

WHY BEING AGGRESSIVE WON'T GET YOU SALES

When people are asked to think of less than successful salesman, one of the unpleasant characteristics that springs to mind is them being pushy or aggressive.

The usual memory is of looking for a new car or used car! We have all had experiences when the salesman hasn't stopped talking and you sense yourself being pushed to say 'yes'. You find yourself signing on the dotted line!

Too many business owners, when presenting their sales pitch don't think about whether their style could be perceived as pushy or aggressive, and don't realise what they could be losing. In this article we are going to look at exactly what being pushy or aggressive looks like and how it can damage building long term relationships (which is what selling should be about).

Being pushy, whether intentionally or unintentionally, can be the ruin of a salesperson. Luckily we are all individuals, so we have a different 'pain' threshold where pushy salesmen are concerned; some people will shrug it off, others will feel intimidated. But what defines 'pushy'?

To 'push' something is the act of exerting force on one object in order to move it from one place to another. When you push an object, its weight responds as resistance and to overcome this you have to push harder. To fulfil the act of pushing you have to expend effort, but when strong enough, resistance can prevent you from moving forward.

Looking at the preceding words again, but re-framing them in a sales context, you can quickly see what being pushy is – forcing your will onto the buyer, countering resistance with more force, using effort to get a result. This is not how to make a sale or encourage someone to buy from you again! You must always remember that a customer is with you because he wants to be there – he can quickly change his mind.

What are the actions you take in your sales process, which could be perceived as aggressive?

- Not taking 'no' for answer
- Not actively listening or watching for body language hints which are telling you to stop, that your message is not getting across
- Being overly familiar with the customer too early in the sales process
- Despite having been told that he is not interested, within a few days you are back on the phone, following up the previous meeting

These actions could be taken in all innocence but the outcome is the same – the customer feels pressurised.

So what's the impact of these actions? Here are some of the possible outcomes if you take things too far.

- You may be lucky and hit upon a customer who is too meek to fight back or walk away. Great, you made a sale! However, they will never buy from you again. Missing out on repeat business means you are missing on the real profit. The next deal can be completed without all the preliminary talk so the true profit is higher. Be pushy and you miss out on all of this
- If the customer is a strong personality, he may dig his heels in and an argument quickly develops. You can never conclude a sale under these circumstances. Worse still, if you are in the retail trade, potential customers wandering around your shop may pick up on the tense atmosphere and be out of the door with their money still in their pocket. The result? More than one lost sale
- Even if your product or service is ideal for them and satisfies all their requirements, if they feel uncomfortable with your style, they'll buy elsewhere
- Word-of-mouth can be a great way to boost sales but it can also be a destructive force. A dissatisfied customer will tell many more people about their bad experience than a satisfied customer will about a good experience. So, not only have you missed out on one sale but also a bucket-load more

What steps can you take to avoid being too pushy or aggressive and possibly end up losing a sale?

Early on in the relationship or presentation, don't be overly familiar. Ask if you can call them by their first name. Seeking permission may sound a bit cheesy but at least you have their permission.

Having established this ground rule, actively listen to what the customer is saying. Is he dropping clear hints that he is not comfortable with what you are saying? Conversely, if he's not responding at all, ask him if he's OK with what he has heard so far. Asking questions is a great way of finding out what the customer is really thinking and so an opportunity to put things right.

As well as listening, watch their body language. Do they appear happy or are their eyes constantly looking around (probably looking for the exit!) and not at you. If so, again step back and use questions to check their mood. Slow the pace down and clarify any concerns. Listening to what the customer has to say is the key and then respond by addressing the issues.

If, after taking on board what the customer is saying, you still get a 'no', don't argue; back off and leave the door open for another day. Once the customer has verbally said no, the chances of you getting a sale after that is dramatically reduced. And whatever you do, don't follow up a few days later with a telephone call! Leave the customer alone and he may come back of his own free will. The memory of your pushy style will linger for some time and the chances of you getting a quick re-match are slim, so don't try and encourage one!

Next time you are making a sales pitch, make sure you don't go too far and push the client so hard that he falls off a cliff. You want him alive so he can come and see you another day!