

# The Most Closely Guarded Secret in Sales

By Ryan Pitz

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How do sales people determine victory? It's really quite simple. They make the sale! There is no second place prize money. But it's not that simple. What is more important is why do they make the sale?

There is one, single universal truth that transcends all sales organizations and is as straightforward as the outcome of an athletic event's score. And here it is:

- Successful salespeople are in front of more qualified buyers more often.

Given that truth, what then, exactly, defines a qualified prospect? There are five distinct and clear characteristics and the more often you are in front of a prospect who has all five (not one, two, three or four), the more successful you will be. Let's look at the five:

- They have a need for your product or service and are aware of it. Forget the old stuff about "creating need." That's a marketing challenge. Your job as a sales professional is to position yourself in front of someone who has a need for your product and is fully aware of it. In fact, an unrecognized need is the same as no need at all! I often tell attendees at our training sessions that I'd love to have the plasma franchise in an emergency room! No question about the need...and none about price either.

- They have the authority and ability to pay for it. You'll notice it is both the authority as well as the ability. The graveyard of sales failures is literally populated with salespeople who have logged lots of time in front of prospects who have:

- Lots of authority and no ability

Or

- No ability and lots of authority

Or

- No authority and no ability

In any of these three cases you'll lose. You can't make a sale to someone who is unable or unauthorized to spend any money for your product.

- They have a sense of urgency about the decision. Urgency is, of course, a relative term. In some cases that could mean right now. Others could be next year. Bottom line, there is some definite time horizon that does have an absolute, clearly defined end or commitment date. Remove urgency and you remove a sense of completion. And a tip here: don't try to create a deadline for your prospect through artificial price increases, inventory reductions, fire sales or the rest. That is a ploy that is fully outdated, irrelevant and offensive at best, manipulative at worst. The best scenario is one where the prospect has a clearly delineated definite need for closure or commitment by a certain, defined date.

- They have a certain level of trust in you, your organization and product. Remove trust and you remove the ability to be perceived as a positive, inactive problem solver. Remove trust and you remove the trusted advisor, least risk supplier role you need to have. And always remember, trust is far more essential than just being liked.
- They are willing to listen to you. Unfortunately, this is where most inexperienced or marginally successful experienced salespeople make their mistake. They will overlook the first four characteristics and settle for only the fifth. The reason for that is simple. If you can get in front of someone who will, at least, listen to you, you will be able to tell your sales manager that you talked to someone!

The bottom line to this is pretty simple, too. A prospect who has all five of these characteristics is better than one who only has four. One with four is better than one with only three. One with three, better than one with two...you get the picture.

The most fundamental secret to astounding sales success is to invest a certain amount of your time guaranteeing that you are in front of as many qualified prospects as possible. The secret to selling anything is never just in the selling. It is, instead, always in the consistent, effective and ongoing effort tied to being in front of qualified buyers when they are ready to buy. That's the key...and, perhaps, the most closely guarded secret in sales.

For more ideas and information go to: <http://www.thebrooksgroup.com>

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