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## EVALUATING YOUR CUSTOMER

It is one thing to make a sales presentation, but it is another thing to make a sales presentation without first evaluating your customer. For all you know, you could be selling your customer something that they already have, or something they don't want, don't need, or can't afford. This is why it is so very important to take your customer in, sit them down, make them feel comfortable, and get to know them and what their needs are. Once you have done this, you can then sell them a product based on what their needs are and not what you think they are. On a personal note . . . I learned the importance of evaluating your customer the hard way. A few years ago, I was a branch manager working in a bank branch. One particular customer of the bank approached me in my office about opening a savings account for her daughter. Once I explained to her the process of opening a savings account, I proceeded to tell her all about a current promotion we were having on our home equity loans. She sat there and listened very politely and patiently as I very proudly went down the list of all the benefits, features, and tax breaks that come with a home equity loan. Once I had finished my rehearsed presentation, she said to me; That all sounds very nice, and it is something that I will consider in the near to distant future. She then went on to tell me that she and her husband rented the house they lived in. So there you have it, I tried to sell a home equity loan to someone without a house. Needless to say, my face turned a deeper shade of scarlet, and I felt like an idiot. But hey, I learned from my mistake. Had I asked some simple probing questions before I went straight for the sale, I would have saved myself a lot of embarrassment. You will be amazed at what you can find out from people just by asking them a few simple questions about themselves. Remember, people love to talk about themselves. Their jobs, their pets, their kids, just about everything. I once had a friend who owned a shoe store, and his inventory was made up mostly of sneakers. One day a man walked into his store to buy a pair of sneakers. As my friend assisted him with his decision, he struck up a friendly conversation with him. As it turned out, this customer ran a basketball camp during the summer and he loved to talk about it. A few minutes into the conversation, my friend and his customer had come to an agreement. All of the boys and girls that attended the customer's basketball camp would receive a 10% discount on their sneakers if they purchased them at my friend's store. So, as you can see, my friend increased his sales that summer simply by striking up a conversation with his random customer and asking a few questions. Imagine going to your doctor's office with an ailment and having him prescribe you a medication without asking what your symptoms were. Would you take the medication? The same principal applies. It really isn't rocket science, it's just friendly conversation, get to know your customer and watch one sale turn into many. Why service only one of your customers needs when you can service them all.

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