

Mastering the Art of Sales Negotiations

Sales Power by Control

Many sales professionals believe that the secret to success is the ability to wield negotiation power, influence the buyer's thinking, and ultimately control the buyer's decisions. Indeed, powerful sales negotiation techniques are a point of pride for many sales professionals. Power and control as a sales strategy is often encouraged by well-meaning sales managers and business owners. But in the inevitable rush to make the sale, book the order, or meet this week's quota, the benefits of short-term results are often gained at the expense of long-term success. When the tactics of power and control dominate the sales conversation, building and growing a genuinely satisfied customer base is more difficult than it needs to be.

Are short-term sales tactics putting your company's long-term success at risk?

Beware. Sales negotiation strategies with the primary focus of power and control can damage your business. Consider the last time you were faced with a purchase decision. Reflect back on the conversations you had with the sales person. Was the overall experience positive or negative?

If your experience was a positive one, did you refer a friend or colleague to the business? If it was a negative experience (even if you made a purchase), did you warn any friends or colleagues? Studies show that most customers who have had a negative experience **never** return. The customer is lost for life! Moreover, a customer who has had a negative experience tells an average of four other potential customers. Of these, **64% will never deal with that business again.**

A study from the London School of Economics underscores the importance of maintaining a positive customer sales experience. **Companies with positive overall word of mouth rankings grow four times as fast as companies with below-average word of mouth rankings.**

Clearly, the cost of sales conversations gone awry can be extreme. While negotiating power tactics can close many sales, to build long-term, sustainable business, be sure

that approach your sales team uses creates a positive customer experience. Fortunately, this is easier than most sales managers might guess.

True Power—Trust and Respect

The most frequently cited reason consumers judge their purchasing experience as positive is, “My sales person listened to my needs and helped me understand the options.” Conversely, the most frequently cited reason that customers ranked their sales experience as negative was, “The sales person didn’t listen to me.”

The correlation between rapport—that is, genuine trust and respect—and the ability to serve the customer in a positive (and profitable) way is obvious. The better a sales person listens, the more able they are to demonstrate that they understand the customer’s point of view and the better the experience is rated. The more controlling a sales person tends to be and the less they listen, the worse the buyer rates the experience.

What is not so obvious is that when sales representatives focus **first** on creating environments of genuine trust and respect, buyers naturally respond with less resistance and greater receptivity. Power is willingly shifted from the buyer to the seller. This naturally occurring affect is not a sales technique or under-handed tactic.

When people show genuine interest in us, when they respect our opinions, demonstrate that they understand our views and accept them as valid, mutual trust and respect is the inevitable outcome. As rapport grows, so does communication effectiveness. When we trust each other, we are better able to understand each other’s points of view, discuss alternatives, and make better, and often even faster, decisions. When sellers work to build authentic rapport, they are naturally ***earning the right to influence others.***

Counterintuitive as this may seem to some power-centric sellers, to buyers it is obvious. Who do **you** trust? Is it the sales person who listens intently, demonstrates that they understand your point of view and accepts it as valid, then respectfully offers options for your consideration; or is it the sales person who doesn’t ask, doesn’t listen, doesn’t understand or accept your point of view, and continues on with sales techniques that are obviously designed to separate you from your cash, rather serve your needs?

When you focus on making friends first and sales second, buyers respond... and they tell their friends!

Persuasive Influence is Earned

The most effective power a seller wields is the power given to them by their customers. Your persuasive influence does not come from clever negotiating tactics, but rather from a genuine concern for your customer's well-being. The power of rapport—derived from respectful, honest relationships, built with clarity of intent and purposefulness by both parties—drives real sales power.

Negotiation strategies and tactics are important competencies for business and sales professionals. Learn all you can—become a masterful negotiator. But remember that the power of most negotiating strategies and tactics is based primarily on control—the control of information, the control of time, the control of expectations. And when control is not freely given, trust is not freely given. Sellers who rely solely on these negotiating tactics of control limit their own success and that of their organizations. Communication falters. Buyers naturally take on defensive postures as the level of rapport deteriorates. As buyer satisfaction declines, inevitably, so does the organization's ability to grow.

Best in class sellers master the art of negotiating with genuine respect, while creating high levels of mutual trust, through absolute honesty and integrity. Negotiating tactics that do not adhere to these principles may be powerful, but there is a genuine business trade-off. Short term wins almost always come at the expense of sustainable, long-term success.

Genuine sales power is earned through genuine trust and respect.

To build your sales organization's effectiveness, set a clear sales and negotiations protocol that focuses on mutual trust and respect. Build genuine customer rapport, and watch your sales soar!



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