

Debunking Great Myths of Selling

Selling is hard enough, but we make it much harder by believing sales myths. Here are a few sales ideas I've heard expressed many times. I'd argue each is a dangerous myth that you should avoid.

Myth #1: There's Something Distasteful About Sales

Business is all about selling. People who avoid sales and leave it to others because they think it's "below them" are wrong. The most rewarding, the most exciting part of running a business, is making a sale.

Myth #2: Market And Advertise More And You'll Generate More Sales

Believe this myth and you risk ignoring the quality of your marketing materials. Today with the Internet and TV and squawking ad boxes at gas stations and phone ads and more, we bombard people with 3,000 marketing messages a day. More isn't more effective. Salespeople who focus strictly on pumping out more marketing can easily lose track of whether they're reaching people who really want and need to hear their message. Getting ten people to love your product is much better than getting a thousand people to like your product.

Myth #3: Great Salespeople Focus On The Close

This is backwards. A great salesperson focuses on the opening, on the relationship, on the first impression. When you focus on the close, you put your need before the client's need. You need the sale; the client doesn't. The client needs a trustworthy business relationship. When you start the sales process, focus on getting to the truth, finding the prospect's pain, or uncovering a problem you can solve for them.

Myth #4: To Sell Well You Must Persistently Pursue Prospects

Dispelling this myth may be tougher. You must think counter-intuitively. When you stop pursuing people, they become drawn to you. Who do you want to see – the salesperson who is always calling you up or the salesperson who is hard to get in front of because she's so busy helping other people? Persistently pursuing prospects smells of desperation. Yes, you need to work hard to gain new prospects, but that doesn't mean texting them every 15 minutes.

(Over)

Myth #5: Sales Are Made On A Rational, Thinking Basis

Tsk, tsk if you fall for this one. We like to think of ourselves as rational, thinking beings. In some ways, we are rational. But what truly motivates us to act or to buy is emotion. Just watch the commercials on TV and count how many are emotional appeals. People will buy more often because they feel an emotional connection than they will buy because the sale makes sense.

Myth #6: The Sales Is Lost Or Won At The End Of The Process

Are you beginning to see how many of these myths are related to one another? This myth is similar to Myth #3. The most important part of the sale is the beginning, not the end. At the beginning of the sale you must establish trust, build rapport, show value, and demonstrate a primary interest in the prospect. It ain't about grabbing prospects by the neck and injecting them with a closing argument serum. It's not about us selling them; it's about us letting them buy.

Myth #7: The Best Way To Handle Objections Is Overcoming Them

This is a great way to start an argument with your prospect. Try overcoming a belief prospects have and their natural tendency is to fight for their belief. You risk offending the person you're trying to sell. Instead, Australian sales guru Ari Galper says to acknowledge the legitimacy of the objection (in the eye of the prospect). For example, if a prospect says they don't need you as a vendor because they already have one, you might say, "I understand your concern and I don't want to replace your current vendor. I just want to see if you're open to some new ideas that only our company can present to you. Would that be okay?"

Myth #8: You Either Sell A Product Or You Sell A Service

This myth used to be true. Today, smart companies and smart salespeople are beyond selling just a product or service. Companies like Disney and Intel use their products as props and their services as a stage to sell an experience. Tim Sanders, former Chief Solutions Officer at Yahoo! spells out this concept in his book, *Love Is The Killer App: How To Win Business and Influence Friends*. Macdonald's doesn't sell food; they sell a clean, quick, enjoyable family experience.

Myth #9: Top Salespeople Are Independent And Self-Sufficient

The only truly independent salespeople are those no one else wants to relate to. Keith Ferrazzi, in his best selling marketing book, *Never Eat Alone*, says "Autonomy is a life vest made out of sand." In sales, independence is less important than teamwork, cooperation and communication. Givers gain. You teach someone a sales technique and guess what? You learn more in return. You share sales leads and guess what? Rather than having fewer sales leads, you find more leads flowing your way. Top salespeople give freely of their time and expertise and the pie gets bigger for all of us, including them.

Do watch out for these myths. Live by the sales truths that really are truths, like this one from Zig Ziglar, "You can have everything in life you want if you will just help enough other people get what they want."