



Grayson Schwepfinger

Friend or Pro

Over the last few years I have watched our industry all but die, compared to past successes, while the site built business has prospered like never before. I have also noticed that as sales get worse the sales methods have become weaker and weaker. The 'clerk' that is selling in our industry today is so afraid of offending a prospect by asking questions, so they

can help them find what they are looking for, that they have become non-offensive to the point of being idiotic. The theme here seems to be tell, show, and let the prospect do whatever they want so you become their friend and they will buy. A few years back this method was taught by the second largest retailer in the industry and was so successful it was instrumental in driving them into bankruptcy and their eventual sale. Another west coast guru advises prospects not to tell the salesperson what they are looking for or what they are willing to invest which is all but guaranteed to have them looking at the wrong homes. I wonder if these people have ever sold a home in the real world. (I sold my last one for a client of mine less than two months ago.) How are you going to help your prospects find the right home throughout this year?

Those of you that are familiar with what I teach know that I believe that selling is nothing more than problem solving. You can't solve a problem you have never identified when you are afraid to ask any questions. Contrary to some peoples belief I am not trying to take control of the sale to take advantage of the prospect. I am trying to take control so I can help them find the right home!

The belief seems to be that the prospect knows all about our industry and is capable of finding the right home, and answering their own questions. If this is true why do we have so many people trying to trade in homes that are only one or two years old? It takes a new salesperson months to learn what they need to know about this industry in order to sell properly. And this is after working at it full time, with training, and answers to any questions they may have. Why do we believe that the prospect can figure this out all by themselves in three weekends of looking?

There are two approaches that can be used when selling big ticket items. You can use the 'let's be friends' approach or you can use a professional approach.

Before I go any further let me expand on this. Two points, first, I am not saying you can't be both professional and friendly. Your doctor or lawyer can be friendly, however I'll wager they are a professional first and a friend second. Second, if the prospect doesn't like you then you are going to have a difficult time selling them anything. (Although I have bought from a salesperson I didn't particularly like because the value was so good. However I never recall spending a large amount of money strictly because I liked the salesperson.) I also seriously doubt that your prospect took the time and spent the gas money to drive to your location because they were looking for a friend. They were looking for a home and help in finding it.

First let's discuss the professional approach. Most salespeople say they want to be professional but wimp out when faced with learning the techniques to become one. I challenge you to tell me one professional that will allow a client to come into their place of business and tell them how to conduct themselves.

Can you tell the doctor to forget about the examination, you know what is wrong, and they should get out the prescription pad so you can tell them what to write? Can you tell a Real Estate agent to forget any questions, you want to see every house they have listed between \$90,000.00 and \$900,000.00. Let's hop in their car and spend their time and gas looking. Can you tell your lawyer how to present the case and what to say in the brief? No, you can't, but this is exactly what is being suggested by the "feel good" trainers.

There are a number of problems with selling *only* as a friend. Here are only a few of them.

1. It takes too long. In order to persuade someone to spend thousands of dollars just because the salesperson is a 'good old boy, or girl' is going to take a long time. Usually 8, 9 or more visits, if at all.
2. Remember the golden rule of selling – time kills deals. The longer it takes you to make a sale the more likely circumstances or another dealer will kill the sale for you.
3. If they do buy from a friend they want the lowest possible price, After all, what are friends for? These are almost always skinny deals with skinny commission checks.
4. Every time they want an accessory they want that discounted also.
5. When they need service they come to you not the service department. They expect you to get them in the front of the line and are upset when you can't or don't.
6. As you spend time making friends their down payment may disappear to another purpose such as a medical bill or automobile accident expense.

Can you occasionally sell as a friend? Yes, every once in awhile a prospect will find something at your location that fits their wants, needs, and pocketbook and they will buy it in spite of the lack of a professional sales approach. But you won't build a profitable career on luck! Go back and read my last twelve articles on how to identify what the prospect wants, and why, what they need, and why plus what they are able and willing to pay for it. Learn your craft and be the friendly professional the prospect really is looking for.

Until next month, good selling!



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