



Book No B.S. Sales Success in the New Economy

Dan S. Kennedy
Entrepreneur Press, 2009

Recommendation

Today’s customers want excellent customer service and great value, and they won’t tolerate an ordinary sales experience. Multimillionaire salesman Dan S. Kennedy shows you how to sell your product or service to difficult customers. He covers effective selling techniques, such as using testimonials and offering free products with a purchase. He emphasizes really listening to your customers because – directly or indirectly – they will tell you what they need. Although this treatise doesn’t break much new ground, Kennedy offers a helpful compendium of solid sales advice. *BooksInShort* recommends it to salespeople hoping to improve their numbers, and to service providers and professionals, from doctors to mechanics, plumbers and dog trainers, especially the ones who don’t know how to sell.

Take-Aways

- “New Economy” customers are more discerning and critical and seek professionals with credibility, authority and trustworthiness.
- Sales professionals today must get “positive results under negative circumstances.”
- Listen to your customers, identify their concerns and provide solutions to their problems.
- Don’t forget that your purpose is to sell.
- A positive attitude matters; you will succeed or fail based on what you think will happen.
- Testimonials from your customers are more powerful than anything you say about your products or services.
- Show your customers how your product or service pays for itself over time, so they feel they are essentially getting it for free.
- Don’t waste your time pursuing customers who can’t afford or don’t want what you sell.
- Position yourself as an expert in your field so potential customers will chase you.
- Great success in sales comes when demand is high and supply is limited.

Summary

The “New Economy” Customer

The New Economy changed the rules of selling: New Economy customers are weary of countless indistinguishable stores, brands, goods and services. Finances are tight, so today’s customers are increasingly discriminating. They won’t tolerate ordinary products, incompetent personnel or bad customer service. You must earn their trust, deliver value and ensure that your offering matches their needs.

Positive Results

Your goal is to achieve “positive results under negative circumstances,” and that requires working hard and taking responsibility for your actions. Some obstacles to closing a deal will be out of your control, such as changing political climates, new business competitors and, if you’re an employee, potentially bad management within your company. While you can’t control such circumstances, you can control your reactions to them. You already know that New Economy customers will say no more often than yes, but you can turn no into yes with these techniques:

- Take charge of the situation.
- Be determined to get a positive answer regardless of the circumstances.
- Don’t let your ego get in the way or take no as a personal rejection.

- Recognize the “erroneous no,” ignore it and make your point.
- Address the client’s real concerns so you can get to a yes.

“The number one secret reason for failure in selling is ego. The person with an inflated ego or with very fragile self-esteem (the two are connected) perceives refusal as rejection.”

New Economy customers will voice their objections to buying your product or service. Get past the negative by recognizing the questions or concerns hidden in their objections and providing answers and solutions. Put yourself in their shoes and list all the possible reasons they have to say no. Great salespeople prepare for any scenario and show how their product or service addresses their customers’ needs. They use the “positive power of negative preparation” to achieve results.

Successful Sales Strategies

Listening effectively is the best way to sell. Consumers today often feel rushed. They get distracted easily. Just because they look at you when you talk doesn’t mean you have their undivided attention. Don’t listen to them just for the sake of making a sale. Instead, “listen with purpose.” What makes your customers angry or frustrated? How can you prevent their sleepless nights? What are they afraid of and what do they worry about? What is most important to them – business, work life, family, power or status? Find out what they value most and tailor your pitch accordingly. Use these five methods to develop better listening skills:

1. Before a meeting, take a deep breath and clear your mind of any distractions. Your clients deserve your full attention as much as you deserve theirs.
2. Know why you’re meeting a potential client and why this meeting matters to you.
3. Listen for information you can use. It may be packaged in a tedious, unrelated story, but if you pay attention, you will find worthy insights or information.
4. “Be an active listener.” This means asking questions, giving feedback, nodding in agreement, and so on. Make your customer feel important.
5. If appropriate, take notes. You can refer back to them later. Jotting down reminders will help you understand and address your clients’ questions and concerns.

“In the post-recession, emerging New Economy, you will be selling to customers conditioned to be critical.”

Napoleon Hill, author of *Think and Grow Rich*, believed in “definiteness of purpose.” He once gave a speech that his audience loved. Hill drew many laughs and a standing ovation. He was almost home before he realized that he had been so taken with his audience’s response that he had completely forgotten to make a sale. He left his product samples under his lectern and went home without ever showing them to the rapt crowd.

“Your success will be contingent on your mental attitude, not the attitude of your customers or clients.”

Most salespeople don’t expect to make a sale each time. They know they will encounter resistance, but successful salespeople do expect to win more often than lose. They believe in their product, they know it works and they think you’re crazy for not wanting it. If you think that you’re not a good negotiator or that your prospect will never buy your product, your client will agree with you. But if you believe that you have the best product on the market and that your client can’t get it anywhere else, you will transmit those positive feelings to your potential buyer. Positive energy makes sales.

“I’d much rather have a no than a maybe. I’d rather know where I stand as quickly as possible, so that I can move on to the next potentially productive use of my time.”

Solid proof that your product works will boost your sales. No matter what products or services you sell, provide testimonials from your current customers. Display their praise on your website, in your direct mail, and in your brochures and advertisements. Customer testimonials can appear through text, pictures and even video. Photographic and video testimonials are especially powerful.

“If you’re going to achieve high levels of success in selling, you’ve got to be able to get positive results under negative circumstances.”

Paul Johnston owns the Shed Shop Inc., which sells backyard sheds. Most people use them for storage, but Paul always remembers the funny or emotional stories customers tell him about why they buy sheds. He ran a contest for great stories, collected the best customer anecdotes about using his sheds and published a booklet for potential clients, “83 Practical Uses for a Shed Shop Shed.” His response rate was phenomenal, and he sold a lot of sheds based on personal stories.

“What others say about you and your product, service or business is at least 1,000 times more convincing than what you say, even if you are 2,000 times more eloquent.”

Quoting statistics is another good way to prove your product works, so incorporate statistics into your testimonials. Another valuable sales strategy is to “sell money at a discount” – that is, to demonstrate to prospects that your product is such a good investment that it will pay for itself over time. Thus, clients will feel they are essentially getting your offering for free. A former thief made a new living with seminars showing business owners how to prevent theft. Clients didn’t quibble over his \$15,000 price tag because he provided proof of the money they would save.

“You have to believe your proposition before anyone else will. You have to believe, with reason, that you will secure acceptance now, not later.”

Offer your customers something free as a bonus. For example, if they buy \$500 worth of Product X, give them a gift of \$50 worth of Product Y. Your freebies should be different from what you normally sell and something people want but might not buy. Secrets also sell. Everyone wants to know Colonel Sanders’s ingredients for KFC Chicken or Coca-Cola’s formula. A sense of mystery gives ordinary products extra oomph.

Stop Prospecting and Start Selling

Finding your customers through old-fashioned prospecting, such as cold calling or knocking on doors, won’t work in the modern business climate. Today’s customers treat a salesperson like a “drooling, rabies-infected, flea-infested dog” – even when they’re interested in the product.

“I do not think you should prospect. What you need to do is focus on positioning.”

Instead of finding customers, make your customers find you. If you position yourself as an expert in your discipline, customers will seek you out. Write a book, blog or newsletter, speak to groups, and cultivate relationships with TV and radio personalities who will interview you as a specialist in your chosen field. Writing and speaking about a specific topic gives you automatic authority. New Economy customers seek products and services from people they trust. Your credibility will lead them to approach you before they talk to your competitors.

“Learn to be unforgettable. Be the kind of sales professional people want to get more of. Same is lame. Boring is invisible.”

Become the “always welcome guest, never the pest.” How can you be invited in rather than having the door slammed in your face? Allow qualified customers to contact you. Send them information about you that “pre-sells” your product or service. Wait patiently for customers to call you. Pitch your product or service only after a prospect requests it.

“Selling is all about trust. People can sense when you are more concerned about your commission than their best interests.”

The best way to reach customers is through “lead generation advertising.” Create a print or online ad that reaches your target customers. Lead generation advertising functions like a personal ad that attracts certain clients and weeds out others. If you sell to other businesses, run ads in local business journals, newspaper business sections or trade magazines. If you sell to consumers, advertise in the newspaper, on TV or radio, or through direct-mail coupon services.

“Pain – the desire to get relief from pain, physical pain, emotional pain or financial pain – is the strongest motivational power of all.”

Send simple postcards to mailing lists of customers. “List brokers” can identify your target customers and create specific lists, such as all residents within a certain zip code, those with six-figure income levels or even those who subscribe to a certain magazine. Keep your ads simple, with powerful headlines, and target your message appropriately. Don’t try to make the sale up front. Your goal is only to get prospective clients to contact you.

Making the Sale

Don’t waste time selling to people who aren’t interested, who don’t have the finances or authority to buy, and who aren’t “predisposed to say yes.” When you find the right clients, make your sale in six easy steps:

1. **“Get permission to sell”** – Ask an opening question in a way that leads your client to request more information. Obtain permission by asking, “If I could show you how to [use my product], would you be interested in knowing more about it?” This first step works regardless of whether you are selling in person, over the phone, or through direct mail or other advertising.
2. **“Design an offer”** – When designing your offering, you may have different options based on price – for example, a basic package at X price and a deluxe package with added extras at Y price. Some sales professionals present both options while others present only the higher-priced item and backpedal to the lower-priced option if a customer proves price sensitive.
3. **“Deliver a structured presentation”** – Follow the AIDA process – “attention, interest, desire, action.” Make your prospects aware of your offering, pique their curiosity in the product, show its benefits and close. Alternatively, employ the PAS model – “problem, agitate, solve.” Present people with a problem, get them frustrated about the issue and intent on solving it. These structured sells work better than creating responses on the fly.
4. **“Use ‘emotional logic’”** – Sales expert Zig Ziglar believes that people buy based on “emotional factors but need logical reasons to justify doing what they really feel like doing.” The following five emotional factors lead people to buy: “love, pride, fear, guilt and greed.” Emotional factors tie into either getting pleasure or reducing pain, and both are powerful purchasing motivators. Hit one or more emotional factors during your pitch.
5. **“Close the sale”** – If you follow the four preceding steps, closing the sale should happen naturally.
6. **Follow up** – Many sales professionals completely forget the final step: a good follow-up. Make sure your customer doesn’t have “buyer’s remorse.” To do so, send a nice letter or gift thanking your customers for their business and reminding them of their good decision to purchase from you. A gift of food is always welcome; it’s hard to be unhappy on a full stomach.

Final Secrets to Selling

Successful selling depends on supply and demand. Products and services that are rarer and less accessible will be more in demand. When more customers seek you than you have time to accommodate, you will encounter less price resistance. New Economy customers will think your expertise is worth the price and the wait. So when you’re in demand, raise your prices.

“Here’s my superpowerful secret selling weapon: I listen.”

Even if you’re just starting out or not as successful as you would like to be, you can encourage demand for your services. An obedience dog trainer tripled her fee, charged each dog owner an initial consultation fee and scheduled prospective clients a week in advance even if her schedule was open. This trainer went from making \$20 per hour to \$10,000 a month and expected to make a six-figure salary the following year.

“There is no more powerful force than supply and demand...demand definitely breeds demand.”

Traditional selling focuses on trying to get as many customers as possible, but selling today works better if you create exclusivity. Customers are willing to wait for the best, most competent professionals, whether they need realtors, plumbers, mechanics, gardeners or dog trainers. They are less-focused on price and more focused on finding the right fit for their needs. If you’re selling a product or service, do it right or hire someone else to do it for you. Selling “deserves your best efforts.”

About the Author

Dan S. Kennedy is a speaker, writer, business consultant and serial entrepreneur.