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Awakening The Natural Salesperson In You

*Maybe we're all
born to sell?*

by Phil Sasso



If you're like most tool distributors, you may not see yourself as a salesperson. And if you do, you probably don't think it's something that comes naturally. You've worked hard learning different techniques, and while selling may be an ingrained trait for some, the rest of us really have to work at it. I don't think that's the case. I think we're all natural-born salespeople.

As kids, we weren't afraid to ask questions, we weren't intimidated by being persistent, and we instinctively knew how to get what we wanted. Deep down inside, we understood the basics of persuasion.

The Problem? We Grew Up

We unlearned what came naturally. We asked fewer questions. We began to fear rejection. We became less persistent. We stopped asking for what we wanted. In a nutshell: we began acting like an adult.

Now, I'm not saying that selling isn't hard work. Or that sales training seminars, tapes and books can't help sharpen our skills. I'm just saying that the best salespeople tend to have fewer grown-up inhibitions. They don't depend on gimmicks or sales tricks. In fact, the simplicity and honesty of their approach is almost child-like.

Take Asking Questions

Top salespeople aren't afraid to ask a lot of questions. Not tricky or gimmicky questions, but open questions that get their customers to open up.

Last week, I got a call from a bad salesman. He said all the trite things you'd expect a pesky cold caller to say. So, rather than waste his time (and mine) I interrupted him. I told him I wasn't interested in insurance - or whatever

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he was selling. His response: "So, you're not interested in being open-minded?"

"No," I said and hung up.

Do gimmicky questions like that really work? Not on me. I'm much more likely to listen to someone who sounds genuine and honest than someone with a pre-planned answer that's trying to corner me into listening to him. That wastes both of our time.

On the other hand, my son PJ is smart enough not to try bullying me into listening if he wants something...

"Dad? Want to play trucks?," he asked as I lounged around with the Sunday paper one weekend.

"No," I responded.

"Why not?," he innocently asked.

Now how could I answer that?

He sold me. I played with him.

And I had fun!

He wasn't cocky. He wasn't trying to trap me. He just asked an innocent question. I convinced myself. I could read when he was in bed. He won't always want to play with me. I'd better enjoy it now. A simple two-word question helped me see things differently.

How can you use the same questioning technique?

Let's say you've just demonstrated a tool that's a big time-saver.


Bad Question: "Do you want to save five hours a week?"

That's a closed question. Closed questions generate one-word answers. You can't discuss a tool with a customer and learn what he or she is really thinking with closed questions.

Plus, this question treats your customer like a fool. Who doesn't want to save five hours a week? Don't you feel railroaded by questions like this? (Yes, I realize that's a closed question!)

Good Question: "What ways can you see this tool saving you time?"

Then sit back and listen as your customer sells himself. This is called an open question. Your customer can't answer it with just one word. It opens a whole conversation. And by elaborating they're giving you information to help you close this sale, and others. They may even save themselves much more than five hours a week!

Successful salespeople know the power of child-like questions. I think it's something we can all re-learn. 

Phil Sasso is the president of Sasso Marketing (www.sassomarketing.com), an aftermarket advertising & public relations agency. He's also a speaker and consultant. (And he's still a big kid at heart!) To get his free weekly marketing tip, email: tips@xmark.com.



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