The sales process

Understanding the sales process is critical to building a relationship with potential customers. Below are steps in the sales process, whether you are selling a product or a service.

1. **Know your product or service.** Know your products or services inside and out, so that you can honestly help your customer find the best fit.

*"Confidence and enthusiasm are the greatest sales producers in any kind of economy."*

*-O. B. Smith*

1. **Make the initial contact with your prospect.** Whether they have just walked into your retail store or you are making a cold call on a prospect, the initial contact is where you begin the conversation to find out what your prospect’s needs are and how you might be able to meet them.
2. **Find out your clients’ priorities.** Before you spend a lot of time selling a client on your product or service, find out if they are ready to make a purchase or a commitment, or if there are other priorities they have to meet before they are ready to buy from you. It may be wise to schedule a call back when they are ready to make a decision about what you are selling. On the other hand, if they are ready to commit, then the time is right to move on to the next step.
3. **Propose a solution.** Once you know your prospect’s needs and wants, suggest the product or service that will best meet them.
4. **Focus on why they should buy.** Emphasize the benefits of your products or services. Remember, people buy benefits, not features. Customers buy softer skin, not lotion made with imported lanolin; they buy a restful night’s sleep, not mattresses made of foam used by astronauts. Focus on the physical, emotional, or financial benefits the customer is looking for.
5. **Help your prospect see the bottom line.** If you know your product or service will save the prospect money or time, or provide a better value than the competition, then point this out to the client, and support it with facts.
6. **Ask for the sale.** Once you understand the customer’s needs and are confident that you can meet them, and you’ve presented all the benefits and reasons why the customer should buy, then ask for the sale.
7. **Deliver.** Although you may not think of delivery as part of the sales process, it is actually the most important part of any sale; without delivery there is no sale. A delivery that is made as expected (or better yet, exceeds the customer’s expectations) will ensure that a trusting relationship continues to build.
8. **Follow up.** Find out if your customer is pleased with the product or service. If not, find out why and whether there is anything you can do to make them happy. The follow up stage is an excellent opportunity to create repeat business or get a referral.