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Selling is Not About You

The more you focus on your customers' needs, the easier selling gets.

Over the years, one of the most important messages I've put forth in my seminars is this: People don't care how much you know until they see how much you care about them and their goals. You have to get what *you* sell out of your mind and start focusing on what your customers sell. What are they trying to accomplish? What do they get fired up about? Once you start listening and learning about them, the trust starts to build and the sales cycle becomes much easier to navigate. Here are three ways to stay focused:

1. Forget what you sell. When you first meet a prospect, start thinking of questions that will uncover his hot buttons. What does that person do, and does he have goals for the next year or three years? What are his top three priorities or objectives? What challenges and changes does he face in his industry? How can you help him generate more business? Once you focus on the customer, it becomes easier to think of ways your product or service can fit into their overall goals. If you realize right away that it's not a good fit, you can walk away and work on other, more qualified prospects.

2. Go beyond the customer's general business needs. Every time I ask my audience if they've ever sold an account because they did something helpful for the prospect that had nothing to do with their business, lots of hands go up. Maybe they helped them get one of their kids an internship at a client's business, or perhaps they referred them to a great builder because they were listening when the customer mentioned she was adding on to her house. This breaks down barriers and opens customers up to looking to you as a resource. That's when good things start to happen.

3. Maintain your passion for learning about the people you serve. How well do you know your prospects and customers? How much more business could you get if you spent more time uncovering their inner workings? When I take a tour of a customer's business, I interview people in various departments and research who their customers are; this always pays off. Your ability to serve is enhanced by knowledge. When you ask a customer for resources in their organization that you can use to understand the bigger picture, your relationship and the trust with your customer improves, you're much more aware of their needs and how best to serve them, and the results you bring them will provide you with repeat business and referrals. I often travel with some of my customers' top reps. On a recent trip with one, a manager we met with said he'd like to have weekly updates and inventory status on every order. The rep took copious notes and addressed the issue immediately. But that's not all--the rep also remembers clients' birthdays and their kids' birthdays. He's familiar with their personal lives. He has an amazing rapport with everyone because he knows how to serve. And he knows how to serve because he knows how to listen.

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