

Selling – Depends on Quantity or Quality?

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You may not consider yourself a sales person, but if you are a parent, manager, or person in a position of influence, you should. As you strive to make a positive difference in your family, workplace, and community, you often depend on your ability to influence. You are selling when gaining buy in for your vision and values. You are selling when persuading people to support your ideas and approaches. In business, as the cliché goes, nothing happens until someone sells something. Whether sales is in your title or not, you sell.

Some people associate sales with a not-so-positive experience they had when buying a car or other high-pressure purchase. Some sales people, particularly those who depended on cold-calling, also have a negative view of sales. But these are exceptions to what most consider a respectful and productive profession. Most sales people rightly see their job as educating people so they make an informed decision.

With selling being an important skill, what is the most fundamental principle of selling? Ask any seasoned marketing, sales, or business development professional and you'll hear something like this—if you're not making your target audience aware, you are not selling. You may have a great idea, product, or service, but if people don't know about it, it doesn't matter. If you're not sharing your knowledge and getting your message in front of people, you're not creating demand.

Does this mean selling is a numbers game? In other words, does quantity beat quality when it comes to creating demand for your offerings? Who typically sells more of their products, services, and ideas—people who make the most sales appointments or those who make fewer appointments, but with more careful selection and preparation? For example, do companies win more business by responding to more requests for proposals (RFPs) or by being more selective and replying to fewer RFPs in which they invest more time and potentially influence? The answer: quality beats quantity. No volume of calls or proposals overcomes poor execution or targeting the wrong prospects. As with hunting, unless you are extremely lucky, you can shoot many times, but if you don't aim, you will never hit your target.

However, this isn't vindication for those who too infrequently engage their target market. With a compelling value proposition and target prospect profile in place, quantity does matter. If people responsible for sales and business development aren't setting up appointments, making calls, and proposing their offerings, they aren't selling. If they're not spending time with clients and prospects, they are wasting their opportunity. Same with marketing people and others in positions that interact with clients. If you're not communicating in some form with your influencers and decision makers, you're not educating your target market. You're not creating demand. You're not filling the sales pipeline.



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To be fair to sales and business development people, creating demand isn't all up to them. They need competitive offerings. They need their colleagues in marketing and delivery to help out. Marketing performed with compelling messaging to the right audience creates leads. So do quality interactions with clients in the course of performing work and providing support. So if you are involved in installing products, carrying out client work, delivering products or services, providing customer support, or performing marketing, your work contributes to generating new leads for the opportunity pipeline.

In summary, selling is first about quality, but quantity is a close second. As high-performing sales organizations know, if you aspire to make a positive difference in your market, gain more followers, sell more, increase revenue, and increase profitability:

- Spend quality in-person time with influencers and decision makers
- Communicate relevant information with prospects through email, phone, and other messaging channels
- Create interest through compelling advertising, social media, and other marketing channels
- Leverage client interactions in the course of product installation, service delivery, and support

Of course, there is a need for sales and business development staff to spend some time in the office thinking, planning, researching, analyzing, and preparing. But if you're responsible for creating demand and you're waiting and wondering why your revenue is down, wait no more. Develop your strategy, craft your compelling value proposition, and get your message out to your influencers and decision makers. The only time that truly counts towards generating new business is the time spent in front of prospects.

How many prospects will you share your message with and educate today?

Article written by Mike Hawkins, award-winning author of *Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others* (www.ActivatingYourAmbition.com), author of the *SCOPE of Leadership* six-book series on coaching leaders to lead as coaches (www.ScopeOfLeadership.com), and president of Alpine Link Corp (www.AlpineLink.com), a boutique consulting firm specializing in leadership development and sales performance improvement.

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