

Your Belief In Selling As A Worthy Profession

By Ryan Pitz

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Have you ever noticed what happens when you ask lots of salespeople what they do for a living? You'll get answers like:

"I'm in real estate."

"I work for..."

"I'm a marketing executive"

"I'm a transportation consultant"

Why is it that most salespeople hedge so much about their profession? Why not say:

"I sell home," or "I sell investment property."

"I sell cars for..."

"I'm a salesperson."

I think there are two parts to the answer.

1. The first part of it may be that they don't want to cause people to start building up an automatic wall of resistance to them. After all, unfortunately, the typical person has a pretty low opinion of salespeople in general.

Ask a hundred people what word immediately comes to their minds when they hear the term salesperson, and they'll respond with pest, bull, pushy, boring, pressure, money-grabber, sneaky, crooked or even dishonest.

Many of them have been exposed to some pretty manipulative, perhaps even unethical, practices by salespeople. For example, you've probably heard the "angel close" routine many salespeople used years ago? The salesperson asks a prospect and his wife to play out a scenario that goes something like this:

"Charlie, let's imagine that you have died...you're an angel looking down on the world, and you see Mary sitting alone on the sofa comforting your two small children...You notice she's crying, Charlie, because there's no money to pay for your home, to feed the children, to pay for their education...Suddenly the doorbell rings and a mailman hands her an envelope, from our insurance company. She breaks into a big smile when she sees that it has a check in it, but suddenly she bursts into tears because she notices that the check has no signature...It is not signed because you did not sign it Charlie...You have an opportunity right now, Charlie - SIGN THAT CHECK!"

Almost every business has its classics in high-pressure tactics: the "turkey-plucking" negotiations

between a car salesperson and a sales manager, the "give your child a fighting chance" pitch of book and computer companies, and the "bait and switch" techniques used by so many misdirected organizations.

I have some good news for you! You don't have to answer for every unethical peddler, drummer, and con artist who ever besmirched the profession of selling! Certainly you have to recognize and deal with the fact that most people have a natural resistance to unethical salespeople. It won't take you long to overcome it, however, if you are open and forthright in your dealings with your customers.

To be sure, you have to demonstrate that you are honest and trustworthy, but the best way to begin that is be proud of your profession as a salesperson.

2. Many salespeople are ashamed of their profession because they feel it has no prestige.

There may have been a time when many people went into sales because they couldn't do anything else - thus, the old stereotype of an occupation that requires minimal intelligence and education, few skills, and little more than a "gift of gab."

In case you haven't noticed, that image has been outdated; by any method of keeping score, today's successful salesperson is a true professional - in every sense of that word.

Let's take a quick look at some common vocational standards and see how the selling profession measures up.

Money. Studies show that top salespeople are among the highest paid professionals in America. It is not unusual to find salespeople who make more money than the chief executive officers of the corporations they work for, and many salespeople actually turn down management positions because taking them would mean a cut in pay.

Prestige. Salespeople are increasingly showing up on the boards of community organizations, as civic leaders, and in other positions usually reserved for only the "top dogs" in a community.

Specialized skills and training. Selling in today's complex world of commerce and trade often requires as much specialized knowledge and skill as many of the "old line" professions such as medicine, law, and banking.

Value to clients. Just as other professionals render services their clients are willing to pay for, salespeople enjoy a unique relationship with their clientele. Most people in our society have learned to look to qualified salespeople for information, guidance, and reassurance in virtually all their buying decisions.

There is little doubt that sales is a profession. It is up to you to make it a worthy and honorable one.

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