



Unit 1

Essential Skills for Smart Selling

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Explain and apply concepts of customer focused selling.
- ✓ Use goal-setting techniques as a way to focus on what you want to accomplish and develop strategies for getting there.

Unit 1

Essential Skills for Smart Selling

Selling Skills

Essential Skills

Becoming a great salesperson takes effort and practice. While a salesperson might enter the industry because they have great people skills and a natural ability to influence others, they can certainly benefit from developing skills in terms of providing the best buying experience for their customers and potential customers.

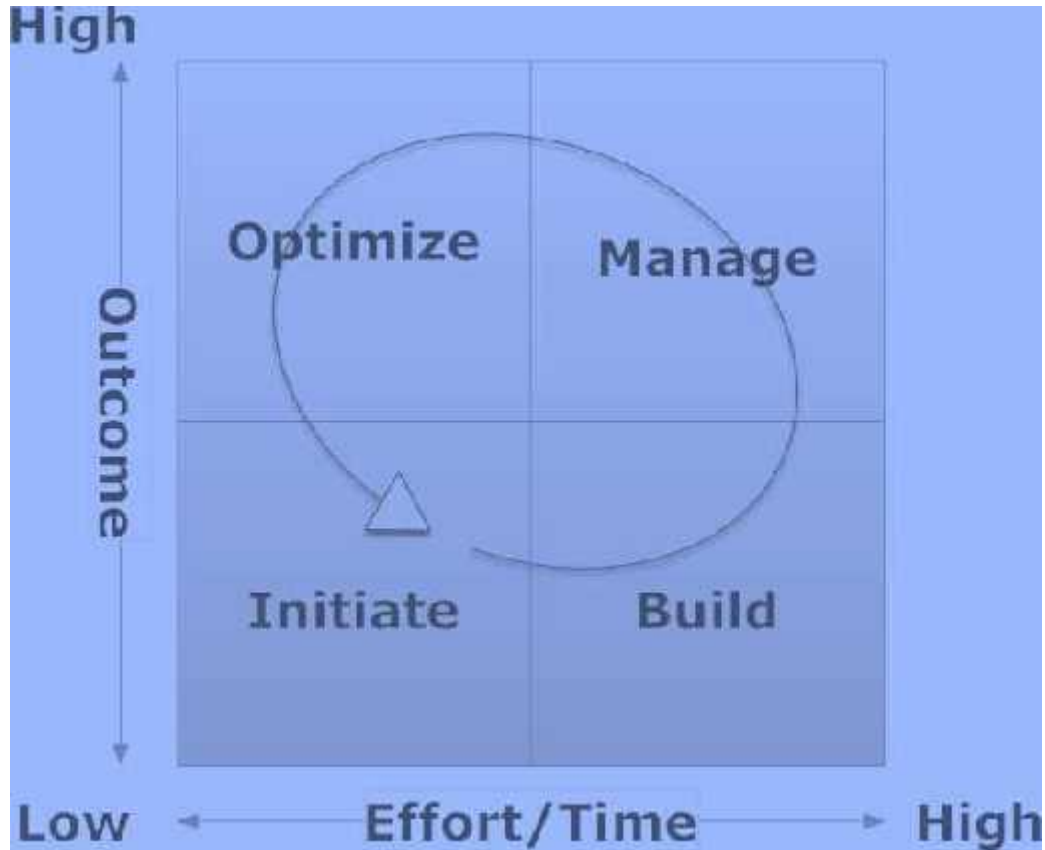
At one time it was not unusual for sales people to focus on pushing a product or service in a way we call the “hard sell.” Hard selling comes from deliberately targeted activities that focus on selling numbers and collecting money.

Things have really changed! Customers expect to be consulted and want relationships with their sales people. Top sales people have developed skills that are based on building relationships and developing trust with their clients. They realize that these relationships are what fill their sales pipeline, and that the stronger relationships they develop, the less time they have to spend on less desirable activities, such as cold calling.

Consultative Selling

Consultative selling, also called customer focused selling, is the model that we recommend to get the best results from your sales efforts. This cycle includes techniques that are used by top salespeople who have the fullest pipelines and get the best results.

If you consider the model below as a starting point, you will see that the more effort we make, the better the results we get. What we need to ensure, then, is that our efforts are also efficient so that we get even better results.



The quadrants defined by the matrix correspond to the sales cycle, which we will discuss in the next session.

Customer Focused Selling

Customer focused selling is about selling from the other person's perspective. While this sounds simple, it is a complex process that requires attention and practice. The skills associated with customer focused selling apply to each sales appointment, phone call, meeting presentation, and interaction through the process. This makes selling a little bit like learning to play chess: the rules are not that difficult, but you need to repeatedly play the game to become skilled.

In the early stages of your relationship with a client, your goal is to use customer focused selling to build trust and credibility. We buy from people that we like, so the opportunity is here for you to put your impression-making skills to use. This is important whether you are speaking with someone by phone or face to face.

The basic steps are:

Initiate

Find new opportunities and establish relationships that focus on identifying and solving client needs. These relationships can evolve in many ways.

Build

Convert those opportunities into clients by building trust and credibility.

Manage

Manage the relationship and focus on serving your customers by offering solutions, resolving problems, meeting their needs, getting their agreement to buy.

Optimize

Grow the relationship with consistent results and problem solving. This is the time to set up long term relationships through additional problem solving, business building, and referrals.

Initiate

The easiest sales are with customers that you already know or have already bought from you. In order to keep your pipeline full, however, it's important to attract a variety of customers from different industries or types of businesses. That way, if there is an economic slowdown, a business shuts down, or a natural disaster, your potential to sell is not so strongly affected.

These days, it is common for salespeople to get involved in a **range of networking activities** that may not seem directly related to one particular sale, but they are a help in getting established within a network or community.

What kinds of activities, networking, or connecting are you doing?

Another thing that a sales professional must work with is what makes their company, product, and/or service unique. This is called your **Unique Selling Point** (or Position) – the USP for short. Make sure that you can answer your prospects question when they ask why you are in the best position to provide this solution.

Our customers are experiencing information overload much of the time, so the amount of attention that they will give you is limited. If you send them a written proposal, expect that they will scan it very quickly. This means that your headings and text need to be short and to the point. During an in person or telephone presentation, watch and listen for cues that you have their attention and are answering their questions. Adjust your approach as necessary to keep them engaged.

Optimize

Grow the relationship with consistent results and problem solving. This is the time to set up long term relationships through additional problem solving, business building, and referrals. When you consider this aspect of the sales cycle, this is also the aspect you will use to help top up your pipeline. Even if your prospect says “no,” that does not mean that they will never do business with you, or that they don’t trust you. Sometimes it means that they need more time to consider your offer, or that there is some very real barrier they have to deal with. Instead of thinking that “no” is the end of your relationship, you can continue to build the relationship. For example, you can ask the client for referrals – they will often give them to you.

The other aspect to consider at this stage of the sales cycle is to consider whether there are other opportunities to work with the same organization. Can you build on the relationship that you have developed and help other departments, locations, and people within the same company? If you have not been introduced to those opportunities through the sales cycle, ask.

The final phase of optimizing is to evaluate what you have done throughout this sale. What have you learned? What can you do better or differently next time in order to reach a more successful result?

Framing Success

The Power of Your Mind

We often talk about positive thinking, the laws of attraction, and expectancy theory. These things are all related and have a bearing on our activities as professional sales people. We know that successful sales people do not just do the right things; they also think in ways that lead them to results.

The **law of attraction** is about focusing your thoughts so that you take actions that lead you to the things that you want. **Expectancy theory** states that we generally get what we expect; if we listen to the things that we say to ourselves, our thinking shapes our results. A winner’s self-talk might be: “I did well today. I’ll do even better tomorrow.” Someone who thinks negatively is more apt to think: “Without bad luck, I’d have no luck at all.”

Optimism is a learned skill. Is this important for sales people and entrepreneurs to remember? Why or why not?

Professionalism

Appearance is important for all sales people. If you look at the top 10% of salespeople in your organization or industry, you will see that part of their presentation is to pay attention to their appearance. If you do not look like someone who cares about being a representative of your company, or someone who wishes to be seen as credible and trustworthy, then you will probably not get the same results as your well-presented counterparts. Even if you do all your sales over the phone, maintaining a professional image is crucial for your self-talk.

Here are some tips for dressing for success:

- Ñ Dress the way you want to be perceived. Look like you care about what you are doing.
- Ñ Dress comfortably and be proud of who you are.
- Ñ Always appear as neat and clean as possible, with your hair clean and neatly trimmed, fingernails clean and neatly trimmed, and shoes that are clean and polished.
- Ñ Look trim. Choose clothes carefully that fit and flatter. You will not feel good and you won’t look good if your clothes are too tight, too loose, or too revealing.
- Ñ You can appear well presented without over-spending on your budget if you are smart about where you shop.

Ⓝ If you travel for sales, also consider your vehicle. In the event that customers may accompany you back to your vehicle, make sure that you keep it tidy and presentable.

Other Tips

Setting Goals with SPIRIT!

Your goals should motivate you to go after them and achieve the things that you want. Good goals should have SPIRIT!

Specific

Be specific about what you want or don't want to achieve. The result should be tangible and measurable. "Look gorgeous" is pretty ambiguous; "Lose 20 pounds" is specific. "Sell more" is vague; "Sell \$2 million dollars' worth of product" is specific.

Prizes

Reward yourself at different points in the goal, particularly if it's long-term. If your goal is to set up a home office, for example, you might purchase a new desk when the room is cleared out and ready.

Individual

The goal must be something that you want to do. If your spouse wants you to lose 20 pounds but you think you look fine, you're not going to want to work towards the goal.

Review

Review your progress periodically. Does the goal make sense? Are you stuck? Do you need to adjust certain parts of it?

Inspiring

Frame the goal positively. Make it fun to accomplish. You could make a poster of the end result, frame it, and post it on the wall.

Time-Bound

Give yourself a deadline for achieving the goal. Even better, split the goal into small parts and give yourself a deadline for each item.

There is research that suggests that setting goals can be pretty tough on us if we aren't sensible in going about it, because the process should be as important as the end result, and if we don't reach our goals, we feel like failures. To overcome that, we can call these goals targets. The target concept can offer you some mental flexibility.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *Hospitality Sales: Selling Smarter, Book by Judy A. Siguaw (2004)*
- ✓ *Smarter Selling: How to Grow Sales by Building Trusted Relationships, Book by David Lambert and Keith Dugdale, (2007)*