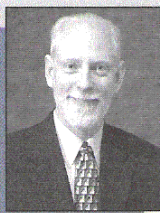


Master Salesmanship™

The Guide to Superior Selling Techniques

"Not only are scalpers selling, but they're also buying or receiving free tickets so they can sell them at higher prices."



What Salespeople Can Learn From Scalpers

By Frank Felsburg,
Sales Trainer, Cogent Training
and Consulting LLC

You see them at every major sporting event you attend. You hear them, too. "Who needs tickets?" they say. And then, before you've even passed them, they change gears and say, "Who's selling tickets?"

You ask yourself, "Are they selling or buying?" Then you realize the answer is "Both." Not only are scalpers selling, but they're also buying or receiving free tickets so they can sell them at higher prices.

Even though scalping is illegal, it goes on all the time. In many ways, it's a microcosm of the "Big Board," the New York Stock Exchange and the world we live in. Supply meets demand and a transaction takes place.

But did you ever stop and negotiate with a scalper? As soon as you ask, "How much?" even if just to test the waters, the negotiations begin. You think they only have two or three tickets but it turns out they have a whole inventory. And they know their inventory well.

"Whatta ya need?" they ask quickly, probing effectively. An excellent opening salvo. A good open-ended question, used to gather information. The ball's now in your court. How do you respond? Depending on the event, you could go right for the prime seats, but if you do, you can expect to pay big bucks and scalpers don't take checks or credit cards.

"What've you got?" you ask inquisitively, eyes wide open like a kid in a candy store. A good retort, keeping the dialogue going and getting the seller to put his or her cards, or in this case tickets, on the table.

What you hear next almost makes you want to cry (either in amazement or from disappointment). The scalper rattles off a whole panoply of different seats or sections, some of them you would only dream of, while others are no better than what you already have.

Seeing your eyes light up when he or she mentions seats "on the 50-yard line," "mid-court," "right behind the penalty box" or "on the first base line right behind the [team name]'s dugout," the scalper now has you doing mental gymnastics. Emotion has taken over. It has trumped rationale and, for a moment, you're back at the office reliving every single play with your colleagues, bragging about where you sat for the big game.

"How much?" you ask, as if rationale had anything to do with buying game tickets. The price is high (you knew it would be) but because the scalper has shown you the value, despite the cost, the deal is consummated.

Then the thought occurs to you, "What do I do with the cheap seat tickets I came with?" So, you decide to try to sell them to the scalper you just bought the tickets from, but it's like selling ice cubes to eskimos. Sure, you may get a few bucks for them, but the scalper already has a supply of tickets that will last halfway through the game.

It didn't take this "salesman" long to realize the five main rules of closing sales: 1) establish a recognized need, 2) have a viable solution, 3) the value must justify the cost, 4) create a sense of urgency for the product and 5) the prospect should have the authority to buy.

The Main Rules: Broken Down

Let's take a look at each one of these individually:

1. Establish a recognized need. In his or her needs assessment, the scalper determined that you have a need. The need in this instance was to feel closer to the action. If the scalper had pointed out what you already knew, that the seats you had were in a different hemi-

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“The prospect should feel that it makes sense to buy sooner rather than later. In other words, there should be some sort of incentive.”

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sphere than where the game was being played, he or she would have turned a want into a need.

2. Have a viable solution. In this case, the scalper was providing a guaranteed way for you to gain closer proximity to the game. If the game was sold out and you didn't have a ticket, anywhere in the house would be closer to the live action than out in the parking lot.

3. The value must justify the cost. The scalper knows as well as anyone how big a game it is. The cost of the item should be less than the perceived benefit of possessing the product or service. Although the scalper, as an “independent contractor,” has the flexibility to charge whatever he or she wants, you can be sure the price will be higher than the face value.

4. Create a sense of urgency for the product. The prospect should feel that it makes sense to buy sooner rather than later. In other words, there should be some sort of incentive.

5. The prospect should have the authority to buy. The prospect needs to be in a position to either a) make the decision or b) have access to the person who can make the decision. You might even say the scalper turned a latent or hidden need into an active need.

Now, back to the parking lot. As soon as the scalper rings up your sale, he or she is back at it. “Who needs tickets? Any extra tickets?” he or she asks confidently, knowing that with the anticipation of the game at hand, the sense of urgency is increasing every second.

Frank Felsburg is a sales trainer with Cogent Training and Consulting LLC. He can be reached at 610-938-2616 or via e-mail at ffelsburg@comcast.net. Cogent's Web site is www.cogenttraining.com. ■

Sales Talk: Are You Really Listening?

It's a myth that sales reps are always verbal and outgoing. Good listeners often outsell talkers. Consider these tips on increasing your listening skills.

- ✓ **Don't monopolize the conversation.** Get the prospect to talk instead, and pay close attention to cues about his or her concerns and needs. Try to talk only 30 percent of the time and get the prospect to do the rest of the talking.
- ✓ **Try not to judge the speaker.** Listen for the message behind a customer's words and gestures instead of focusing on his or her pencil twirling, twitches and other eccentricities. Read the gestures as well as you can, but pay more attention to underlying concerns.
- ✓ **Pay close attention.** Try using a small notepad to take down essential concerns your prospect is sharing. When he or she is finished speaking, rephrase the concerns and ask if there are any others.
- ✓ **Don't be impatient to get your turn to talk.** If you show impatience, the prospect might stop before actually saying all he or she has on his or her mind. Stay with the speaker for as long as it takes. ■

Questions And Answers

Q: Have there been any studies conducted on the personal qualities of successful salespeople? What do they have that less successful ones don't?

A: There have been many studies on the qualities of successful salespeople which conclude that a successful salesperson should be people-oriented, hard-working, informed about the product and have a good personality. The problem with these studies is that other salespeople have these same qualities and they aren't successful.

We all know top producers who have terrible personalities and losers who work hard. One survey that makes the most sense was conducted by the New York Sales Executives Club. Here is a short summary:

Researchers found that when all the other qualities were the same, the “X-factor,” or success factor, always present in the successful salespeople was achievement drive, or the will to sell, coupled with persuasive ability, the ability to move the prospect convincingly.

Think of the top producers you know. They have more will to sell and more energy and enthusiasm for their work. They work harder but they get a personal satisfaction out of selling. Sure, they like to make money, but for them money is a sign of accomplishment, proof of personal achievement and recognition for a job well done.

Fortunately, persuasive ability is more easily learned than achievement drive. That's why training programs can help salespeople become more successful. ■