



## **Strategies: How to become that trusted adviser**

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Does anyone get tired of the buzzwords thrown around in the sales profession? For example, salespeople are told to be "trusted advisers" to prospects and clients. What does that really mean?

Webster's Dictionary defines trust as "assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something."

"Truth" is the key word here. How many prospects believe you're showing up to seek the truth and do the right thing for them? Think about it. Sales is a broken model. You don't get paid unless you sell something, which makes prospects skeptical about your intent.

Here are three things that you can do to assure prospects that you can be trusted and have their best interests in mind.

### **(1) Tell the truth.**

It's that simple. Follow your parent's advice. Tell the truth so you don't have to remember what you said. It's good parenting advice and good sales advice.

For example, if your company can't deliver a product on time, tell your prospect and customer. Most of them can deal with bad news. What they don't like dealing with is bad surprises. If you don't have expertise in an area, refer your client to another person or firm. Tell the truth and your clients will return and refer.

### **(2) Seek the truth and do the right thing.**

Your job as a sales professional is to figure out the root cause of a prospect's problem. The challenge in sales is remembering that the problem the prospect presents generally isn't the real issue.

For example, in the sales training business, you often will hear, "We are not closing enough business." The easy answer is to sell the prospect a program on sales training.

If you're seeking the truth and doing the right thing, you ask more questions. Well, is this a closing problem or is your marketing department not attracting the right prospects? (Perhaps the marketing department needs help, not the sales department.) Do you have the right people on your team? (Perhaps the company needs to invest in working with a recruiting firm, not a sales training firm.)

Webster's defines "adviser" as giving (someone) a recommendation about what should be done.

How does a salesperson become great at giving good advice and positioning themselves as a trusted adviser?

(1) "Act like you did in the beginning."

This quote comes from Tony Robbins, motivational author and speaker. He tells his audiences that if we act like we did in the beginning, we'll continue to enjoy success personally and professionally. (How many of you were really well-mannered when dating your spouse?)

Reflect on how you behaved when you started in your profession. Were you curious and open to learning and development? Did you seek advice? Fast forward a few years. Are you still curious and open to learning or have you settled into the land of complacency?

Here's a good question to ask yourself: How can you give advice if you aren't getting any smarter? Business changes every year. Do you?

Take this short quiz:

- Are you considered an expert or average in your business?
- Do you invest in personal/professional development for yourself each year?
- After meeting with prospects, do you hear, "I never thought about that approach before"?

Curiosity may have killed the cat, but it keeps salespeople alive.

(2) Be a resource.

Your prospects and clients have lots of needs and little time. Schedule time to meet other salespeople who can help your clients solve issues outside your area of expertise.

A colleague got a call from a client, asking if she knew anyone that conducted Six Sigma training. My colleague is as far from Six Sigma as you can get. So why did she get the call? Because her client knows that she has relationships with smart resources that provide good advice.

(3) Walk the talk.

How many of you know someone that's giving advice -- but not applying it? Prospects and customers spot people operating from the "do what I say, not what I do" playbook. That erodes credibility fast. You may be the smartest guy in the room, but people might not trust your advice due to lack of personal execution.

If you aren't applying the advice you're giving, go back to the first point in this article: Tell the truth. "I am giving you this advice and it works. However, I have to tell you upfront -- I am lousy at applying my own advice." Tell the truth, do the right thing, act like you did in the beginning, be a resource and walk the talk. Take these actions and you're on your way to being a trusted adviser.

Good Selling!

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