

The Personal Touch Will Never Be Replaced

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Now that pad computers, smart phones, and the World Wide Web have infiltrated most aspects of our lives, you might think the nanosecond has become the standard clock-speed for all transactions. Not so!

Dealing with people in a meaningful fashion still requires patience, and a level of understanding far deeper than any machine can facilitate. In difference to sci-fi buffs, I must say Virtual Reality may one day attain this height. This day however, reality still rules the marketplace.

The great myth perpetrated by the electronics world is that computers and devices can do anything — including sell products and services for you. Nothing makes me angrier than to receive one of those computerized advertisements on my cell phone where the computer finally asks me to press in my credit card number to order. This is even worse than putting up with telemarketers — no offense to those in the biz.

Here's the point: computers and telemarketers cannot afford the luxury of patience. Patience takes time; in fact, some believe time is patience.

Since there isn't enough time to exercise patience over the phone, telemarketing companies must lean on probability and statistics to close enough sales to survive. Probability dictates that if enough numbers are dialed, then eventually a sale will be made. This is the myth-busting truth about electronic gizmos: when selling complex varieties of products and services (like janitorial work and cleaning supplies), no machine or telemarketer can touch the salesperson patiently demonstrating wares in front of a prospect.

We humans are not mechanical. Our emotions are stroked by our interrelationships with others, and emotions control our buying habits. A salesperson who works patiently with a client face-to-face will outsell a telemarketer simply because of proximity.

It's commonly known that a warm body is harder to get rid of than a voice on the phone. Don't forget the impact of the senses either. Seeing, hearing, smelling, touching (and tasting, although not so much in our industry) a product evokes hundreds of instant emotional responses, which can never be rivaled by a telemarketer or a fabulous web design.

Proximity alone brings out feelings necessary to make informed decisions. Imagine trying to sell a multi-thousand-dollar automatic scrubbing machine to a client who has never seen one or attempting to explain to a prospect that you will restore their indoor stained concrete slab that cost them megabucks simply by using your great expertise. Odds are you wouldn't. Why? Because you aren't close enough to evoke the emotions required to make a decision to purchase what you're selling.

An alert salesperson reads emotional responses (body language) from the prospect, evaluates the effect of each statement he or she makes in a presentation, and utilizes that knowledge to guide the prospect into a sale.

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This emotion-reading function is normal to all relationships, but salespeople usually have a heightened awareness.

Again, emotions control our buying habits. How can a computer, smart device, or a telemarketer perform this function? Personal contact is needed, especially for contract cleaning companies where word-of-mouth advertising is the key to success.

For the next few moments — not nanoseconds — I want you to consider the following scenario. Pretend you are using your new CompuPod 5000 Wrist Communicator. The year is 2016, the date is August 8, and the time is 3:52 P.M. It's Wednesday. Total access to two-way voice/video, fax, e-mail, text messaging, ordering system, multi-media color catalog, and a myriad other menu choices are at your thumb tips.

You are following up on a lead given to you by a satisfied customer named Bob. In fact, your prospective buyer, John, just answered his desktop Vid. He looks strung out.

You: "How's it going, John?"

The biggest mistake that I see cleaning contractors make is to assume that just because they do a good job, customers will flock to their door. This is also the largest reason for the majority of startup cleaning services to fail before they even get their feet wet. I've actually heard this comment over and over again: "You mean I have to go out and sell? I'm not a salesperson!"

Guess what, we're all salespeople to one level or another. As a contract cleaning outfit, if you're not out there searching for new clientele every single day, you're going to eventually fail. Here's a checklist of things you MUST do to grow your business:

- Learn basic selling techniques, whether by using books, audio or videotapes, or taking a professional sales course at the local community college.
- Practice these words in front of a mirror every day and live by them: "I am happy. I will smile. I will meet new people today. I will show them I am a good person to deal with."
- Meet with customers and prospects in person and on a regular basis so they don't

John: "Oh, hello. Sorry. I was expecting another call."

You: "I hope I'm not interrupting."

John: "It's pretty busy, but what can I do for you?"

You: "Actually, your name came up in conversation the other day. We completed a total house makeover for a buddy of yours, Bob. He suggested I call to see if you might need for the same service at your place."

John: "Bob? You mean my neighbor down the street? Yeah, I saw you guys blasting off the vinyl siding the other day. Looks good, but I don't need that kind of service right now. If I need anything, I'll let you know." (John looks away as if talking to someone else.)

You: "Mind if I ask one more question? Have you taken a look at Bob's freshly cleaned concrete drive? (You punch up a video which shows on John's terminal in a window.)

John: "No. I haven't paid much attention to it. (Aside: I'll be done in a second, Mary.)" John looks anxiously at you, not paying attention to the video on his screen.)

forget you.

- Send personal mailings that include "Thank you" notes, "Customer Appreciation" cards, and "Invitations" to free food and service demonstrations. People love to eat free.
 - Follow up on a regular basis with your customers to ensure they are happy about EVERY level of your service.
- Always ask for referrals from satisfied clients.
- Thank people for their time, their business, and their consideration of your proposals. Charm them with your goodwill.
 - Be consistent. If you give them a great performance today, but next week you drop the ball, they will search for a better contractor.
 - Honesty solves most ills.

So, eliminate the possibility of going under by going door to door. Keep your current customers happy. Show prospects that by doing a great job on every level, you will save them money. A bad job wastes dough. Never let that happen! Word-of-mouth advertising can make a business and break a business. Don't get broken.

You: “Our new concrete cleaning machinery and scrubbing methods will save you a lot of money in the long run. Are you interested?”

John: “How do you know whether I need your service or not? And for that matter, how does Bob? Have you been out to my house? I’ve got an asphalt driveway and a brick exterior.”

(You hesitate, not sure what to do. You’ve never seen John’s property, so you can’t say for sure your cleaning methods are appropriate. John notices your hesitancy.)

You: “Why don’t we meet at your place sometime soon and I’ll see what XYZ Super Cleaners can do for you?”

John: “That’s too much of a hassle. Tell you what; I think I’ll have a little talk with Bob and if I need you, I’ll give you a shout.”

You: “Okay, John. Well, thanks for talking to me. Let me know if you need my help.”

John: “Sure. Gotta go. Bye.” (John breaks the connection.)

Suddenly, you realize what just happened. Your prospective buyer was not impressed by your whiz-bang digital presentation. In fact, he seemed rather put out. Why? Your CompuPod had worked perfectly. He wasn’t able to smell the onions on your breath from lunch. You only took up a minute of his time.

This failure reminded you of the old days when telemarketing was accomplished without all the latest multimedia.

Despite the slick modern delivery method, John had still taken the call as an interruption! He had seemed preoccupied, so you had not been able to spend the time necessary to present your product properly. This was no different than in the past!

The truth is smart phones (or CompuPods) really are an interruption. They will always ring, buzz, or squawk at the most inconvenient times. People die every day using them while driving. Salespeople in general are considered interruptions too, but there is a difference. It is inescapable that a happy salesperson brings welcome relief from stressful work atmospheres. They are vents for frustrations, sounding boards, even scapegoats!

However, professional salespeople arrange to meet their prospects at the most convenient times in order to use Patience as a sales tool. While business transactions are reaching the speed of light with the advent of newer communications technologies, never forget that proximate salespeople will continue to guide emotions with patience to close sales faster than any machine will ever make possible!



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