

Skills of Sales Personnel

1. Communication

Strong communication skills are the foundation of building meaningful relationships with clients, setting expectations, and (tactfully) discussing a buyer's pain points.

This might seem obvious, but it's important to remember that communication is about much more than speaking clearly and concisely:

- Writing and presentation abilities are needed when it comes to interacting over email, social media, video conference or in person.
- Salespeople must also be able to communicate effectively throughout the sales cycle, from cold outreach and follow-up, to moving an opportunity along.

2. Product Knowledge

A sales rep who doesn't perfectly understand the product they're selling is a completely ineffective rep. Product training should be one of the very first things you teach new reps – they should be able to explain in detail how each product works, what business value it offers, and the reasons it appeals to your company's ideal customers. This will help ISRs (Inside Sales Reps) craft their sales pitch effectively, and ensure they highlight each product's strongest features. Deep product knowledge is honestly one of the few things that separates the top 1% of reps from the rest.

3. Discovery

Can your sales reps ask intelligent questions, identify buyer needs and follow-up accordingly?

Today's reps must be able to gain an excellent understanding of any prospect's company, business challenges and current priorities. This means asking well-informed questions that can identify pain points, desired outcomes and give your organization a better sense of the buyer's political hierarchy.

4. Buyer-Seller Agreement

In order to set mutual expectations and to make your prospects more comfortable, sales reps should learn how to create a Buyer-Seller Agreement, (aka “Upfront Contracts” as Sandler Sales Training calls them), to set the tone for all calls and meetings. These are verbal agreements at the beginning of the sales process that outline expectations for both sides. For example, a sales rep can ask a prospect, “Is it OK to ask a few questions about your business and then I will show you a demo of our product to see if there is a potential fit for both of us?” It allows the prospect to feel comfortable and understand what is coming next, so no one feels ambushed by the next step. It also allows the sales rep to open up a two-way street in the selling process so that both parties get to a win-win conclusion.

5. Prospecting

Unfortunately, we’ve all experienced poor sales prospecting. For example, the “spray and pray” approach in particular can rub buyers the wrong way.

For prospecting to be effective, salespeople need to develop a **strategic approach** for identifying new business opportunities – and then commit to working on it daily. That means having the ability to research potential buyers, conduct cold outreach, and create new opportunities.

6. Active Listening

Most sales reps feel comfortable talking to prospects, but listening is another story. ISRs need to become proficient in active listening, or listening with a strict focus and asking intelligent follow-up questions. People can usually tell if you’re really listening to them, rather than just thinking about what you’ll say next – and most people appreciate a good listener. Great listening skills can help reps empathize with prospects to learn more about their business and pain points. With that knowledge, they can then sell more effectively and offer a better solution.

7. Qualification Questioning

ISRs need to start off every sales conversation by asking questions during the Discovery phase to analyze a prospect’s business needs (i.e. Needs Analysis). It’s important to not just throw random features and benefits at the prospect hoping something will stick. In fact, I tell ISRs to

stop sharing all of your product's capabilities all at once. This is a bad tactic. Instead, you need to delve deep to discover your prospect's business pain and how your product can help them solve it by asking qualifying questions. These questions help you determine what you should share about the benefits and value in your product based on what is going to be most important for them. Beyond the Discovery stage of the selling process, over time, ISRs will need to qualify prospects for Budget, Authority, Need, Timeline, Competition and Buying Process in order to get all the key criteria that will help them get to the purchase. Being good at qualification is critical to be a successful ISR.

8. Time Management

The most effective ISRs are able to make the most of their time, with more dials and more connects than other reps. The key to being highly productive is using good time management skills. You need to train each rep to sort through leads to find the most promising ones, and not waste too much time on a deal that isn't going anywhere. You can use analytics to identify the industry, business size, and other characteristics of ideal leads, and share the information with your team. It's vital to make the most of the hours in the day to bring in more deals per rep.

9. Objection Prevention

Great sales reps practice the art of proactive "Objection Prevention" and not merely "Objection Handling" and can thus reduce some of the most basic objections by way of how they approach a sale. Train your reps to be strategic and think ahead by studying what typical objections come up in most cases. For example, there is no reason to get to a point when a prospect can say, "I don't have a need for this" or "Call me again in a few months".

It is possible to be proactive and address a common objection before it even comes up. For example, at InsightSquared, many of our reps hear people say "You do reports for sales but I can get reports from Salesforce anyway." Instead, we preempt that objection by sharing during our Discovery Call that our cross-object sales reports are impossible to run in the CRM and yet these reports can save time for the Sales VP or CEO to run and can help grow revenue significantly

and all this is possible in a few clicks of a mouse button instead of days spent in Excel with data that will be antiquated by the time you're done.

10. Objection Handling

Even the best reps can't prevent every objection, so it's important to help your team prepare for objection handling when they do hear one. Reps have to be on their toes so that the sales process doesn't end abruptly and they lose the opportunity at the deal. On our sales team at InsightSquared, we coach reps to empathize, soften and ask good questions to understand what is genuinely at the core of what the prospect is concerned about. Reps need to learn to sincerely understand the prospect's problem, ask for more information, and offer clarity to help the prospect overcome their objections. You should do extensive role play and training to help prepare your team for this.

11. Storytelling

You might think of storytelling as a component of good communication. But it's a distinct skill because it requires reps to be clear and concise, as well as **engaging and authentic**. This is critical, because an authentic story will:

- Help your company stand out in the minds of buyers
- Appeal to buyers' emotions and encourage action
- Help buyers see how "like" clients have solved similar challenges with your solution

12. Presentation Skills

Sales reps deal with the unexpected every day, which makes it even more important that they nail what they can practice ahead of time. Sales presentations and demo calls certainly fall into that category.

Many sales presentations become too feature-centric, when they should really focus more on the buyer's challenges and needs. The presentation content and the sales message delivery both need

to be engaging and informative – or else you risk putting your buyers to sleep or worse, losing them all together.

13. Negotiation Skills

After building an effective proposal, reps must lead a disciplined negotiations process. That's important because high-stakes negotiations can lead reps to make errors, such as offering a discount that's too steep.

14. Technology

Experience using new technologies has quickly become important for sellers, and that trend isn't going away anytime soon. Reps must know how to take advantage of various sales tools, whether it's a free productivity app, the CRM, or a sales enablement tool.

Of course, technical knowledge shouldn't completely fall on the sales team. Your reps should know enough to ask the right questions of sales engineering and IT as needed.

15. Demo skills

For many B2B products, the demo is critical to starting a sales process. Sales reps need to not only understand the product, but must be able to show off it's capabilities to a prospect effectively through a demo. Demos are challenging in that reps need to first discover what benefits will be most important to solving a prospect's pain, and highlight the business value of those features during the demo. Throwing too many features at the prospect is a bad tactic and can overwhelm and confuse them. This is another skill that you should practice with your reps, so they can practice their demo presentation, and clearly be able to show off the product.

16. Post-Sale Relationship Management

Many of us forget to thank customers and to continue building and maintaining the relationship after the sale. Firstly, it's important to be appreciative for the business regardless of whether the customer will buy from you again. This is just common sense and common courtesy. And those sales reps who are genuinely appreciative are the ones who typically grow professionally and become masters of their craft. Furthermore, you don't want your customers churning later and

going to a competitor. Additionally, your customers can and will refer you to other customers. Finally, even ten years later you can still go back to the individual to whom you sold years ago and they may still become a customer even when both of you are in a new and different company. Relationships really matter; it's that simple. Yet some reps don't engage in post-sale with their customers. This is a key area at which I encourage all ISRs to get really disciplined.

17. Time Management and Planning

There's only so much selling time in the day. Good salespeople can make the most of the buyer's time and their own.

Specifically, reps should have a clear sense of the specific steps needed to close each deal, and how long each step typically takes. If a client is requesting product information or thought leadership content, they should respond in a timely manner. And as priorities change, they should know how to shuffle their day-to-day activities accordingly.

18. Curiosity

Curiosity sends a message that the rep is not solely focused on making a sale. Rather, they are actually interested in the buyer's challenges. Imagine that! Great sales reps are inquisitive and possess a willingness to understand the "why" behind the client's pain points.

19. Collaboration

Complex B2B sales cycles require reps to be good orchestrators of people and resources. After all, many deals now involve multiple buyers and a handful of internal teams, such as sales ops, marketing, customer success and legal.

That's why team players who can advocate on the customer's behalf and get the right people involved in each sales process are more likely to achieve positive results. In addition, you'll want to make sure reps can collaborate internally to plan and deliver compelling business proposals to your clients.

Types of Sales Manager

1. Administrative sales manager:

In a large company sales organization has generally administrative sales manager. He has to develop the structure of the sales organization. The sales organization is divided into many sub-departments. An assistant sales manager or deputy sales manager is the head of each department.

The sales manager is the administrative head of the sales organization, and is commonly known as general sales manager. He must have effective control over all the sub-departments. He must direct and co-ordinate the activities of the sub-departments. Success or failure of sales organization depends upon the ability of the general sales manager.

He plans, directs and co-ordinates. As such the administrative sales manager is concerned more with thinking. That is he formulates sales, sales programmes, sales planning, evaluation of performance, co-ordination of activities etc.

2. The Administrative-cum-operating Sales Manager:

In a smaller organization, this type of manager does all the functions with the help of salesmen and assistants in the sales office. He does the duties and responsibilities of administrative-cum-operating manager. In small firms involving a single product or limited products or restricted market, this type of combination i.e., administrative-cum-operating manager is suitable. In short, operating sales manager is both an administrator and an operator. He combines 'thinking' and 'doing'.

3. Operating Sales Manager:

Operating manager works under the administrative sales manager. He works under the direction, guidance and supervision of the general sales manager. He is actual executor of the plans which are prepared by the general sales manager. The plans are implemented and worked out by the operating manager.

He is responsible for the management and development of sales personnel. His job is to direct and control the selling efforts of sales personnel. Hence he is concerned with 'doing' or

executing of the plan. He executes the sales plan with the help of branches or divisions; and he directs the manager and field supervisors.

These managers are subordinate managers. They help the sales administrative manager in preparing plans and formulating the policies. The final decisions generally rest with the general sales manager.

4. Field sales manager:

The field sales manager or operational sales manager is a sales executive who is directly responsible to the manager's sales manager. The operational sales manager works under the supervision, direction and supervision of the general sales manager.

He is mainly responsible for the effective implementation of the sales plans and policies developed by the manager of sales administration.

He is known for personal guidance and control of sales staff, and therefore spends most of his time on the field supervision of sales force work. Manpower maintenance in the sales organization is the primary task of this executive. He must recruit, identify, train, oversee, motivate, evaluate, equip, monitor and direct the sales force.

The field sales manager moves with sellers on important visits. Designates sales territories and controls vendor activities by setting standards for sales accomplishments, analyzing sales reports, holding a sales meeting, overseeing cooperation in advertising and sales promotion with merchants, directing sales competitions, overseeing inventory storage, agent relations, and coordinating regional and internal office activities .

Consequently, the field sales manager provides the manager of the sales manager with the most recent information related to the view of agents and consumers about the company and the company's products, policies and practices with facts about market trends, competitors, distributors and individual sales.

5. Assistant sales manager:

Generally, the Administrative Sales Manager assists the Assistant Sales Manager in the administrative functions of planning, analyzing, directing and coordinating. It coordinates the work of sales personnel specializing in advertising, sales promotion, research, marketing and agent relationships.

It may also deal with sales office personnel, records, and routines. Acts as a liaison between headquarters and the remote field sales manager. Not surprisingly, he functions as Field Sales Manager. Thus, he works as a line official and employee of the sales organization.

6. Marketing staff manager:

As the title suggests, the Marketing staff manager is not a line-officer. He is one of the staff specialists who are delegated some of the responsibilities of administrative sales manager. These are the specialists in the areas of marketing research, sales-promotion, merchandising, advertising, sales planning, sales personnel, distributor/dealer relations, sales costs, budget sales finances, traffic, sales office administration and service and the like. These staff managers being non-line officers have no field tasks.

These managers are accountable for analysing the needs of the marketing organization in respect of their specific areas of specialisation, developing plans and recommending solutions to the problems encountered or thrown open.

7. Product-line sales manager:

A company that markets variety of products has such product-line sales manager responsible for one or group of products in the product- line. He is also known as product or brand manager.

He is responsible not only for sales but also for production, research, product- development, planning, advertising and profit for the product or the group of products in question. He is to report to the Marketing manager who coordinates the work of several product sales managers.

8. Divisional/regional sales managers:

In all the national organizations, one comes across these Divisional or Regional sales managers. These are also known as District sales managers who are responsible for the delegated sales operational duties on a territorial basis.

They report to Assistant sales managers or the field sales managers who act as the liaison officers with headquarters. The functions of Divisional or Regional sales manager are similar to those of field sales manager who is in charge of several divisions or regions and hence divisional or regional managers.

They are mainly responsible for maintaining the man-power in the concerned areas by recruiting, selecting, and training, supervising, motivating and controlling the sales-force.

They are also responsible for directing branch or local office sales managers. The divisional sales managers assist branch managers in solving their sales personnel problems, dealer relations, warehousing and inventory, advertising and sales promotion, sales campaigns and sales meetings.

9. Sales supervisor:

A sales supervisor is a line sales manager who supervises normally eight to fourteen salesmen. He is seen in branch sales office of a national sales organization having branches all over the nation.

He is responsible to the local branch sales manager. In case there is no branch sales manager, then he is responsible to the sales manager of the company directly. His work is to train and motivate the salesmen under his charge.

His supervision, guidance and coaching helps in building up more confident sales personnel. He is the key communicator in the transmission of information on sales policies of new products, promotions and marketing programmes between the higher-ups and individual salesmen.

10. Branch sales managers:

In case of sales organizations that operate branches or local sales offices in major cities of the country, one is to come across such Branch sales managers. Branch sales manager is a line

executive responsible for the direction of a small group of salesmen calling on consumers or dealers in the branch area.

He recruits, selects and trains, sales people with the guidance of Divisional or Regional sales manager to whom he reports. He works along with salesmen in the field, supervises their sales activities, holds periodic sales meetings, evaluates sales performance and helps in key accounts. If warehouse is attached to branch, he supervises warehousing activities too.

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