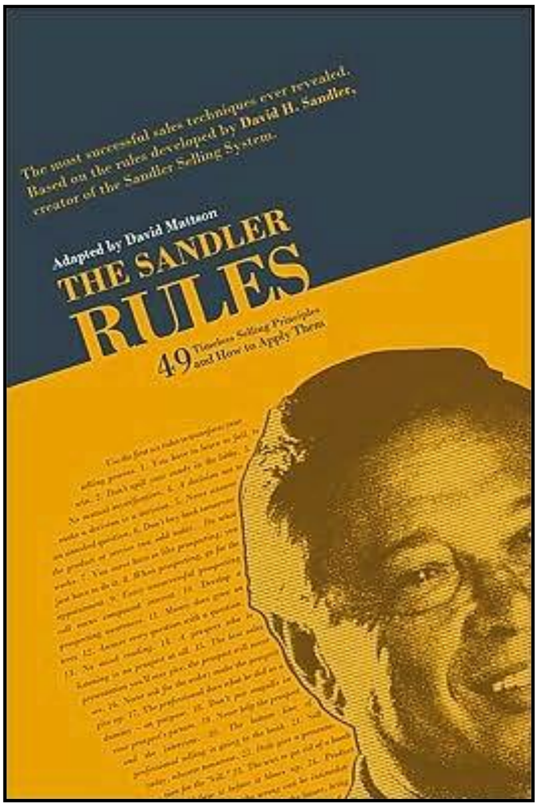
49 Timeless Selling Principles and How to Apply Them

THE SANDLER RULES



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THE SANDLER RULES

49 Timeless Selling Principles and How to Apply Them

MAIN IDEA

"People make buying decisions emotionally . . . and they justify those decisions intellectually." – David Sandler Sandler's quotation is widelyknownand used every day. The underlyinghuman relations model he used to develop this quote and the 49 Rules which make up his sales methodology states every person has three ego states which dictate and influence behavior:

1. The Parent ego state – the part of us where information is stored about what is good and bad, desirable or otherwise.
2. The Adult ego state – the logical, analytical and rational part of our minds.
3. The Child ego state – the emotional part of our intellectual makeup where many of our decisions originate.

A sale will only happen when you get all three of those ego states in sync and in agreement:

• When the Parent says: "Okay, this seems like the right thing to do. You have my permission."

• When the Adult says: "After weighing all the pros and cons, this makes good logical sense. Go ahead."

• When the Child says: "Yes, that's definitely what I want".

The 49 Rules are all about bringing about that kind of alignment and agreement between the three ego states in your prospects.

About of Author

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The Web site for this book is at www.sandler.com

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The Sandler Rules 1 Core Concepts

Rules 1 - 6 are the core concepts of the Sandler System and can be used to transform your selling process.

1 You have to learn how to fail first before you can learn how to consistently win

When it comes to sales, failure can a positive experience. Defeats, setbacks and losses can teach you what not to do and what needs to be changed and improved in the future. To get and maintain this perspective on failure, you will need to differentiate between the real you and the role you play as a salesperson. The real you is defined by your sense of self worth. When you fail in your professional role, that is not a reflection on the real you. It's a course correction for the role you play as a salesperson. Don't take failure personally but learn and move on.

2 Never "spill your candy in the lobby" – don't share too much information too soon

Many salespeople give away too much information too soon. They are fired up to share their knowledge and experience and unload whenever an opening arises. Unfortunately, doing that is highly counterproductive.

During the initial phases of the sales process, your emphasis should be on getting the prospect to speak rather than on dumping everything you know on them. Ask questions and gather information. Get to understand the prospect's situation and challenges. Determine if what you have to offer is a good fit before you drop off your information, proposals and marketing materials. Gather enough facts so you can qualify the opportunity. If you can genuinely help the prospect, there will be plenty of time later to make presentations. At first contact, you should be asking questions and listening rather than talking. Your job is to get information, not to give it.

3 Don't merely hear what you want to hear – Find out for certain what people are thinking

Sometimes, salespeople are guilty of having "happy ears". They hear only what they want to hear from the prospect. When someone contacts them, they automatically assume that person is ready to buy at the drop of a hat and all they need to do is dump on the prospect everything they know. They assume the prospect will then be enthusiastic and eager to buy.

Obviously this approach to the sales process is all wrong. It's built on misplaced optimism and selective rather than objective hearing. The salesperson's job is really to:

■ Determine what the prospect's expectations and goals are.
■ Help define any ambiguous terms or phrases the prospect has heard but does not understand.
■ Tie up all the loose ends and keep the prospect moving forward towards a purchase decision.

Savvy salespeople don't fall into the trap of having happy ears. Instead, they make it a practice to say things like: "OK, let me quickly recap what we've been discussing to make certain we're all on the same page on the way ahead."

4 … Tell prospects it's better they say "No" straight away rather than saying "I'll think it over"

There's nothing worse than having a prospect say: "I need to think about it." There's no way forward from that position. More often than not, when someone says they want to "think about it", this is simply their polite way of saying "No" without hurting your feelings.

To avoid this, tell prospects right at the outset you will ask them for a decision. Tell them you hope they will say "Yes" but you'd much rather they came right out and said "No" if that is the case. Tell them "No" is OK from your perspective. By giving your prospects permission to say "No", they will be less inclined to try and hide behind any form of "think-it-over" terminology. And the sooner they come right out and say "No", the sooner you can move on to the next prospect who may buy.

5 … Never answer a prospect's "unanswered questions" – don't bring up elements they haven't mentioned

When giving a formal presentation on your product or service, be careful you address only the concerns and issues which have been previously tagged for discussion. Don't use this as a fishing expedition where you try and answer every conceivable concern the customer may have. Not only is that too much to achieve but if you're not careful, you can end up introducing new elements which stop the sale dead in its tracks.

Stay on target. Don't keep bringing up new elements and discussing them just on the off chance the prospect was worried about them. It will be counterproductive to answer unasked questions.

6 … Defuse "buyer's remorse" by always giving customers a chance to back out before the deal goes ahead

There's nothing worse than having to buy back from your prospect tomorrow the product or service you sold today. Buyer's remorse can be a real problem if you operate on the usual sales imperative to get the order and then get out of there as fast as you can.

Instead of attempting to trap the prospect into buying, a better idea is to make certain the buyer is 100 percent happy about the proposed sale before the deal is signed. How do you do that? Rather than reviewing all the positives of the deal, give them a chance to back out of the deal before the purchase agreement is signed. Encourage the prospect to take a good hard look at the decision and confirm they want to move ahead. Doing this has three definite advantages:

1. It enhances your credibility – and demonstrates definitively you are highly confident your product or service will do what you say it will.

2. This approach creates an opportunity for the customer to express any second thoughts in a no-pressure environment – which has the effect of defusing any unseen pressures mounting later on.

3. This also allows you to address any real concerns – you can deal with potential problems while you are still face-to-face rather than scrambling to try and save the deal later on. Dealing with problems when face-to-face is always more effective than having to rely on later follow-ups.

The Sandler Rules **2** **Execute**

Rules 7 - 33 are the heart and soul of executing your sales process. You have to do what works.

7 Nobody says you have to like prospecting – you just have to do it

Prospecting is the art and practice of identifying those people who need your product or service. It works better if you keep your mind focused on that goal. If you get concerned about how many people you look at who aren't qualified or interested, you can easily get discouraged. Don't fall into that trap.

At its heart prospecting is a selection activity and nothing more. You have to prospect consistently well. This is all part and parcel of the sales process so prospect consistently. Every salesperson on the planet does this.

8 When prospecting, go for the appointment – don't try to give your entire sales pitch

When you are prospecting, keep reminding yourself you're not trying to make an immediate sale. Don't fall into the trap of trying to deliver a "sales pitch" to everyone you come into contact with. Prospecting is not selling – you're merely proposing to set an appointment where you can sit down and talk through some interesting ideas.

If you go for an appointment rather than attempting to make a sale with each prospecting call, the pressure will lift. You're not trying to solve the person's problems because you don't know what they are yet. All you're trying to do is create an opportunity to look at how you might have something to offer which will be of benefit. If they're open minded and agree to meet with you, then you've achieved all the prospecting is about.

9 … Use your unsuccessful prospecting contacts to improve the next call you make

The undeniable fact is when prospecting, you will have more unsuccessful calls than you will have successful calls. That's OK. Some people won't be a good fit for what you have to offer and others won't be aware enough to realize how badly they need what you have.

If you set a goal to learn something from each unsuccessful call, then prospecting becomes an exercise in business process improvement. The more unsuccessful calls you make and learn from, the better equipped you will be to achieve success in the future. As you apply what you learn from each call to subsequent calls, you can become very good at prospecting. You can even develop a prospecting call which preempts the most frequent objections you are likely to hear and start a new conversation.

A good prospecting approach is: "If you are like most business owners, as soon as I mention _______ you will tell me, 'We're already working with someone' or 'We're covered'. I respect that, but would ask: Are you willing to put those on the shelf for two minutes while I explain why I called and then decide if there is a reason for us to get together in person to talk further?" By bringing up the most likely response yourself and signaling you're not afraid of it you create an opportunity for getting together face-to-face, which is what you want.

10 … Develop awareness – prospect anyone you interact with and they may turn out to be interested

"Suspects" are anyone you might be able to sell your product or service to. "Prospects" are people you have contacted who have shown interest in talking with you further about what you sell. You should keep on your toes at all times because anyone you talk to during the course of your day is a suspect and could actually turn out to be a prospect if you handle things the right way.The simple fact is suspects who are about to turn into prospects look exactly the same as suspects who are about to say "No". You just never know. Keep sifting through the big pool of suspects until you have enough prospects to keep your sales funnel full. Initiate the kind of conversations which will separate the prospects from the suspects.

11 … Money does grow on trees – if you take the time and effort to build a referral tree

Referrals are the best way to grow your business. If you're working smart rather than working hard, you will make it easy for your existing customers to refer their friends. Get into the habit of writing or e-mailing your customers and asking them for referrals. Then contact them again to thank them when the person buys. Build an ongoing stream of referrals and your sales volumes will increase.

12 Answer every question with a question – so you can figure out the prospect's intent

Most people are reluctant to ask a real question up-front. Instead, they will pose a "smoke-screen" question which sounds good. If you answer those smoke-screen questions immediately, all you achieve is you box yourself in.

With this in mind, whenever a prospect asks a question, you should answer their first question with a question of your own. Seek clarification of the real issue behind what they say. Or even ask them directly why they are wondering about that. Once you do that, you can then get to work answering the real question they have in a constructive way.

13 Don't be a mind reader – never assume you know what people are thinking without asking

Salespeople in general are often guilty of "mind reading". The prospect says something and you assume all kinds of things, like they are ready to go ahead and place an order. That's a problem because it can send you off onto all kinds of different tangents and side-roads.

Whenever a prospect says something vague or uncertain, instead of assuming you know what they're getting at you should ask for an explanation. When they say something, ask them:

- "And you're telling me that because..."
- "You must be telling me this for a good reason. What is it?"
- "Which means..."

By avoiding the mind reader trap and never assuming you know what the prospect is thinking, you can sidestep a wide range of misunderstandings. You can then deal with realities rather than chase ghost images or shadows. That will clearly be better than going off on tangents.

14 Get prospects talking – if they are just passively listening, they're not buying

A good sales presentation should feature you talking for about 30 percent of the time and the prospect talking for the remaining 70 percent. In most sales situations, those ratios get reversed as the salesperson waffles on about features, benefits, unique selling points, etc.

If the prospect honestly wants to know that stuff, he or she can visit yourWeb site and read it for themselves. Selling is not about "telling". It's more about helping the prospect relate your product or service to their needs. That happens when the prospect is asked thought-provoking questions and you then listen to their answer and respond. The more the prospect talks, the less selling that's going on.

"You can lose a sale by talking too much. But you'll never, ever lose a sale by listening too much."

– David Mattson

15 Help prospects discover for themselves why they should buy from you

The best sales presentation you can ever give helps the prospect discover for himself the reasons why he should buy from you. You do this by asking questions rather than making a presentation which educates the customer. A question-and-answer dialogue is always going to be far more effective in making the sale than any presentation you might attempt to give.

How do you do this? Start your presentation with: "Typically, when I discuss production efficiencies with owners of manufacturing facilities like yours, they are interested in increasing production throughput or decreasing production costs. Which, if either of these, matters most to you?" The prospect will choose OptionA or Option B. You then say: "Tellme about that." You then identify the positive outcome you can provide and formulate questions which lets the prospect discover how to connect those outcomes with what you have to offer. Once the prospect has figured out it makes sense to work with you, your actual presentation will then be viewed by them with a whole new level of interest.

16 Never ask for the order – make the prospect give up searching for alternatives

Traditionally, salespeople have been told to ask for the order often and openly. That's all well and fine, but if you have to ask for the order, then doing business is not a mutual decision.

A much better approach is to treat the prospect as an equal business partner. Discuss options and pose questions until you narrow down to the solution they want the most. Then you need to steer the conversation to where the prospect realizes it is in his or her best interests to give up the search for other alternatives. Instead, you want them to feel so comfortable they ask: "OK, all of that makes good sense. I can see this would be good for me. How do we get started?"

For this to happen, you must have established rapport and a degree of trust. The request then becomes an open discussion between two professionals rather than a charged situation where the salesperson is going in for the kill by posing killer closes.

17 Act like a dummy on purpose – so the prospect does 70 percent of the talking

Don't be afraid to ask "dumb" questions that get the prospect talking. That's good – it's exactly what you want to happen. New salespeople naturally ask dumb questions when they first start out because they don't know much but later they start trying to show off their product knowledge instead and end up doing most of the talking. Remember, the goal is to try and get the prospect to do 70 percent of the talking.

If someone complains to you, pause and say: “Okay. Is it over?” Then wait for them to respond. What they say next will tell you what you have to do to keep moving forward.

18 Pitch ideas indirectly – make it possible for the prospect to discover the need for change themselves

Every prospect has a mental picture of what their needs are before they talk with you. If you try and make alterations to their mental picture – even with the best of intentions – all you end up doing is making them uncomfortable. You give them a reason to mistrust you. Therefore, you have to indirectlymake suggestions and let the prospect discover the need for themselves and come up with suggested fixes.

Say to prospects: “Okay, I see what you’re getting at. You didn’t mention ____. Would that be of value if it was included?” If they agree, you can say “Why is that?” to let them graft in the new stuff themselves. If they aren’t favorable, say: “I didn’t think so” and move on to something else.

19 If ending a sales call without success, ask what you could have done differently to make the sale

You aren’t going to make every sale. Instead of bailing and running, try and make an effort to figure out what went wrong. Get the uncomfortable feelings out in the open. Say: “You seem skeptical we can deliver what we say. It must be something I have said or done. Am I correct? Do you want to talk about it?”

By raising the issue and putting the ball in the prospect’s court, they can then respond and point out where you went wrong. You can then find a way to get things moving forward again or decide to terminate the discussion. At the very least, you’ll learn more about the prospect and what you can do better in the future.

20 Never forget the bottom line of professional selling is to make a sale and go to the bank

You’re not in sales to make a friend. Nor are you there to develop a relationship, to educate the prospect or establish credibility. Those are all things that hopefully will happen as part of the process but they are not the focus of what you’re doing. Your goal in calling on prospects is to close sales.

Invest your time in activities which take you closer to making the sale. Sales success is always measured in dollars. No prizes are given out for having “the best relationships” or “building the most goodwill for your firm”. Those are nice by-products of your professionalism but it is only sales that count. Work at learning what you have to do to make more sales and then get out and apply what you learn. Learn how to spend less time with tire kickers and more time working with people who can and should buy what you have to offer.

21 Sell today – and worry about "educating" the prospect at some future time

Don't get sucked into giving a seminar on every bell and whistle your product offers. That's nice but it's irrelevant. When you're selling, what your product does is of minor consequence. What's all important is uncovering the prospect's pain you're trying to address. If you're too busy delivering a monologue, you won't find that out.

Selling requires a dialogue. You ask questions about specifics and listen carefully. There will be tons of time for educating later on. At this stage, ask lots of questions to determine what the prospect needs. The more they talk, the more opportunities you have to position your product in their mind advantageously. Make it your goal to find out under what conditions or circumstances they would actually buy from you.

22 Only give a sales presentation when you're serious about making a sale today

The only time you can and should give a sales presentation is when you have already determined:

- The prospect is fully qualified and authorized to make a "yes" or "no" decision.
- You know the prospect's needs and goals in some detail.
- The prospect has the resources they are willing to invest in a solution to their problems.
- Your product or service is a best-fit solution to their problems.
- The prospect has agreed he or she will make a decision at the conclusion of your presentation.

If any of these elements are missing, keep laying the groundwork first. Don't give a presentation until you're ready and able to sell.

23 Defuse bombs early on – always try and bring up tricky issues before the prospect does

If there is some objection you fully expect the prospect to bring up at some stage of your presentation, get it on the table early on rather than later. Bring up the problem yourself and start working on potential solutions as soon as possible.

Doing this not only enhances your professionalism but also allows you to demonstrate to the prospect you're looking out for his or her interests. You control the timing and not vice-versa.

24 Don't sabotage sales with your expertise – use your superior product knowledge sparingly

Do you honestly think prospects are going to buy from you because of your superior product knowledge? Wrong. The fact you know so much can be intimidating to people who don't know the buzzwords, the technical terms or the industry jargon. If you make prospects feel uncomfortable, then they are much less likely to make an emotion driven decision to buy what you offer.

Product knowledge is good. It makes you feel more confident and more comfortable, but if you show off that knowledge in front of customers, all you're going to do is end up confusing them or at the very least making them put off a decision. Think about what you say, keep it short and orient everything from the perspective of someone who has no experience whatsoever in your field.

25 Use the "let's pretend" approach to avoid doing lots of preliminary work for nothing

At times, a prospect will say: "I really like what you're suggesting. Can you do some groundwork and present your findings at our next meeting." If you agree, all you end up doing is loads of preliminary work for free on the faintest hope they will be persuaded to go ahead as a result of all your fine efforts. Most often, that will mean you end up doing lots of preliminary work for no gain whatsoever.

A better idea is next time someone says that, you should state:
"I'd be happy to start working on that. Let's pretend that I come back with a preliminary plan for implementation, that you're comfortable with the approach and it falls within your budget. What would happen at that point?" Get the prospect to agree they will make a commitment to move forward if the groundwork looks good. If they won't agree to do anything, then it will be a waste of time to do the groundwork. Or you may consider charging them a consulting fee for the work you do.

26 Always remember people buy in spite of your hard sell and not because of it

A "hard sell" presentation mentions:
• The features and benefits of your product or service.
• Your company's history and reputation.
• Customer testimonials, etc.

All of this stuff is nice but in reality, these are your reasons for selling what you sell. What you should be focusing on is what problems you can solve for your customer. You need to get them talking about their potential reasons to buy what you offer and their criteria for choosing one company over another. That's what you need to be discussing. By all means mention the unique things you bring to the table but center everything on their needs and interests, not yours.

27 You can't sell anything – people have to discover for themselves they want what you have to offer

People hate being told what they have to do – which is what usually happens when a salesperson issues a "call to action". It's like when your parents told you to eat your vegetables. Your natural reaction is to say: "I don't think so".

A much more productive approach is to say: "Many of our customers have found _______ What would that mean to you?" By relating a third-person story and then allowing the prospect to discover the benefits and advantages of what you offer in this way, you build the case for them to move forward. Or more correctly, you allow the prospect to build their own case. That will be far more persuasive and effective than asking them to "eat their vegetables" because you say so.

The best wayto prepare for a sales presentation is to develop the questions you can ask which will help your prospect discover the value of those benefits for themselves. Your presentation – as such – should consist of you asking those questions and adding in some pertinent third-party stories. Let the prospect own the discovery process and uncover the advantages and benefits for themselves. This will always be more persuasive and more influential than giving them an hour long presentation about the proper uses and benefits of your product or service.

28 When customers reprimand you, fall back – surrender up front and work on solutions

If a customer is upset about something, don't fight back. Surrender. Say something like: "I realize you're upset about the delivery delay. Rather than explain about the events beyond our control that caused that, I imagine you've made up your mind never to do business with us again. Would that be a fair statement?"

By doing that, you take the wind out of their sails and defuse the emotions of the moment. Once that happens, you can then start working together to come up with a workable solution. Instead of focusing on hostility, everyone can work together to develop a way to move forward which will provide benefits to all.

29 Always be professional – which means the meter is always running

When you become friends with someone, there is a natural tendency to start blurring the lines between what you fo for free and what you do for a fee. That's a problem because all those "little favors" have a way of adding up. To avoid that, maintain a professional demeanor. Make it clear you are a professional salesperson first and foremost and you will always treat them as well as you possibly can.

Professionalism is a two-way street. Don't assume that you can make minor changes to the customer's order on the basis of your friendship either. Treat your newest customer the same way you would treat your best friend. By all means do good things for them but keep the relationship professional. And if that isn't possible, give someone else in your organization responsibility for that account.

30 You can't lose what you don't already have so replaced stalled sales with fresh prospects

Often salespeople hold on to stalled sales opportunities like they were gold. There is a tendency to avoid moving on when sales opportunities don't pan out and the sales process drags on. Some salespeople have a scarcity mentality and therefore try and keep bogged down sales processes running rather than risk “alienating the prospect” by moving on to fresh opportunities. It’s not at all unusual to hear:

- “I believe this sale will happen eventually.”
- “If I were to antagonize this person, they would immediately go to my competitor and do a deal.”

While hoarding prospects is alluring, the reality is you’re far better off letting go of any prospects who don’t measure up. When the sales process stalls, get to work replacing the prospect with someone better placed to make an immediate decision. Plunge into your prospecting activities today rather than wasting your time and energy on a poor quality prospect whois unlikely to buy anyway. And if that prospect ends up going to your competitor, then feel good about that. It frees you up to find someone better and it presents your competitor with a ticking time bomb they will have to worry about themselves at some point in the future.

“You can’t lose a sale you haven’t completed. The only thing you risk by addressing the prospect’s delaying tactics is the ‘risk’ of uncovering the truth.”

– David Mattson

31 Always be prepared to close the sale or close the file

Salespeople are lauded if they “never take no for an answer”. That’s wrong. There comes a point where you must either make the sale or else close the file and move on. And generally speaking, you will know intuitively when that point has been reached.

If you keep pushing for a “yes”, you’re ignoring the reality what you have to offer may not be a good fit for that prospect. You may be wasting your time because you’re trying to address the wrong problem or achieve a result the prospect doesn’t really value highly at all.

For what you have to offer to be a good fit, it must:
- Have a level of investment the prospect can afford to pay.
- Deliver what the prospect values the most.
- Meet a time frame the prospect requires.

If you can’t deliver that, take “no” for an answer and move on.

32 Get into the habit of always procuring an I.O.U. for everything you do

To make a sale, you’ve got to do lots of preparation work. That’s all well and fine but help your customers take notice of all the effort you’re putting in. Help them see this is not “free”.

Any time you do something above and beyond the call of duty, make it clear you’ve had to rearrange some previous commitments to free up time. Every time you do that, you’re in effect creating an I.O.U. you will want to bring up when it comes time to make a decision.

33 Always keep your eyes open whenever you're presented with a "done deal"

Bankable deals have a wayof becoming unraveled. Even whena purchase order has been received, the order processed and the goods delivered, things can still go wrong. All kinds of internal developments can arise unexpectedly to derail proceedings. There's not much you can do about this reality but you should be aware of it and plan accordingly.

The list of potential spanners in the works is long:
■ Another decision maker or a committee may veto the original decision to buy.
■ The incumbent supplier may have a contractual right to better your offer.
■ People higher up in the organization may put the purchase on hold for one of a limitless number of reasons, both logical and illogical.
■ Your buyermay get reassigned to a newposition elsewhere in the organization.

Try and look at where you've struck these kinds of problems in the past and address these issues before the final sale is made. If there is even the slightest possibility a problem will arise, discuss it and find some workable and realistic way to eliminate that potential barrier. It's far better to find out the sale you assumed was "closed" is in jeopardy earlier rather than later. The sooner you find out about it, the more time you have available to do something about it. Look for ways you can recognize the warning signs earlier next time around.

The Sandler Rules 3 Course-Correct

Rules 34 - 49 are all about reminding yourself of those principles which are all too easy to forget.

34 Work smart, not hard – and stop cheating yourself out of the income you should be getting

To work hard at having a successful sales career is great but you also need to be smart. Instead of making the same mistakes over and over, you need an efficient sales system which will enable you to identify good prospects, develop a relationship with them and develop worthwhileselling opportunities.A smart system will have criteria in each of these areas and if that criteria is not met, you move on to another opportunity which is more viable.

You work smart when you develop benchmarks and then do whatever is needed to progressively improve your performance on those benchmarks.

35... Never do what your competition is already doing – come up with a unique game plan instead

You probably already know what your competitors do. Find something you can do which will be different and ideally unique. Make a list of what you can offer that your competition does not, rank that list from your customer's perspective and then get to work adding value. There's always something you can do to add value. You're a professional so figure it out.

36... Never lose sight of the fact only a decision maker can get others to make their own decisions

Sellers make only the one decision – to buy or not to buy. You, on the other hand, make loads of decisions along the way to a sale. You have to decide whether a prospect is qualified, whether they are worth the investment of your time and how what you have to offer adds value for the prospect.

The more quickly you make your decisions, the more pressure you will generate for prospects to make theirs. If you drag your feet, it will come as no surprise they ask for more time to "think it over". Be decisive and you earn the right to ask them to make a go/no-go decision as soon as possible.

37... Expect your prospects to lie all the time – that's what they will do

Prospects are less that completely candid and 100 percent truthful all the time. They will tell lies to:

• Protect themselves.
• Cover their vulnerabilities.
• Avoid having to admit something embarrassing.

To avoid being misled, you should always check what they say. Probe a little deeper and find out what the prospect really thinks before you jump. In particular:

■ When someone says they are the decision maker, ask who else plays a role in the decision and who has the power to veto any deal which is agreed.

■ If someone is eager to move quickly, quiz them about how soon they need to make a decision and what will be the consequences if that timetable is not met.

38... Never accept problems at face value – the problem the prospect brings you is never the real deal

When you ask a prospect about the cause of his or her problems and take their diagnosis at face value, you often end up going down a side road rather than dealing with the real issues. Why? Either the prospect is unable to realistically diagnose the cause of their problems or they say something that sounds good because they are too embarrassed to admit the true cause of their pain.

Therefore, your standing practice should be to use your own know-how to identify the true underlying problems and address those. Don't accept the prospect's own diagnosis. It is going to be almost always faulty.

39 When all else fails, move from being a salesperson to acting as a consultant instead

When you've come to the end of your sales process but the prospect is unwilling to go forward, you should try this approach: "Is it OK with you if I stop acting as a salesperson for a few minutes and instead become a consultant?" When the prospect agrees, you can then point out: "Here's the problem. I believe what I've shown you makes sense and solves some very real problems. It's obvious you don't agree.Howcan I tell you, without you becoming upset, that I'm concerned if you don't move forward all you end up doing is hurting your own bottom line?"

By going into consultant mode, you can give away some concepts, insights and expertise. You can then go back into salesperson mode to sell the implementation of those concepts. Plant the seed and fire the prospect's imagination as their consultant and then go ahead and sell the implementation.

40 Never send the message you "need a sale" – if necessary, fake it until you make it

If the prospect senses you desperately need to make a sale, they will automatically say "no". Your need will spook them. It's fine to want the sale to happen but problematic if you have to make a sale. To avoid that, always act as if you were financially independent and it doesn't matter whether you make the sale or not. If necessary, fake it until you are that way.

Always be confident and optimistic no matter what. If you do this, your mental state of mind will attract even more success. People will do business with you because they feel comfortable and not because of pity.

41 There's no such thing as a "bad" prospect – only bad salespeople

If you're not aware, you can get caught up in thinking: "This guy wouldn't buy an umbrella in the middle of a downpour." That's a joke. You should stand up and take responsibility. If the prospect is not prepared to buy, it's because you've done a poor job in convincing them, end of story.

Above all else, you want to learn from your mistakes so you can be better in the future. That won't happen if you blame external circumstances for the sale not happening. Accept responsibility for the failure and figure out what you need to do differently in the future to avoid a repeat. Use setbacks as an opportunity to sharpen your selling skills.

42 Winners always have alternatives whereas losers tend to put all their eggs in one basket

Don't try and script your sales calls by visualizing what the prospect will say. That's pointless and generates unnecessary pressure. Prospects always use their own script. You'll be better off if you identify some key points, map out some questions which will lead into each point and then respond appropriately to whatever the prospect says.

Having an internalized map like this is much better than memorizing a step-by-step script. It gives you flexibility and allows you to respond to the real concerns of the prospect.

43 The best way to learn how to get "yes" from prospects is by getting lots of "no"s first

If you can get a prospect to make a decision and definitively say "no" rather than "maybe" or "think-it-over", you're doing very well. Not only is every "no" taking you closer to the next "yes" but accepting a "no" frees you up to pursue more viable opportunities in the future.

You may even find more success by reversing your thinking. Start each day trying to get as many "no"s as possible and you will move into the winner's circle. It will also take the pressure off and make your job a lot of fun.

44 When it comes right down to it, don't be your own worst enemy

Many salespeople end up becoming their own worst enemies. They create roadblocks and detours which prevent them from being more successful and then try and blame others for these self-inflicted problems.

Take a look at why your prospects are saying "no" and ask: "What am I now doing differently to ensure this doesn't happen again in the future?" If you're doing nothing differently, get to work. Use your past experiences as indicators of the roadblocks you're likely to strike in the future and plan accordingly. Take responsibility to systematically stop these situations arising in the first place.

45 Become adept at using third-party stories to express your feelings in sales situations

Sometimes, when you're face-to-face with a prospect, you want to say something blunt to them you feel in your gut. It may not be appropriate to just blurt out what you're thinking, because that may offend them or get their backs up.

In these situations, become a storyteller instead. Talk about a third-party which was in a similar situation and the solution they utilized. Describe in vivid detail how everything worked out and then leave it to the prospect to draw their own conclusions as to how that story applies to them. This is a subtle and professional wayto share your feelings in a waywhich strengthens rather than dilutes the relationship.

You might even consider developing a series of written third-party stories you are familiar with and which you can recount in your own words whenever the need arises.

46 In selling, there is no such thing as a "good try" or any other weasel words

What counts in sales is what you do. You either do the right things that will make you productive or you do not. There is no half-way "try" or "experiment". Actions speak louder than words.

You either schedule the right activities and do them or you don't. There is no in-between state. When the outcome is important, leave "try" out of the equation and do the right stuff.

47 Selling requires that you remain objective at all times – getting emotionally involved is fatal in sales

Buying is an emotional experience for the prospect, but it should not be an emotional experience for you. Rather, you need to keep your composure and be a little bit detached from the emotional roller coaster that is selling. If you can't contain your emotions and maintain objectivity, it's likely you will sell a lot less than you should be.

During the sales process, take something of a third-party position. Understand the human dynamics involved but never lose sight of the big picture. Look at what's happening from the perspective of an unaffected observer. Direct the play and make sure the right things happen. Retain your objectivity, even when the prospect starts acting erratically, and you will be in the best position possible to make the sale happen.

48 Recognize a life without risk is a life without growth

Never stop learning how to do better. Keep reaching and improving. The only guarantee in business is things change so you can't afford to cling to the status quo as a professional salesperson.

Growth will require that you take some risks professionally and personally. Welcome that opportunity, even with its attendant problems and challenges. Figure out where you've got into the habit of coasting and set some stretch goals in those areas and get to work. You have to keep moving forward at all times if you aspire to be a long-term success in sales.

49 Remember transactional analysis – and always leave your child ego in the car when you are selling

Transactional analysis suggests each person is a composite of three ego states – Parent (which must give permission), Adult (which must understand the logic) and Child (which must want the same to happen emotionally). Your Child ego plays no part in the sales process and must be kept out of the reckoning at all times. If you "kick and scream" or "throw your toys out of the cot" because things aren't going your way, you'll get nowhere.

Ensure everything you do as a professional salesperson is guided by good logic rather than an emotional assessment of the situation.

"Put the Sandler Rules to work. Employ these concepts until they become second nature. Make the Sandler Rules something you do, not just something you know."

– David Mattson

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