

10 tips to help you stand apart from the competition.

The word “sales” may not be in your job description, but in today’s competitive marketplace, it probably should be. Whether you’re selling yourself for a job or promotion; your ideas for a new project; or a product to a potential customer—everyone sells some of the time. Our tips will help you make your next sales pitch more effective.



1 Know your audience

The more you know about a potential customer or employer, the more you can tailor your presentation to what’s important to them. Leverage your personal network and the web to get up to speed quickly. Nothing builds rapport like a relevant, customized presentation.

2 Make a great impression

Practice your presentation until you feel prepared for success. It’ll help boost your confidence, reduce any anxiety you feel, and help you remain upbeat and positive. Your personal appearance should be neat and professional. If you provide printed handouts, make sure they look professional too. Custom, color handouts make a better impression than generic, black-and-white.

3 Listen and learn

Good salespeople spend at least half of their time listening; asking questions and listening some more. They adapt their sales pitch to include what’s most relevant to their audience. Techniques to improve your listening skills include observing body language, taking notes, and just plain concentrating on what’s being said—instead of your response.

4 Create connection

Provide opportunities for a prospective buyer to connect with what you’re selling. If it’s a product, let them try it out and see how it works. If it’s an intangible like a service or an idea, provide endorsements or references from industry leaders or other trusted sources.

5 Summarize your key selling points

Ask yourself what about your offering would benefit your potential customer most. Consider your competition and what sets you apart. Be bold. Lead with your strengths. Remember to emphasize benefits over features. Benefits are the reasons prospects become customers.

6 Make it risk free

Put yourself in your customer’s shoes. People are naturally excited by new opportunities and ideas, but they’re also cautious about something they’ve never tried. Make it easy for a prospective customer to take a chance on you. Provide references or testimonials from trusted sources. Offer a free trial, free training, an unconditional guarantee, or another assurance to reduce risk.

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7 Add an incentive

Why should a potential customer buy now? Incentives help move sales forward. Price incentives are powerful, but offers of training or additional services are also effective. Other incentives are convenience, location, availability, timeframe, guarantees, trials, bundles, discounts on future purchases, etc. Knowing what's important to your prospect(s) will help you design a more effective incentive.

8 Close the sale

When you've answered all the questions, countered objections, presented your offering, and reviewed the situation as objectively as you can, ask your prospect if there is anything else you can provide to help them make their decision. If appropriate, ask your prospect what their expectations are for start-up, the first week, and six months after purchase. Make a note of their response and address any concerns. After the sale be sure to meet or exceed their expectations and you'll be well positioned for continued success.

9 Follow up

Good follow-up is common sense, but it's surprising how often it's neglected. That's why it helps you stand out. Write a thank you note. Make a phone call to check on delivery or how your product or service is performing. Selling is about relationships. Good ones lead directly to more sales and referrals.

10 Ask for feedback

The easiest time to ask for feedback is when you're doing well, but don't hesitate to ask any time. Customers and prospects may be reluctant to bring up small things on their own. But if you ask how things could improve, they'll tell you. It'll help you do even better and stay ahead of your competition.



Make a great impression

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