

Characteristics of Successful Salespeople



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No one list of traits exactly describes every successful salesperson. Salespeople are as diverse as members of any other profession. They include both extroverts and introverts – and all the degrees in between, shy and outspoken, talkative and quiet. However, certain core characteristics seem to be present to some degree in most successful salespeople, despite the numerous ways individuals express

those characteristics and adapt them to their own selling styles.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.” In one survey, sales executives indicated that the most important characteristic in new salespeople is enthusiasm. A distinction must be made between people who are enthusiastic about their product and those who are merely eager to take the prospective buyer’s money. Enthusiasm in salespeople is based on a genuine belief in the product and a conviction that it will serve the needs of the customer. My belief, in the housing industry, is the main ingredient of my success in selling houses. I am a firm believer that home ownership gives everyone a feeling of security and I have enjoyed seeing the faces of a happy home owner. Such enthusiasm is communicated both verbally and nonverbally to the prospect in terms of the salesperson’s own personality. Enthusiasm may be expressed as calm, quiet confidence or excited activity. However it is demonstrated, real enthusiasm is highly attractive and reassuring to prospective buyers.

Salespeople who operate from a position of sincerity find the sales situation flowing naturally. Prospective buyers are likely to respond positively to salespeople who are sincere in the enthusiasm exhibited in the home, in the expression of interest in the prospective buyer’s needs, and in the recommendation of a specific buying decision. When salespeople just pretend to be sincere prospective buyers either recognize the pretense or feel a vague lack of trust that is expressed by indecision about buying.

Empathy, the ability to understand another person’s concerns, opinions, and needs, whether sharing them or not, provides salespeople with the sales edge of being able to think and understand the prospect during a sales presentation. The key is truly to set aside your own needs and your ego and to listen to what the prospective buyer is saying. I think it is equally important to understand what the prospective buyer is not saying in the initial conversation. This is the reason I keep reminding you, “Selling is not telling – Selling is asking questions.” You should ask good – thought provoking questions, ones that will get your prospective buyers to think and also to regard you as a housing expert, because you care about their housing needs. Since most of us sell houses built by different companies I will not, at any time, talk about a particular house.... I want to get a good handle on what problems or need they may have, without discussing or attempting to sell them a house until I understand their needs and also their wants. Everybody, including your prospective buyers, have the right to dream. By carefully listening, effective salespeople absorb their prospective buyer’s reaction, generate an upbeat environment, and sell themselves to the prospective buyers. The combination of sincerity and empathy enables them to tailor the presentation to mesh precisely with prospective buyer’s stated problem.

When you have knowledge, ability, and enthusiasm, all you need is

a specific set of goals and those assets can take you straight to the top. Stay focused on your goals and daily activities. A half-dozen things make eighty percent of the difference between success and failure. Ask yourself what things contribute the most to your success. Goal-directed salespeople respond positively to incentives such as money, prestige, recognition, and pride of accomplishment, which they see as tools they can use to reach their overall goals. When these incentives fit into their overall plan for achieving the goals that represent self-actualization for them, salespeople go all out to win them. Awards, plaques, prizes, and other sales recognition devices serve as a means of helping salespeople feel they have fulfilled their need for social and peer acceptance. They are then free to move up to satisfaction of higher needs – being of service to others and experiencing self-actualization – the levels at which they find it easier to exercise empathy and serve the needs of others, prime requirement for becoming a master salesperson.

A question that I am often asked at my seminars, is professional selling a viable career for an ambitious woman who wants to maximize her earning capacity, use all her skills and talents, and enjoys the satisfaction of knowing that she is personally productive? I always answer with a resounding YES!

There are two primary characteristics I look for in the interview process, sociability skills and high energy. Does this individual have the interpersonal skills to make a good salesperson and do they have the high energy necessary to excel? The buyers of today’s manufactured or systems built homes are extremely demanding and particular with whom they do business. The nature of how our customers buy or have their home custom built, they are looking for salespeople that have the ability to develop partnerships with their customers.

In today’s highly competitive housing market, many products, companies, and even salespeople start to look alike to the prospective buyer. I am always looking for individuals with the creativity to differentiate themselves from their competition. One of the questions I always ask during my seminars is, “Why should a prospective buyer purchase a home from you instead of your competitor?” The correct answer is definitely not because I offer the lowest price!!! The answer is should be, “We as an organization uniquely meet the needs of our prospective buyers and customers. We are also much more aware of the value of the needs of our customers.” Salespeople should strive to build long-term relationships with their customers and not look at every sale as a one-time transaction. This will allow you to close more sales and also have your customers refer their friends to you for their housing needs.

In my years as a salesperson and as a manager, I have noticed one very interesting thing. There are certain individuals that excel each and every year. You can change their compensation plan. You can move them to another job or even another community or sales centers. You can throw any number of challenges at them that would disturb the average salesperson. For top performers, it doesn’t matter. They have the confidence and the skills to adapt to all situations. They remain positive and they remain focused on the most important thing: the customer and the customer’s needs.



Henry Thomas is President of Creative Sales Training, a sales training firm specializing in creating sales for the salespeople of the housing market. Call 480-654-8349 or E-mail henrythomasjr@msn.com to schedule Henry for your next sales meeting.