

Selling to Women

THE BIG PAYOFF!

QUICK TIPS:

- Respect the buyer and the buyer's questions.
- Provide a multitude of information, like you would to an trainee.
- Address all concerns and questions quickly and honestly.
- Stay away from pressuring closing tactics.



Know Your Demographic

Last year, one of our customers called me to express her outrage about how another power washing company behaved. She wanted to share with me her disbelief and frustration that in 2011, a company still maintained antiquated selling practices. At the first contact, a scripted introduction was read that broke all the rules. She was asked if her husband was available to talk to the company instead of her (and she was the one who contacted the company). Then, it was requested that the husband be there when a representative arrived to estimate the project. If that wasn't enough, they addressed her by Mrs. Last Name without any knowledge if she was married or preferred to be addressed as a Mrs. When they lost the job to us, they mailed her a letter letting her know how incompetent she was for not hiring their company.

When I heard this story, I was completely amazed how blind the other company was to how ineffectual their methods achieved the goal of the business: to make money. They completely failed to realize that this customer was going to spend a lot of time detailing her horrible experience to everyone she met. Don't let this be you!

In a recession, knowing your key demographic is essential to every successful business. Women

are increasingly making the final purchasing decision of varying industries.

According to a 2009 buying habits poll by NBC, women make more than 85% of the household purchasing decisions. The potential payoff here is huge. Understanding how women buy will make your bottom line bigger!

"Women are not only buying in the typical categories like groceries, home and family items," says Susan Malfa, senior vice president of sales for Bravo, Oxygen and Women@NBCU, "but they are also shopping for traditionally male and big-ticket items such as financial products and flat-screen TV's."

Mary Lou Quinlan, author of "Just Ask a Woman: Cracking the Code of What Women Want and How They Buy," formed a consulting firm for high profile advertising geared towards women-specific marketing. She knew that it isn't marketing *to* women anymore, but *with* women. It may seem a no brainer, but advertisers are notorious for defining what consumers want instead of the other way around.

So what exactly is different about selling to women as opposed to men? Different priorities.

Women want to fully understand the product/service more than men. Not only that, but they expect this information to be offered up freely.

The “To-Do” List

Do:

1. Provide a lot of information. Women want to know more about what they are buying than most men. This means providing much more technical and educational information without being asked.

2. Be honest and upfront. Everyone’s time is precious, so don’t waste a woman’s time with platitudes and insubstantial sentences. Saying, “I don’t know, but I will find out” will aid the sale much more than a fib.

3. Provide detailed estimates. A clear and concise estimate will show a woman your company is not trying to hide anything. Additionally, it will give her the right tools to compare pricing. A woman is more likely to come back to a higher cost service if they feel they know more about what the service entails.

4. Address her concerns immediately. Just as you value your customers, women value being taken seriously. By answering her questions and concerns quickly and professionally, she knows your company has her best interests in mind.

5. Ask for questions. This gives her a

moment to think about anything she may want to ask and gives you a moment to assess her understanding.

6. Make yourself available. Provide her with your contact information readily and remind her that she can always contact you with any questions or concerns.

7. Make eye contact. This goes a long way to developing trust. Women need to know the service they are buying will fulfill their needs.

8. Create an atmosphere of assistance. Women are more likely to buy from a company that can assist them in other relevant areas. For example: a power washing company may have a referral list of roofers or painters available.

By sharing your knowledge about your field of expertise, you will create a relationship with your customer that will last longer than the initial sale. Women talk more to each other about, well, everything than men. This is a wonderful thing, because women are much more likely to refer your company to a friend than men.



Social Marketing

Women practically invented social marketing. Who better to share what they experienced than a happy customer?

Women talk over almost all decisions with one or more other people before making a decision. This process helps them to address all angles of the issue and to gain feedback.

They feel more comfortable hiring a company that a friend, colleague or family member recommends than a company they found online. That means asking for recommendations on Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites.

After this, a woman searches for the ideal company and will keep learning about the process, industry and companies as she goes along, asking questions and doing research. After a service is purchased and completed, she feels it is necessary to share her experiences with the same people that helped her along the way.

Again, social media sites are the easiest outlet for the information. A happy and satisfied customer can be your biggest advocate online. Make sure to ask for her reviews and input—you won’t be sorry!



The “To-Don’t” List

Don’t:

- 1. Interrupt or cut off.** Women like to be heard, just like everyone else. The easiest thing to do when you know the answer is to cut into the conversation with the answer. Bad move. Be patient!
- 2. Bulldoze.** Sales gets a bad rap because of bulldozing. The idea here is to not push on a potential customer until they run away. A woman contacted your company because she wants a service/product, you don’t have to forcibly make her decide. That technique is more likely to lose her business.
- 3. Ignore woman and address man.** In addressing a couple, it is essential to evenly distribute your attention between both parties. Make sure to ask a woman if she has any questions, even if she wasn’t the initial contact.
- 4. Use endearments.** Even if ‘hon,’ ‘dear,’ ‘sweetie’ and other endearments are part of your culture, doesn’t mean all your customers fit into that mold. It can be seen as over familiar and derogatory to use such words instead of the actual name.
- 5. Be physically dominant.** A strong handshake is one thing, but an over powerful handshake will feel like you are forcing a



A recent survey conducted by Cerebellas LLC focused on home improvement retailers, but the results of the study provide some compelling observations for any service provider. The top three findings were:

Women are most loyal to businesses that have products and services relevant to their needs, good customer service and good value.

Poor customer service was cited by 77 percent of the women in the study as the chief contributor to an unsatisfying experience.

Nearly 97 percent reported that a single person capable of answering all their questions was one of the most important services a business could provide.

“Deficiencies in a sales staff’s product (and service) knowledge are tremendously frustrating to women shoppers,” says Beth Zimmerman, principal of Cerebellas, a strategy and marketing solutions company based in Long Beach, N.Y. That’s why hiring and training the right talent should be a top priority for all service providers; to do anything less it to risk alienating your customers.

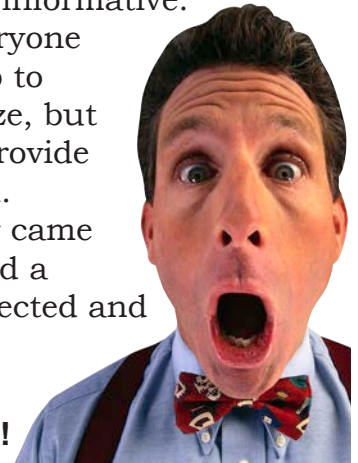
woman into a decision she is not ready to make. Invite her outside to look at the property instead of asking to come inside. Let a woman take the lead in her domain.

6. Ask stereotypical gender questions. Unless a woman brings up her husband or children, don’t bring them up in conversation. Not all women are married or have children. It is very rude to assume every woman you meet fits into the same gender role. Finding something in common with your customers is a great way to build a relationship, but be careful.

7. Be too familiar. As with endearments, stay away from physical contact and any topics too personal. Stay as professional as possible. This can be done without appearing like a robot. Just be polite and informative.

8. Make excuses. Everyone makes mistakes. Own up to yours. Minimally apologize, but take responsibility and provide a solution to the problem. Remember, the customer came to you for information and a service, not to be disrespected and belittled.

Don’t be an oily salesman!



Morgan Booz is the owner/operator of AccuWash, a Maryland-based exterior cleaning company that specializes in roof washing. To learn more, visit her website at www.BaltimoreRoofClean.com.