



Podcast #30 How to Earn Your Prospect's Trust and Win Sales

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Hi, It's Phyllis Mikolaitis, and I am delighted to share with you that we have reached a milestone. This is our 30th podcast. We want to share our experience and expertise, and we want to earn your trust as a resource. So, I thought it was a fitting topic to talk about building trust in this podcast. I've been researching to determine what are the essential skills and attributes of sellers who work with today's buyer 2.0. These buyers are bombarded with over 3,000 marketing messages in various mediums every day. Much of the information in those messages is conflicting and contradictory. So, it's a challenge to sort out the facts from the hype. Therefore, trust is a highly valued attribute. In fact, Brian Tracy says it now represents over 40% of the selling process model.

Look at it for a moment from the buyer's perspective. For him or her, making a buying decision is similar to being a contestant on the TV show, *The Amazing Race*. The contestant must gather the courage to move forward in some scary activity such as walking a rope footbridge. Each step toward the other side is made with great caution and often a fear of failure. The contestant must trust their partner, the situation and the show's producers with their success and safety. With the guidance and coaching of their partner along with envisioning the joy of reaching the other side, the contestant finds the courage to make the perilous walk. Likewise, the buyer approaches a purchase with similar trepidation and the successful salesperson knows how to build trust and guide the prospect to envision success.

Buyers are more knowledgeable today, but they still need to define precisely what they need and understand how it will integrate into their business. I remember my customer Bob at a major manufacturing company said, "I have to be sure this solution will work. I have two boys to put through college, and I can't afford to risk my job on anything that might not work." So, like it felt to Bob, the buying process feels unpleasant and stressful for your buyer. The higher the risk associated with the decision, the more critical it becomes for the buyer to make a purchase from someone he trusts.

To get beyond the prospect's defenses, the best salesperson has a path in mind for the prospect that begins with strategic pre-call planning. She acts as a guide on this path. She is agile and is prepared to make shifts based on additional information provided by the prospect, while still getting him to a successful conclusion.

A well-planned guidance strategy builds trust and leads the prospect to selling himself on the idea and then mentally justifying the solution. Let's look at the top ten ways you can build trust that leads to a sale.



1. Develop Patience

- a. Trust is built step-by-step not on one glitzy meeting with spellbinding words and presentations. Many sales training programs teach the rep to uncover needs or present insight and then present a solution. However, jumping to an answer before you have built trust will cause the prospect to put up defenses. The buyer's journey is an emotional one, and the salesperson must act as the guide that removes the fears and helps the prospect reach the goal. Whether you are selling a lower cost item with repeat business or a high dollar enterprise-wide solution, you want to build loyalty and become their trusted advisor. So, focus on long-term relationships.]

2. Be Honest and Demonstrate Integrity

- a. It's important to show you are honest and have integrity. Buyers want to know that you are not out to take advantage of them. When you respond with candor, it demonstrates to the prospect that you are worth engaging openly and truthfully about their challenges and aspirations. Telling the truth, even if you lose the deal shows honesty. Your reputation is at stake. People talk to one another in the industry and word of your honesty, or lack of it will get around. An incident of dishonesty would have a long-term economic impact on you.
- b. Keep your word, no matter how small the promise. Keeping it demonstrates your integrity.
- c. If you don't know the answer to a question, tell the prospect you don't know but will get back to them quickly with the information. Then return promptly with your response and any associated documentation to enhance and validate your reply.
- d. Don't exaggerate or set unrealistic expectations. If your solution doesn't fully meet their needs, say so. Discuss the importance of the need and then let the prospect decide on the solution. Be honest with them about the difficulties and challenges they will encounter implementing and executing your solution.
- e. The larger the deal, the more critical honesty, integrity, and trust become.

3. Make Them Feel Comfortable And Safe

- a. Deciding to make a change is scary and risky for people. Although survival is always paramount in our brain, we can create an environment of comfort. The emotional side of the brain reacts first, so connect emotionally and make them feel comfortable and safe with you. Christine Comaford, the author of *Smart Tribes*, says that "an emotionally engaging mission, vision, and values statement will help you get connected." Your



conversation must also communicate that you see the unique qualities of the buyer. Let the buyer know that you are in the situation together and you have similar interests. This approach will increase safety as well as develop trust. Once trust is established, the buyer can use the logical side of their brain to make a decision.

4. Be Reliable

- a. One aspect of building trust is proving that you are reliable. Deliver on your promises. So, call back when you agreed to call back. Do whatever you promise you are going to do. Remember, trust is an agreement. When you prove you are reliable, you are validating you keep your part of the deal.

5. Demonstrate you are knowledgeable

- a. You have to prove to the prospect that you are knowledgeable and competent. Respond to their questions with complete and accurate information. Provide insights and in-depth information to attest you are skilled in the areas related to the product or service you are representing.

6. Reduce the Risk of Failure

- a. Customers fear failure. There is always a risk when working with a new vendor or buying a new product or service. When you ask the prospect to take a leap of faith, they want to be assured that they are not going to fall.
- b. Taking the first step on that rope ladder to the new product or service is not as scary when you build trust that you will not let the prospect fall or fail. It's critical you ask the right questions and confirm your understanding of the prospect's challenges and aspirations so that you can recommend the right solution. This characteristic links back to having the patience to be sure you have all of the details before making a recommendation.

7. Demonstrate transparency

- a. Today, prospects and customers look for transparency. That applies to everything you do, not just the financials as dictated by laws such as Sarbanes Oxley. Communicate you will be a good steward of their finances and the prospect's vulnerability. Back up anything you say with facts. Case studies, testimonials, and industry articles are helpful in establishing transparency.
- b. Don't hide from complaints and admit to any mistakes you or your company have made. Then make every effort to make things right or show how the company took action to make it right.
- c. Let prospects know who you are as a person. They want to work with real people. So, post your bio and some stories on your website. If you go to our website, you will find John, and I have posted our bios and several personal stories on our website.



Be Consistent and Follow Process

- d. Follow the sales process and don't jump ahead and pressure the prospect to make a decision. Remember, I said, they expect to be guided to a conclusion. People feel comfortable when there are processes and consistency. People develop expectations in their interactions with you.
 - e. For example, our listeners expect that we follow a process in our podcasts and that we post transcripts and free tools on our website. For example, we published a free podcast on the steps to creating business stories that have an impact. We described each of the storytelling steps in the podcast, and then we provided a worksheet and a free eBook to help listeners create their own business stories. Next, we offered a free webinar to answer questions and help people evaluate their story. Our consistency and process developed trust and continued engagement.
8. Create A Vision With Stories
- a. It is also essential to create a vision by painting a picture with words. That's why storytelling works so well in selling. People get excited when they can envision an opportunity or solving a problem. Stories spark their imagination and take them to places in their mind they haven't been before.
 - b. Stories about the success of other companies create a can-do feeling and move the sale forward. A story of how you helped other companies reach their goals builds the prospect's confidence and trust in you. When you tell this type of story, you are indirectly selling yourself as an expert and trusted advisor.
9. Listen And Take Notes
- a. The Greek philosopher Epictetus said, "We were born with two ears and one mouth, so we can listen twice as much as we speak" Listening attentively and reflectively earns the right to hear the truth about the prospects aspirations and challenges. The prospect must come to believe that you understand him. Listening to the prospects words and observing body language will allow you to understand what is said and what is unsaid. Confirming and validating what you have understood, gives the prospect the experience of being listened to.
 - b. Many salespeople think they can wing it. They think they are focusing on the conversation and will remember the facts. However, there are two facts to counter this thought. First, if you make multiple calls a day, that is hundreds of calls per year. You can't possibly remember the details of every call. Second, customers notice if a salesperson doesn't take notes.



Lack of note-taking signals the prospect that what he or she says is not important.

- c. Take notes, not dictation. That means to write down the pertinent facts and validate them with the prospect. You can take notes in a journal, notebook, on your tablet, or laptop. Always confirm with the prospect that you want to make notes to be sure you get all the details. Moreover, you don't want to waste her time asking for the same information. You also want to ensure you are following the right path to a solution.
- d. Use the information you obtain. After the call, put the dates for activities and follow-up calls in your calendar and transcribe your notes into your sales management system. You can use the notes to ensure you complete your action items and to refresh your memory before the next call.

When you have demonstrated these characteristics, prospects will show enthusiasm for you and your solution, and they'll commit to moving forward in the buying process.

People buy from people they trust. When a prospect decides to go with you, they are showing they trust you and your company. Without trust, there will be no sale.

Well, that wraps up our podcast for today. I wish you good luck and if you have questions, don't hesitate to contact us.

Thanks to my business partner, producer and audio engineer John Switzer, for his excellent work with me on today's podcast. Join me next time when I'll share more hints and tips. I appreciate your feedback so please send your questions, comments or topic suggestions to me at Phyllis@salestrainingolutions.com.

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Watch for our FREE mini-course on Presentation Skills and Storytelling coming soon. As I said, it's absolutely Free and filled with tools, tips, and resources to help you achieve success.

Bye-Bye for now!