

The Top Ten Sales Skill Sets Sales Professionals Master

Developing Sales Mastery

These were identified using a perspective developed over 30 years of researching best sales practices

1. **Targeting, qualifying, and managing your limited time in selling the right products and services to the right prospects.** Consider this analogy. You can have extraordinary skills at climbing a ladder but if you put the ladder up against the wrong wall how effective will you be at reaching your intended outcome? A foundational skill to master is targeting and qualifying prospective clients and making the best use of your limited time (and theirs) throughout the sales process.



2. **Differentiating and positioning your company, your offer, and you.** This skill is under practiced, under trained, under tested, and is one of the causes for suboptimal selling. The specific coaching point is: understand your competitive advantages, distinctions, disadvantages and learn how to articulate and position you and what you are selling in a way that is short, tight, confident, and compelling. You need to be perceived as positively different AND memorable.

To develop mastery: This is not about memorizing a “one size fits all” elevator speech. It’s about understanding and communicating the “*differences that make the biggest difference*” when it comes to working with you to that individual prospect. It comes down to framing and positioning your differences in an ideal way for an *audience of one*.

3. **Playing the “value game.”** This connects very closely to understanding your competitive advantages and distinctions. It plays to the reality that value is personal for each *audience of one*. Value is what they care about or would if they *knew what you know and could see what you see*. Focusing on what they care about and what they prioritize is how we play the value game. Our failure to do so prevents us from being an elite Sales Professional and Trusted Advisor.
4. **Effectively planning and preparing for a sales call** whether it is a final presentation or a follow up phone call. Pre-call planning is among the most significant and powerful things the best of the best do. They understand that their “*greatest opportunity for success in any situation is thinking in advance.*” They understand the power of research, anticipation, and practice/rehearsal. When was the last time you anticipated a prospective client’s concerns? When was the last time you anticipated what a client would be positively surprised by? When was the last time you anticipated what the client may be feeling or what really prompted the need for this conversation? When was the last time you planned five open-ended exploring questions before you picked up the phone or went into the meeting?
5. **Opening the sales conversation.** Opening effectively, setting the right tone, setting the right frame is what extraordinary Sales Professional do.
6. **Effectively exploring your prospect’s mental map including their experiences, beliefs, needs, preferences, sophistication, amount of research they have done, and their behavioral style** puts you in a powerful position to share insights that matter to them. It also guides adjustments to your approach to better influence them.

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7. **Strategic listening** is not just hearing what is said; it is putting it in context, listening for any emotion behind the words, and the meaning behind any data. It is listening for potential interest, curiosity, excitement, fear, confusion, resistance and more. Strategic listening works hand in hand with your ability to ask questions and explore while identifying and syncing up to the other person's behavioral style. Syncing up to someone's behavioral style is a researched, proven approach for managing relationship tension and trust, increasing authentic rapport, and influencing people positively.
8. **Facilitating next steps all the way to commitment.** Sales Professionals and Trusted Advisors facilitate. They ask exceptional questions, listen strategically, sync to behavioral styles, manage relationship tension and trust, and manage perceptions and expectations. They manage and frame every conversation. Along the way they are guiding or facilitating the conversation to a conclusion. The conclusion will always be designed to maximize the value you can deliver to that prospect (you are always playing the "Value Game"). Sales Masters and Trusted Advisors are always facilitating the conversation to a positive conclusion.
9. **Collaborating with authentic dialogue** vs. pitching is an important ability on this list. Truly working with your prospect as opposed to doing something to them is a powerful distinction. In our digital world, buyers are increasingly more educated and have access to an extraordinary amount of information, insights, reviews, comparisons, and specifications. Your job is *to meet them where they are and facilitate* the conversation to a positive conclusion. That begins and ends with your commitment to working with them collaboratively instead of attempting to push them or pitch them. When you push and pitch, tension goes up, and trust goes down. When you are collaborating with your prospect the game changes.
10. **"Best story wins!"** Master Sales Professionals understand how powerful stories are to increase the likelihood that what they are sharing will be heard, understood, accepted, and acted upon. We need to take facts, features, metrics, specs, and transform them from factoids into parts of a story that fit together in a narrative. Ideally sharing relevant stories about real clients and experiences that can add value for your prospect. Well-crafted stories are one of the ways that elite Sales Professionals make the **"complex simple and the invisible visible"**.

A Bonus Skill Set

Product Mastery vs. Product Knowledge. The distinction is simple. When you have Product Mastery your knowledge and insight goes beyond knowing features, functions, capabilities and benefits. With Product Mastery you confidently and effectively prescribe solutions that maximize the value your prospects need. Think of it like "Goldilocks"; meaning your counsel and recommendations are not too much or too little. They are just right for that unique prospect and their unique situation.

Call us to find out why pitching and closing won't ever make this list.

**We invite you to explore how these top 10 skills should change
in your unique selling situation. Let's talk.**

813.989.9900