

## **PERSONAL PREPARATION FOR SELLING**

### **Physical qualities**

It includes health, posture, speech and appearance. Without good health a sales person will not have the endurance to sell the product or achieve targets. He or she may also be required to move about different places which would be difficult and also stunned during the greater part of the day.

Good posture implies that unnecessary tension of muscles should be avoided. Voice should be expressive, pleasant, not monotonous or high pitched, audible.

A neat appearance is an essential. A good appearance would give a salesperson confidence in presenting his arguments in a convincing manner without being destructed by fear of his/her own appearance. The salesperson should know how to smile. A good natural smile enhances appearance.

### **Mental traits**

Mental traits include alertness, imagination, initiative, observation and self-confidence. The salesman should be alert, ready to find out ways and means of servicing customers. Alertness encourages customers to be confident in the sales people. With imagination will have the capability to visualize the items required by the customer, such a customer will be relieved and so grateful for suggestions and ideas given by the sales person. A salesperson should be able to think and decide for himself instead of having to be told everything i.e. he/she should be self-reliant. The salesperson should help wavering customers in to making decisions by gentle means of questions and suggestions. A salesperson should be a keen observer. This will help in immediately sorting out problems and finding solutions as soon as possible. Close attention should be paid to the customers, products being sold and company being worked for.

### **Social qualities**

The ability to make friends and get along with people is one of the most valuable assets. Social traits include ability to meet people, being polite, keeping appointments, addressing customers in a friendly way, not easily losing temper, saying thank you and goodbye while leaving.

Generally the following make up a successful sales person include among others

- i. Patience
- ii. Knowledge on product, company and competition
- iii. Reliable and honest
- iv. Determination
- v. Sales discipline and motivation
- vi. Commitment
- vii. Ability to work with or in a team
- viii. Willingness to learn
- ix. Enthusiasm
- x. Customer focused and has genuine concern for customers
- xi. Good communicator
- xii. Ability to set goals and work at meeting them
- xiii. Creativity and innovativeness
- xiv. Should be able to accept and learn from objection
- xv. Loyalty to customer needs
- xvi. Flexibility
- xvii. Love challenges

## **KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED BY A SALES PERSON**

This knowledge includes company, product, market, competition and professional knowledge if he/she is to be competitive and successful

## I PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE

Salespeople should have the following knowledge about their products:

### ❖ Product history and development

Some products have been around for a long while so you need to let the customer know how it began. It builds confidence in the customer concerning product reliability and helps him/her know how successful the company is. Colgate, Homedent, Mubs and Team Business College

### ❖ Manufacturing process and quality control

The sales person needs to know how the product is produced, and how its quality is controlled. This helps in competing with people producing similar products. Rwenzori, Azur

### ❖ Product application

That is the uses of the product – both formal and informal. Formal use refers what the product is made to particularly do, and informal use refers to any use other than the formal one. Customers buy benefits/solutions to their problems, so the sales person should know them well enough. Mukwano cooking oil

### ❖ Product performance

How does the product perform in different situations? This helps the buyers judge the product well. The sales person should also know the limitations but be able to present them to the customer without causing bias. Heat, snow e.g. cameras

### ❖ Maintenance and care

What does it cost to maintain the product? Free, cds, refill of cartridges.

### ❖ Pricing and delivery terms

The buyer needs to know these in order to make preparations like budgeting. What discounts are available? Etc.

### Why is product knowledge important?

- a) Many products are extremely complex so the knowledge helps in providing assistance
- b) A variety of products exist. Knowledge about the products helps one to differentiate company products from competitors' products.
- c) It helps in satisfying the needs of customers
- d) Helps the sales person develop self-confidence, and also builds the confidence of the buyer
- e) Facilitates sales persons in answering objections to the product that arise due to incomplete or inaccurate information about the product or service
- f) Presenting sales appeals – one who knows the product well can easily appeal to customers
- g) Prospecting and qualifying customers – product knowledge helps in identification of possible customers and getting them to buy

### Sources of Product Knowledge

Company, product manuals, sales trainings and meetings, consumers, newspapers, external publications on trade products, continuous product evaluation, etc.

### NOTE:

### ❖ Product from the customer's perspective

Customers are trying to solve problems; they are benefit or profit-oriented. For example, customers who buy a laser printer and an electric drill are looking for the benefits on neat, professional looking reports and neat, round holes

### ❖ Selling Multiple Products

Product knowledge problem is compounded when salespeople must handle several product lines

### ❖ **Interaction with Other products**

Salespeople must know how products work together with other products, including those of other companies.

### ❖ **Knowledge about product service**

Post-sale service is an important part of the total product being considered for purchase by customers, so salespeople must be thoroughly informed about what customer services their customers expect and their companies offer

## **II COMPANY KNOWLEDGE**

### ❖ **Company history**

It provides perspectives and insights that will serve the salesperson well through his or her career. When did it start? Who owns it? Why was it started?

### ❖ **Growth and Development**

The company's record of growth in sales, market share, profits, and new products are often questions asked of salespeople by prospects and customers.

### ❖ **Company Organization**

New salespeople can learn a great deal about how management views the sales force by studying the sales force organization's structure – geography, product, function, markets, or some combination.

### ❖ **Mission Statement**

It describes the essence of the company's business and what it seeks to accomplish. It shows the values to which the company attaches importance. Values are stated in terms of the product, customers, etc.

### ❖ **Culture**

The set of formal and informal values that establish rules for dress, communication, and behavior

### ❖ **Goals and Objectives**

It outlines the long-run goals (qualitative) and short-run objectives (quantitative) that the organization seeks to achieve.

### ❖ **Strategies and Tactics**

A strategy is a total program of action for using the resources to achieve a goal; a tactic is a short-run, specific action that is part of the larger strategic plan.

### ❖ **Company Policies**

The predetermined decisions for handling recurring situations efficiently and effectively e.g. on pricing, delivery, promotion, etc.

### ❖ **Other necessary company information**

Information about other departments

Importance of the company to the country and society

Relationship between the company and its stakeholders

Key personnel in the organization

### **Why is company knowledge important?**

- a) The sales person is the point of contact between the customer and the sales person. The customer sees the sales person as a company
- b) A customer forms a mental image of the organization basing on his/her experience with the sales person.
- c) The decision to buy the product/service partly depends on the buyer's feelings about the company
- d) It is a strong appeal that can be used during the sales presentation, especially where the products are similar

- e) Buyers use past performance of a company to evaluate the quality of the current product offering. The sales person should translate the past performance of the company into buying appeals.

### **III MARKET KNOWLEDGE**

#### **❖ Demographic aspects**

Income and literacy levels, income, age, sex, marital status, etc.

#### **❖ Buying behavior and how it changes**

This helps in predicting the forecasting

#### **❖ Positioning of your product in the market**

Where does your product stand in the market?

#### **❖ Target market needs and how they change**

### **NOTE**

The sales person needs to understand the following:

- ❖ What are the company's present and future markets? Who are and will be its customers? How and why are these potential markets changing?
- ❖ Understanding Professional Buyers  
Professional buyers expect a salesperson to not only know their needs well, but also have keen knowledge about their customers' needs.  
Salespeople also need to know how their product is compatible with the buying organization's strategy, such as how does the product fit in with the customer's strategy and achievement of objectives.

### **IV KNOWLEDGE ABOUT COMPETITION**

- ❖ Competition is a great force in the market environment
- ❖ History and background of competitors
- ❖ Recent developments
- ❖ Product developments
- ❖ Marketing policies
- ❖ Technology
- ❖ Research and development
- ❖ Current customer profile
- ❖ Relationship between your company and the competitors
- ❖ Market share
- ❖ Marketing plans, objectives and strategies

#### **Why is knowledge about competition important?**

- a) To identify strengths and weaknesses of the company's products vis-à-vis competing products. Some products are so similar that it is hard to find differences between them.
- b) Enables sales people identify unique features especially if competition is on price
- c) Make it possible to identify non-price competition objectives e.g. after sales service, delivery, etc.
- d) It gives the sales person the ability to handle questions about competitors
- e) Customers want to know as much on competing products as we tell them about the company products

### **NOTE**

When using this information on competitors, salespeople must take caution to:

- a) Avoid making reference to competing products unless questioned
- b) Never discuss competitors unless you have all fact right
- c) Avoid criticizing competitors. Stick to facts and avoid emotional comments

### **V PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE**

- ❖ Selling techniques
- ❖ Team work
- ❖ Time management
- ❖ Customer care
- ❖ Understanding customer behavior
- ❖ Market knowledge and willingness to keep the buyer informed
- ❖ Imagination in applying products to the buyers' needs
- ❖ Knowledge of the buyer's product line
- ❖ Diplomacy in dealing with operating departments
- ❖ Preparation for well-planned sales calls
- ❖ Regularity of sales calls

Technical education