

THE POWER OF CREDIBILITY

“In the end, you make your reputation and you have your success based upon credibility.”

Brit Hume

Always, always, always be honest. I once read that if you always tell the truth you never have to remember what you said. This quote struck a chord with me because I have worked with, and have seen, too many salespeople who stretch the truth or deliberately lie in order to close a sale. What’s even worse is the way salespeople try to justify this behavior. Is it any wonder customers are skeptical when they talk to a salesperson?

Here are a few things you can do to increase your credibility with new prospects and existing customers.

Listen more than you talk. Most salespeople I know talk far too much and dominate conversations with prospects. The most successful ones I know invest more time listening and less time

talking. See Secret #50—The Power of Listening for more ideas on this topic.

Deliver on your promises. We have all heard the expression, “under-promise and over-deliver.” This may be a simple concept in theory, but it is a very challenging principle in reality. If you make a commitment to a customer, do everything in your power to deliver on that promise. From phone calls to delivery times, everything you do affects your credibility in your customer’s mind.

If it feels wrong, don’t do it. We are all faced with situations that do not feel right. However, in many cases, we forge ahead and close the deal. I remember a conversation with a prospect a few years ago. As the discussion progressed, I felt uncomfortable about the derogatory way he talked about his sales team. I ignored these feelings, eventually closed the sale, and later conducted the training program we had discussed. When I followed up with my customer a few weeks after the program I was disappointed—but not surprised—to learn that his team had not adjusted their sales approach. I knew my customer had wasted his money and I felt badly because I could have prevented it. At that point, I made a conscious decision to never accept an assignment just for the sake of closing another sale.

Refer a competitor. Sometimes it makes sense to refer a prospect to a competitor. When I think of this concept, I am always reminded of the Christmas movie *Miracle on 34th Street* when the real Santa Claus tells a customer that she should shop at the competition because his store is out of stock of a particular item. You cannot be

everything to everybody. But most salespeople would rather sell something their customer does not need, or want than lose a sale to a competitor.

Make your customer comfortable. The majority of people experience some level of discomfort when dealing with a salesperson. You can reduce this discomfort by focusing on helping your customer rather than closing the sale. You can also tell a prospect that it is okay to say no at any time during the sales process.

Ultimately, you, and you alone are responsible for the level of credibility you develop with your prospects and customers.

SALES TIP

Decide what you can do to improve your credibility with your clients and prospects. This may take some serious self-evaluation, but in the end it will be worthwhile. For instance, some people set unrealistic time frames for the completion of a project which means they fail to meet the scheduled deadline. They could improve their credibility by establishing a later deadline. This would allow them more time to complete the project, and if they finished the project ahead of schedule, would demonstrate their reliability.