads, having enthusiasm, being honest, following up and building visibility. The 25 habits, in brief, are:

Being a Great Communicator

Each customer contact hinges on making a real connection. Reach out with these tips:

#1: Use your communication skills to convey a message that it makes good business sense to trust you, because you are honest and trustworthy. Don’t use tricks like claiming the person just won a raffle. Successful salespeople inspire trust, the hallmark of a good leader - one who has vision, deserves respect, is accountable, has a clear sense of direction and has confidence. Be "the real thing" and remember that the details matter.

#2: Ask important and real questions. A little small talk to establish rapport is fine, but get down to business, so you don’t waste your prospect’s time. Use a single question to make the transition from small talk to business, such as "How did you get your job?" and then explain why you are meeting. Plan to ask about the clients’ responsibilities, so you can help them improve, whether that involves increasing sales volume or performing other tasks better.

#3: Guide the conversation in the direction you want, and inform the prospect where you are going. Take the lead in stating where you are in the sales cycle, so he or she feels more comfortable about the process - from initial contact to closing the sale. When you arrive, explain that first you will inform the prospect about your company; then note that you are ready to ask questions to get the information to move the sales cycle ahead, and so on.

#4: Engage your prospects by responding clearly to their statements about their requirements and what you sense are their unstated requirements. Create a "core of understanding" or a framework you can use to achieve solutions to their current problems. Adapt these responses, since every customer is different and will react differently to your presentation. Build rapport by discussing the surroundings or some interest which you apparently share with your prospect (i.e. does he have skiing pictures or golf balls on his desk?).

Be Strategic and Plan What You Do

Careful forethought can help you take deliberate, productive action.

“You want to develop an earned reputation for following through on everything - and I mean every syllable - that comes out of your mouth.”

“Relationships are built on trust, and trust is built on evidence of all kinds.”

“Base everything you ask on a simple principle: never waste the prospect’s time.”

“Tell the prospect where you are at any given point in the sales cycle.”

“When the person starts to talk about himself, lean in’ to the conversa-

#5: Identify the most suitable customers for your product or service and tailor your approach. Look for prospects who match your profile of a good customer for your product. Don’t focus on getting "virgin" prospects for your product line. Rather, determine your niche and the customers most likely to buy from you (which can include customers of competitors) and target them. When you contact these selected people, be as tactful as an educator or a facilitator. Win your prospects with information, not with high pressure tactics.

#6: Don’t be pushy with the leads that "fall into your lap," such as when someone calls for information. You may be tempted to close the sale right away, but don’t leap too quickly. That’s a turn-off. Focus on developing a relationship first. Share some small talk to build rapport and get a sense of the person. Then, ask questions to learn what the person wants and why he or she contacted you. Finally, ask to set up an appointment. Don’t try to close a sale on the phone, even if the person seems to want to. Your goal is establishing a personal relationship first. You are likely to sell even more and to increase the potential of future sales.

#7: Make your product or service fit your prospects’ needs. Find ways to be adaptable and flexible. For example, a paper clip can have many uses besides just holding paper together. Consider how your product might fulfill a new purpose. Look at different ways to make your product presentation or find new groups of people to approach.

#8: Present yourself as a consultant - and see yourself as one, too. You are doing more than selling a product. You are a "professional problem solver." For instance, think of car sales as solving someone’s transportation problems. When you sell to a business, you are solving their problems about becoming more profitable.

Making the Most of Your Sales Call

When you meet with prospects, make your presentation strong and effective.

#9: Set up your next appointment on your first visit. Don’t wait for the prospect to ask you back. Since you initiated the contact and have shown that you are there to help, it is logical to ask to come again to show how you would implement your proposed solution. Estimate the time you need to prepare a quote and when you can return; use that to set your next meeting. If you have to reschedule, do so. But get the follow-up appointment set right away.

#10: Take notes - writing them has value and so does owning them to guide you after your meeting. Taking notes will help you: 1) listen and pay attention to important points; 2) show that you are in a position of control and authority; 3) analyze the information from your meeting; 4) encourage the prospect to give you more information; 5) send a positive signal to the prospect about your interest and concern.

#11: Create a customized, written plan for each new prospect. Use the material you obtain in your meetings to derive your plan. As you listen, note any problems and ways to adapt your product or service to that customer. Identify solutions to tailor your plan.

#12: Ask for referrals. One ideal time to do this is when you send a letter to thank your client for his or her business. Add a note that your business depends on referrals and invite the customer to list the names and phone numbers of a few people in the industry who might benefit from talking to you. Note that you don’t need to use the customer’s name. Or, more directly, ask for referrals in person and see if the contact will call them for you.

Have the Right Attitude for Success

Your personal demeanor affects your sales. Work on these habits:

tion. People who talk about themselves are more relaxed than people who don't."

"Show care by really caring. When the prospect outlines a problem, show the same concern you would if it were yours."

"Most successful salespeople develop a sense of who the likely customer is - and then put themselves in front of as many of those types of people as possible."

"Look at each lead as a sales relationship - and remember that relationships take time to develop."

"Ask yourself, does what you sell work in only one way? Or can you adjust it? Can you make it serve some new purpose

#13: Show your enthusiasm. Don't go overboard trying to embrace clients or throw around insincere compliments. Just adopt a friendly, warm approach. Use good eye contact, a strong handshake, and calm, confident movements and gestures.

#14: Combine humility with giving yourself credit. Show that you feel proud and confident about your work, but avoid seeming arrogant. Demonstrate "success, confidence and flexibility," which are professional hallmarks. Assert your ability to succeed, perhaps by describing how you have helped someone else do what the prospect hopes to achieve.

#15: Be honest in whatever you say. It's easier to remember what you've said when you speak only the truth - and it shows you are trustworthy. Sales depend on relationships; relationships depend on trust. It's fine to occasionally exaggerate a compliment, such as telling a person he has a great-looking office, when it's only ordinary. But don't misrepresent your ability to solve a business problem; that's at the heart of your professional relationship.

#16: Use self-motivators. Be specific about your goals and the roles you value. Find sources of positive reinforcement, such as another salesperson with whom you can share support, advice and helpful critiques. Leave yourself affirmative notes, such as "I can do it."

Stay on Top of Your Industry

It's critical to stay informed and to use the early morning productively. Here's how.

#17: Start early, so you can reach important decision-makers. Many come in very early and may even answer their own phones when you call, since the secretaries and receptionist haven't arrived yet. Arriving early lets you do your paperwork before the peak contact times for calling and meeting most prospects. And, commuting is easier if you're early.

#18: Read the publications in your industry - and in your client's industries, to stay abreast of changes and trends, so you can adapt how you sell. The "who's who" and "on the move" sections are a good source of leads. To control costs, try the library.

Dare to be Out There

Maintain a high community profile and follow-up with the people you meet.

#19: Support your prospect meetings by calling or writing to follow up the next day. Create a tickler system or write in these calls into your daily schedule. This reminds your prospects of your presence and shows your commitment to addressing their problems.

#20: Give speeches to community groups, including businesses and civic organizations. Develop your speaking skills and learn to share your knowledge. Expand your contacts beyond your own industry to a wide variety of groups. Your speeches reinforce your sales message, and 10% of your audience will ask you for information about your product.

#21: When appropriate, pass on an opportunity to others. If you help others, they will help you in return. View other salespeople as teammates and colleagues, rather than competitors.

#22: If something goes wrong with a sales presentation or an expected sale ends with a "no," take responsibility for that. Don't be shocked that the prospect doesn't want to buy. Rather suggest that the problem must be in your presentation or in something your company is doing wrong. Your prospect may then describe any remaining obstacles and this can turn into a sale.

or function? The key lies in opening your own mind to new possibilities, then following through.”

#23: Be honest about the firm where you work. If you don't feel there is a fit or the people don't meet your standards for ethics, quality or customer support, move on.

#24: Spread the word to everyone you meet about your company and your product line. Talk with pride, though don't give everyone a sales pitch. Quick introductions can become leads.

#25: Maintain your sense of humor. Don't take yourself too seriously. Detach yourself from the day to day routine and laugh about what you do. It's refreshing and good for the soul.

About the Author

Stephan Schiffman has trained more than 250,000 sales people. He is president of DEI Management Group and the author of *Cold Calling Techniques (That Really Work!)*, *The 25 Most Common Sales Mistakes - and How to Avoid Them*, and a number of other books on sales.

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