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Product availability

Be sure you know the availability of products. Ask yourself these questions:

- Will there always be a range of products on hand?
- Can you locate an item at a branch store?
- Are products on back order?
- What is the turn-around time from ordering?

Delivery of product

Be prepared with information about:

- availability – is there a delivery service?
- delivery times – is there after-hours delivery?
- costs – is delivery free or is a cost involved; is free delivery part of the sales pitch?
- location – are items delivered within a certain range of the store?

Identify internal product information sources

Product information available from within a business may vary in terms of the information that can be made public and that may be proprietary information. Remember that some information about a product can be sensitive or confidential to the company; this could include detailed product pricing and costs, or research and development trials, so be sure about what you can share in a sales presentation.

Internal product information can be sourced from a wide range of documents and information locations.

Sources may include:

- company website
- marketing material
- company intranet
- products
- brochures and catalogues
- detailed manuals
- case studies
- laboratory testing information
- experienced salespeople
- historical development information.

1B

Identify and choose appropriate sales tactics for prospects

Sales tactics are the strategies, methods and approaches a salesperson takes when offering products to a potential customer. When choosing a tactic to use, be aware of the customer you are working with, the type of industry, your organisation's position in the market, the organisation's sales budget and the time you have.

Choose an appropriate sales tactic that could result in a sale. This allows you to respond to a customer's need using a particular approach, and if this doesn't work, a different tactic can be implemented.

Remember that some tactics will not be appropriate for particular products, or for different types of customers, so knowing different tactics and when they can be applied better equips you to adjust your approach.

Here are some principles of an effective sales presentation.

Principles of an effective sales presentation

- Always be honest and never provide misleading or false statements.
- Speak clearly and succinctly in language customers understand.
- Be familiar with information relating to the products and services so you can discuss all aspects confidently.
- Be prepared with answers to questions customers are likely to have.
- Be prepared with appropriate sales aids to assist the presentation.
- Be prepared with a range of appropriate sales solutions.
- Be professional when discussing competitors. Don't say anything negative, as this reflects poorly on a salesperson and the company they represent.

Sales tactics: build a rapport

Acknowledge the customer, make them feel welcome and build a rapport with them.

Your role is to make the customer feel comfortable. If they feel pressured or the timing is wrong a potential sale may be lost.

Here is an example of an approach that can be used for either a formal sales presentation or a routine customer approach in a store.

Understand customer types

Knowing how individual customers behave when seeking a product can help your timing and the manner of your approach. Understanding buying types allows you to match your communication style with that of your customer.

Matching the way you speak and interact with a customer can build rapport. This works because people feel more at ease when the people they are speaking with is someone who communicates in a complimentary way to them.

Here are some examples of customer types.



Methodical buyers

Methodical buyers like to find out as much as they can about a product before they commit to buying. They have already researched the product but ask the salesperson a lot of questions. They are in no rush to make a decision.

Signs include:

- reading product packaging and labels thoroughly
- comparing products
- asking many product-related questions, often about technical details
- placing a high degree of trust in expert information.



Humanistic buyers

Humanistic buyers are not pushy and are generally driven by their emotions. They are value-driven and their buyer decision-making is generally based on products or services that further their view of social good. They can be slow at decision-making. Characteristics of a humanistic buyer include:

- high emotional involvement in the purchase
- feeling and acting strongly about a product
- slow and carefully deliberated decision-making
- being strongly driven by their values.



Cost

A sales solution focusing on value for money and low overall product running costs is attractive to customers who are price sensitive or seeking a product that may last a long time but have lower maintenance service requirements.

Provide different product options with ranging prices if appropriate.

Favourably compare your organisation's prices to competitors' prices.



Time

Solutions that offer savings or efficiencies related to time are useful to customers who are seeking a product to carry out a task faster or to save time. Be aware of any product features that can save a person time. For example:

- Robotic vacuum cleaners designed to clean a designated area of the house on a timer may save a customer spending time manually vacuuming the house.
- Wireless printers are an effective time-saving device, as it is no longer necessary to plug a computer into a printer in order to print a document.



Environment

Increasing social awareness on the environmental impacts of many products has resulted in a surge of environment-based features being offered as a sales solution. For example, compostable disposable coffee cups may be a solution for people with limited rubbish disposal access and a general concern for their carbon footprint; customers may be seeking a product that is bio-degradable and contains no chemicals.



Safety

Providing products or services that are safe is crucial. Not only do organisations have a duty of care to their customers, but it is against the law to sell items that are unsafe or potentially dangerous.

Most customers value safety and inquire about the safety aspects of a product or service they are thinking of purchasing. Safety may be related to a person's physical or emotional wellbeing as well as to security. For example:

- Superannuation companies may offer a superannuation product portfolio that delivers low risk based on safety and security of wealth.
- Electrical goods may have safety devices and clear operating instructions.



Brochures

Brochures contain a combination of text, graphics and other images and are generally related to a specific product or product range.

Brochures can be distributed and taken away. Brochures are valuable to summarise a product or service, such as a corporate retreat or gym.



Catalogues

Catalogues present lists of products and identify key features of each product. They use pictures and minimal text.

Catalogues may be hard copy for the customer to take away or provided on the organisation's website.

Most products can be described in a catalogue; for example, a carpentry tools catalogue showing all the woodworking tools and machines available from a company with a description of their use, size and price.



Presentation pack

A presentation pack may contain brochures, photographs, samples and other information relating to a product or service.

Presentation packs are useful for large-scale presentations. Potential customers can take them away and read them at their leisure.



Case studies

Case studies are an effective sales tactic used to illustrate how a product or service has been used. You can use a guest speaker as a sales aid and ask them to speak or use a slideshow with brief points.

A case study that highlights how a product or service was used may be more effective when a guest speaker is included in the presentation.

Different reactions

Customers are individuals, and their reaction to body language may be based not only on their cultural beliefs, but also past experiences, both positive and negative. They will not all react the same way to what a salesperson says when explaining a product or service. Subtle observation throughout the presentation allows a salesperson to adjust their body language appropriately.

Example: use effective body language

A company selling water filtration systems to corporate customers invites a prospective customer to a demonstration in their showroom. The customer enters the showroom and is greeted with a warm smile and a firm, friendly handshake. The tone of the greeting is kind and genuine. The customer's body language instantly relaxes and it is clear that they have been put at ease.



At the commencement of the formal presentation, Hamish, the salesperson, uses open yet relaxed hand gestures and is careful not to display closed body expressions (like folding his arms in front of his chest).

After using open-ended questions, Hamish listens carefully to the customer's responses and casually mirrors gestures of the customer in a subtle manner to further engage with the customer.

The customer is deeply engrossed in the conversation and Hamish notices the customer has relaxed further during the presentation and is even making jokes and laughing with him. In response to this, Hamish relaxes the tone of the presentation slightly.

The presentation continues successfully and Hamish feels certain that at the end of the presentation the customer will purchase the product.

Practice task 5

1. In one paragraph, describe why rapport building is important in a sales process.

... continued

Keep asking open questions

Asking the customer the right questions is important. Use customer response from each question to guide the next question; keep asking questions until you have a clear idea of the buyer's motive for buying, their needs and preferences.

Examples of open questions

Examples include:

- 'What brings you to the store today?'
- 'What functions do you need from your mobile phone?'
- 'Why do you prefer this style?'
- 'Where will you be storing the item?'
- 'Who will be using this service?'
- 'Tell me what you are currently using.'

Example: ask open-ended questions

Salesperson: 'So what brings you in today?'

Customer: 'I'm looking for chairs.'

Salesperson: 'What type of chairs are you looking for?'

Customer: 'Well, I've inherited my grandparents' dining table and would like some chairs to go with it.'

Salesperson: 'What style of table is it? Do you know what type of wood it's made from?'

Customer: 'Well, it's an old Baltic pine kitchen table actually, it's a fairly pale colour and in need of a little care.'

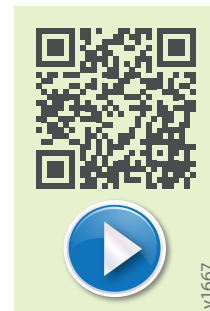
Salesperson: 'Also, what personal preferences do you have for the style of chair?'

Customer: 'My home is decorated in a fairly modern style, so I'd like a chair that will suit the table and my more modern furniture.'

Salesperson: 'Okay. What else are you looking for in a chair?'

Customer: 'I suppose I'd like them to be comfortable as well. I hate sitting in uncomfortable chairs. Oh, and I'd like to think that the chairs I buy will last as long as the table, so good quality is important.'

Salesperson: 'All right, let's begin over here ...'





Passive adjustment

When a customer does not understand what a salesperson has said and appears confused, a natural reaction for the salesperson is to either repeat or rephrase information. This is an example of a passive adjustment, and one that may not require too much planning or consideration.



Active adjustment

Active adjustments require a deeper level of observation and consideration. For example, if a salesperson becomes aware the product being offered is not actually what the customer needs, they need to consider how to approach a switch to a more suitable product.

Types of adjustments

Be familiar with a range of adjustments you can make.

Here are some examples of the types of adjustments that might be made.

Types of adjustments



Change the amount of information

The level of detail and information provided may need to be increased or decreased. Know how much is too much or too little to present to a customer.



Change the timing

Be aware of how much time a customer has to spend at a presentation. If a customer appears to be in a hurry, summarise the features and benefits and provide them with a brochure or information sheet. Ask more specific, targeted questions. You might schedule a one-on-one meeting after the presentation for those who need more information.



Negotiation

Negotiate with the customer throughout the sales process in a manner that the customer does not feel as though they have been cheated and results in a 'win-win' situation; for example, offering an incentive such as a discount, free delivery or a free trial.



Use questioning techniques

Using a range of questions (open, closed and review questions) to guide a customer to closing a sale. Each type of question can further persuade the customer to buy.



Adjusting tactics

Adjusting and responding to customer needs can eventually lead to a sale. Use a range of interpersonal and communication skills, and be aware of when you need to adjust and respond to customer needs if the current strategy is not working.

Document features and benefits

Many organisations list the features and benefits of products in their catalogues or advertising materials to convey explicit information, requirements and recommendations. Make sure everyone has access to this material. Keep in mind what you already know about the buyer so you are not describing benefits the customer has no use for.

Be accurate

Product information and leaflets prepared to assist buyers in making purchasing decisions should be clear and accurate. Be honest in the information presented to customers and be aware that making false claims about a product is against the law. There is a range of legislation governing different industries and this can affect how a product is sold. For example, insurance products must include certain disclaimers and be compliant with Australian Securities and Investments Commission regulations. Businesses are not permitted to mislead or deceive buyers under the *Competition and Consumers Act 2010* (Cth).

Example: identify product features and benefits

Many businesses prepare specific lists that detail a product's features and benefits that can be used effectively when making a presentation.

Here is an example of a list of product features and benefits.

Product: Car detailing service	
Features	Benefits
Complimentary courtesy service, including pick-up and delivery from your home or work in the metro area	Convenience for customers who have busy lives and cannot wait around for their car to be ready.
Weekend appointments available in advance	Weekend appointments are ideal for customers who require greater choices for car detailing services and cannot attend during the week.
Modern detailing technology and fully equipped workshop	Utilising the latest technology, our cleaning services are state of the art and ensure an immaculate clean every time.
Fully insured	In the unlikely event of damage or unforeseen circumstances with your vehicle, we are fully insured and can return your car to you as new.
Old or new, we shine them all	We offer a range of specialist services that will suit all cars from the latest luxury to vintage and everything in between.
Ample customer parking	Customer parking makes it easy for the customer to park their car when they arrive.

... continued

2F

Use sales aids to build buyer understanding of how the product aligns with their needs

Sales aids are the tools a sales professional uses to enhance a sales presentation. They may be items a customer can take with them to refer to at a later date, or items that are part of a presentation. Sales aids should be selected with the customer and their needs in mind. Providing inappropriate or unnecessary sales aids only clutter and confuse a sales presentation and the customer.

When used effectively, a sales aid can be persuasive; for example, demonstrating a washing machine that is very quiet when operating can be a very persuasive sales tactic for a customer interested in a machine that is not loud.

Use appropriate sales aids

Sales aids need to be appropriate to the needs of the buyer. For example, offering a detailed written brochure with small type may be inappropriate for a person with a visual impairment or a lack of proficiency in the English language, whereas this would be ideal for a customer particularly interested in detailed product specifications.

The purpose of a presentation is to build buyer understanding of how the product or service aligns with their needs. Sales aids should enhance a presentation and, if they do not serve this purpose, they are not aids.

Be prepared with the aids you have selected for your presentation.

Here are some examples of different presentation and the appropriate sales aids.

Appropriate sales aids



Corporate sales presentation

Audience needs: Information and data on the product

Sales aids:

- Electronic presentation
- Graphs, photos, images and statistics



Hands-on presentation to a group

Audience needs: To explore and use the product

Sales aids:

- Product
- Product samples
- Printed brochures

Topic 3

Respond to buyer signals

Buyer signals are the indicators that a customer displays when they are interested in purchasing a product or service. However, recognising the signals a buyer uses is only part of the process; sales professionals must know how to respond to these signals to successfully close the sale.

Questions, body language, customer statements and objections are all clues as to whether a customer is ready to buy. Hearing or noticing and then reacting to the buyer signals a customer is making gives you, as a salesperson, an opportunity to progress a sales interaction into an actual sale.

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 3A Identify and assess verbal and nonverbal buyer signals
- 3B Use probing to identify the source of buyer resistance
- 3C Identify strengths and limitations of strategies to counter resistance and implement an appropriate strategy
- 3D Use trial closes strategically during different stages of the sales process

Don't use language or a tone that is hesitant or apprehensive in formal closes, as this may indicate to a customer a lack of faith in the product on your part. For example, a salesperson who closes with 'I can begin the paperwork if you'd like', may be better placed to reword their close with 'I will fill in the paperwork now and all you have to do is sign here'.

Example: close a sale

Renato works for a large paving supplier. He meets with the Browne family who are seeking a specific amount of pavers for their outdoor kitchen and pool surrounds. The Browne family discuss colour and textures of the pavers and decide on the Ultrapave 200 series.

After several trial closes, Renato believes the Ultrapave 200 in Mystic Grey suits the Brownes' needs in terms of style, colour and texture of the paver. Renato is aware of the differences that occur in paver batches. His company regularly uses the limited supply strategy to close a sale, as the colour and texture can vary considerably from batch to batch; identical batches of bricks and pavers cannot always be guaranteed.



Renato: 'As with all of the Ultrapave 200 pavers, each batch of pavers is unique due to the different mineral compositions within the paver. I know you are interested in 80 square metres of pavers for your outdoor area. We currently have 100 square metres of Mystic Grey in stock. I am worried if you leave it too long we may not have the exact colour and texture of the Mystic Grey you like so much in stock. It's a beautiful product, and I would recommend you order today if that's what you like.'

Practice task 15

1. Why are closing strategies important?

2. When is a formal close used?

3. When might you use an assumptive close?

Sales documents



Tax invoices

A tax invoice is an invoice that confirms a sale. There are a number of specific Australian Taxation Office requirements, depending on the sale amount. A tax invoice must include:

- details of the seller's identity
- details of the seller's Australian Business Number (ABN)
- the date the invoice was issued
- a brief description of the items sold, including the quantity (if applicable) and the price
- the GST amount (if any) payable; this can be shown separately or, if the GST amount is exactly one-eleventh of the total price, as a statement such as 'Total price includes GST'
- the extent to which each sale on the invoice is a taxable sale (that is, the extent to which each sale includes GST).



Warranty documents

Warranty documents may be issued as part of a sale. They may detail the duration of the warranty and what aspects of the product may be covered under the warranty.

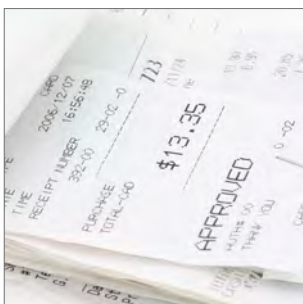
You need to insert the date and purchase price of the item. Warranty documents are generally written using legal terminology and may include circumstances when the warranty is void; for example, the negligent use of an item.



Delivery documents

A delivery document (or docket) itemises the products being delivered to a customer and confirms the date, day, time and location a product or service is delivered.

A delivery document may be supplied in addition to a receipt to confirm that the product has been received by the customer.



Receipts

Receipts are documents that provide proof of purchase of a product. Generally a tax invoice can be used as a receipt. A receipt may be issued in Australia by a small business if they are not registered for GST and therefore not claiming or charging GST.

It is often a condition for the exchange or return of an item for the receipt to be provided as proof of purchase.

4D

Identify and present cross-selling opportunities to buyer

Cross-selling (or complementary selling) is the practice of selling additional products or services to an existing customer. Cross-selling is a valuable skill for salespeople, as it helps to achieve the goals of making your customers satisfied and improving sales figures. Cross-selling has benefits for both the salesperson and the customer, and wherever possible you should identify cross-selling opportunities early in the sales process and offer them when closing the sale.



Be familiar with the range of products on offer so you are aware of suggestions you can make to the customer.

Cross-selling is used to increase the amount of revenue obtained from a customer and protect the relationship with the client by preventing them from purchasing elsewhere.

Benefits of cross-selling

Cross-selling has a range of mutual benefits for both sales professionals and for a customer.

Benefits of cross-selling for a customer include convenience of not having to shop elsewhere, and established rapport and trust with salesperson (cross-selling builds a deeper relationship between customer and salesperson).

Benefits of cross-selling

- Increases the amount of money a customer spends with the salesperson
- Demonstrates to the customer that the salesperson is trying to meet customer needs
- Promotes efficiency in sales with the salesperson spending more time with one person and less time and effort with multiple customers
- Reduces the likelihood of a customer switching to a competitor
- Increases the chance of customer referrals from satisfied customers

Dangers of cross-selling

Before you try cross-selling products to your existing client base, it is important to understand some of the key aspects of cross-selling. You need to link the cross-selling to an actual need the customer has. Randomly suggesting a product to a customer to purchase may come across as pushy or desperate and may harm your relationship with the customer.

When cross-selling you need to link the product to an identified need and explain why you are suggesting the item or service. You should not pressure the customer into buying.

Complementary selling

Selling additional items to customers is about increasing the customer's satisfaction with their purchase. An important part of providing excellent service is to ensure that the customer is aware of complementary products and services that will benefit them.

5A

Contact buyer post sale, provide assistance and advice, and help them access after-sales support

You should never underestimate the value of after-sales support. It is often post sale that the customer's relationship with an organisation and its products or services is established. Customers who are engaged in after-sales support activities and have a positive experience are more likely to recommend the organisation and the products to others or be receptive to cross-selling or promotional offers.



Benefits of quality after-sales service include increasing market share by establishing client goodwill, increasing repeat sales from the customer and leading to customer referrals.

After-sales support

Organisations have a number of responsibilities relating to the support they give customers after a sale has been made. In some instances these are legal requirements, while in other cases they are a way of providing ongoing service to the customer. The provision of post-sale support makes good business sense and helps to ensure the ongoing satisfaction of customers and build client relationships.

Here is some information about after-sales support.

Inform the customer

Once you have closed the sale of a product with a customer it is important to let them know of the support services that may be available to them. Doing this is an important step in helping to build long-term customer loyalty, as some customers may think that the store will lose interest in them once they have spent their money.

After-sales options

After-sales support options vary considerably depending on the product offered. For example:

- Retailers of electrical products, such as computers and televisions, commonly provide after-sales support to buyers, including ongoing support if the customer has a technical query or problem.
- Some stores provide support in the form of a letter they send to customers saying they hope they are enjoying the product and to contact the store if they have any difficulties.

5B

Use feedback methods to identify sales and product satisfaction

Every organisation aims to improve its sales and profits. The best way to do this is to serve the customer as fully as possible. By seeking customer feedback, many businesses gain a clearer picture of ways they can improve. Collecting feedback can present a challenge. An organisation must be clear on what information they want to obtain in order to improve; for example, is it feedback on the product or is it feedback on the service experience? A range of different feedback methods can also be employed, depending on the budget, purpose and nature of the organisation.



Obtain feedback

Customers are normally willing to provide feedback on their customer experience and satisfaction level if it is made easy for them to give their feedback. In fact, customers like to know that you value their feedback and that you are willing to take their opinions into account.

Customers often have a different perspective from that of staff and managers. They are likely to experience problems and situations you may not be aware of. Their comments will reflect the experience they have with your organisation.

Once you have obtained feedback you need to analyse and evaluate the information to determine the most appropriate action to take within organisational requirements. For example, you may need to improve procedures, provide staff training or suggest that different marketing strategies be used.

There is a wide range of different feedback methods available to an organisation.

Email dialogue

Email can be used to gain written information from a customer about the product or service. In an email dialogue you have the opportunity to ask further questions to obtain additional information from the customer. Types of questions could include open or closed questions; for example, 'Were you happy with the product you purchased?' or 'Can you explain why you mentioned you were confused about payment options?'

Be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of using emails to solicit feedback. Here are the advantages and disadvantages for using emailed dialogue.

Social media platforms

Some organisations may wish to engage with a customer in an online social environment, either one-on-one or in a group situation. Examples of social media platforms that could be used include Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Here are the advantages and disadvantages of using social media platforms to solicit feedback.



Advantages

- Engages with a customer in an informal social environment
- Social media groups and communities can be easily targeted to ensure that potential customers can see responses from satisfied customers.



Disadvantages

- Comments can be very public and many not be controllable by the organisation
- How an organisation handles the negative feedback on social media can sometimes be more important than the feedback itself.

Anecdotal feedback

Anecdotal feedback is feedback via an individual's written or verbal account of what they think about a product or service. It may be passed on by another customer during or after the sales process.

Anecdotal feedback is a useful mechanism to record and reflect upon opinions from the customer's viewpoint. Qualitative data such as this may be difficult to measure, but should always be noted as it is generally unsolicited.

For example:

- 'My Uncle Jim bought his Hampton washing machine in 1962 and it still works!'
- 'I love the range you have. That's why I keep coming back.'
- 'Your store is always a bit cheaper than others, yet the quality is good.'

Sales performance data

Internal information is available to an organisation to determine customer satisfaction and sales performance and complement the external feedback obtained.

There are many different statistical methods that can be employed to analyse and review sales data to determine areas of improvement for the business. Many organisations use complex and technical calculations to determine future sales and profitability; for example, banking and finance organisations employ actuaries to calculate complex risk and probability of customer behaviour. However, salespeople can also utilise simple calculations to determine sales performance.

Address problems or difficulties

Problems or difficulties communicated by the customer to the organisation should be addressed quickly and without fuss. A customer may quickly recover from any dissatisfaction they have when the organisation addresses issues promptly and professionally. In many cases, a customer becomes a loyal advocate, sharing their positive experiences with friends of how their problem was resolved.

Legislative requirements need to be adhered to; for example, if the product sold is faulty or does not do what it is supposed to do, then the organisation must replace it or refund the customer's money.

Some organisations may have policies that extend further than legislative requirements to protect their image; for example, they may extend a warranty beyond what is required by legislation.

Addressing problems or difficulties:

- Acknowledge the customer's concerns.
- Each should be addressed individually, especially if the customer has more than one issue.
- Communicate with the customer in regard to how the resolution is progressing, including any delays.
- Follow up after the issue has been rectified to ensure the customer is satisfied with the rectifications made.

Strategies for addressing service difficulties

Be aware of the strategies you can implement to quickly resolve issues relating to customer service. In many cases you may need to train team members in processes and work practices.

Here are some issues and concerns that may arise and strategies to use to resolve them.

Unable to contact anyone to help

Resolution:

- Ensure a messaging system is available for customers to leave messages; for example, voice messages or emails.
- Provide customer with contact details at the time of sale.
- Ensure messages are being answered.

Not being told to keep a receipt after the sale

Resolution:

- Train sales staff to communicate the need to keep a receipt.
- Organisation to keep records of all sales transactions.