

Selling is an exhilarating expedition; there is never a dull moment. Either you celebrate your achievements or bash yourself on the accomplishment of your competitor. If you are a salesperson, the prospect of **winning and losing** probably haunts you in your dreams.

In a recent workshop on selling skills, I asked participants to list down some of the sales fallacies. It was quite an eye opener. The list was long and fascinating. Here are the top three myths that surfaced.

1) Success in selling is all about having the “gift of the gab”

Most salespeople believed that having the **gift of the gab** was undoubtedly the qualification required to be successful in sales. To some extent this is true - a sales professional should have a natural ability to express ideas fluently and persuasively. However, at times our eloquence turns out to be the major hurdle in understanding and connecting with the prospect. WHY? Simply because we emphasize more on our sales pitch rather than lending an ear to understand the needs of the other person. The desire to talk more than to listen renders a salesperson ineffective.

In this context, you will realize that communication skills are often misunderstood. When I ask my participants to define communication, the most common reply is “getting your message across”. This may be so, but this is just a small part of communication. What about the receiver and his/her comprehension of the message?

Communication is all about connecting with the other person at an intellectual and emotional level. “Gift of the gab” is talking impressively, and this in itself is not enough. Empathetic listening and our ability to understand and feel the real need in what is said, is of the essence.

2) “Topi” Principle

Sadly, many salespeople apply the “Topi Principle”. Interestingly, it does work, but only for a

short while. A participant described it thus: “A topi is actually a helmet which we offer to customers to supposedly protect them from the sales overtures of our competitors”.

Usually sales people revert to the ‘topi’ principle out of sheer desperation. As selling is about achieving targets, the pressure to make the numbers drives some to go for an instant ‘kill’. They end up over exerting themselves and achieve a reluctant ‘yes’ to their offering from some of their prospects.

While this approach may work, success is short-lived. In reality, such deals turn out to be counterproductive in the long run. You end up losing our customers/prospects to our competitors.

Seasoned sales professionals opt for trust, instead of ‘topi’ and pressure selling. They aim to win over the prospect by aiming to develop long term relationships. This they do by focusing on mutual value addition through their faith in their product or service and their personal credibility and professionalism.

Portraying competition as villains

You may have come across salespeople who spend more time emphasizing weaknesses of their competitors than amplifying the benefits their products and services that match your identified needs.

One thing that kills a sale faster than anything else is when salespeople waste precious time elaborating how bad, dishonest or over priced their competitors’ products or services are.

It’s never a good idea to portray a dark picture of your competitor. Not only is it unprofessional, it also harms your image and that of your organization. Follow the golden rule, “If you have nothing good to say about someone, say nothing.”

Conclusion

The profession of selling is inherently noble. It has earned a bad name simply on account of many salespeople acting unprofessionally, and at time unethically, either out of desperation, or their insatiable greed.

The process of selling requires skills in relationship building. And this calls for integrity stemming from a desire to give value, instead of focusing on getting numbers at any cost.
