

Relationship Building - Training

7 Principles of Relationship Building

1. When the sales representative/merchant relationship is right, the details are negotiable. If there is tension in the relationship, something is wrong and the details become obstacles.

Tip: Build strong, open relationships with your merchants.

2. When there is little difference between what you and your competitors offer, there should be a big difference in the way you deal with your customers.

Tip: Never demean your competition. Treat your merchants with respect and offer them the information and guidance they need to make a solid business decision that is right for their needs.

3. Sales and service are like medicine: Offering a prescription before a diagnosis is a form of malpractice.

Tip: Listen to your customers' needs first, despite your enthusiasm about any single solution.

4. We judge ourselves by our intentions, but others judge us by our actions.

Tip: Make promises you can keep, and keep your promises.

5. Professionals are no longer determined by the businesses they are in, but rather by the way they do business.

Tip: Build professionalism. The more comfortable merchants are with the products and services they purchase from you, the more professional you will seem in their eyes.

6. One sincere gesture can do more for your business than thousands of dollars of advertising.

Tip: Go the extra mile for your customers. They will remember your effort and buy from you again as well as refer new customers to you.

7. People truly don't care what you know until they know that you care.

Tip: Show your customers that you care about their business' success by demonstrating your listening skills.

Closing Strategies Ask for the Order - Then Keep Silent!

Once you ask your prospect to buy, be quiet for as long as it takes the merchant to respond. Follow these steps:

- Sit in your chair and zip your lip
- Lean forward slightly to demonstrate your sincere interest
- Fix your gaze firmly on the prospect's eyes. The merchant won't maintain eye contact until he or she is ready to speak. Instead, the merchant will probably keep glancing at the desk and the papers on it.
- Maintain a slight, friendly smile while you watch your prospect - and wait.
- Keep yourself busy by sending out positive vibes. Silently repeat, "Go on, buy it, buy it, buy it."
- Bite your tongue. Don't be tempted to break the silence.

Remember: A long silence is always a good sign. The longer the silence, the more likely it is that the prospect will say "Yes." It means the merchant can't think of a good reason not to buy from you.

Thank Your Customers - And Those That Don't Buy From You!

You didn't get the account you just resented to the merchant. What should be your very next step? Send your prospect a thank-you note even though you didn't get his or her business. Why? Because many businesses are required to get bids from different companies, and sometimes these bids require many calls and considerable number crunching. However, since you didn't get the merchant's business the first time around, your customer may feel uncomfortable calling you to bid again if and when the need arises. Your thank-you note will remove any strain the merchant may feel because he or she did not offer you the business. The note also demonstrates that you are a real professional who doesn't hold a grudge.

Your thank-you note should read something like this: "Thank you for the opportunity and invitation to evaluate your business (or make a presentation on a particular product or service). I'm sorry we couldn't help you this time. But please keep (your company) in mind for future products, and feel free to call or fax me

for more information or ask for a presentation that could help your business in the future.”

This kind of personal thank you leaves the door open for future bids and sales opportunities. Be sure to follow up in a month with a telephone call to find out if the merchant is happy with the product/service he or she chose over the one offered by you.