

Five Things More Important to Buyers Than WHAT You're Selling

Five Things More Important to Buyers Than WHAT You're Selling

No matter what customers say they want, what they're really looking for is "something special." They can't quite describe it, but when they find it, they know.

Indeed, those little details of the buying experience may appear intangible. But what you sell is usually less important to customers, almost incidental - unless they don't get what they expected.

As Walt Disney said, "Do what you do so well that people want to bring their friends to see you do it again." Any business able to satisfy customers in these five ways will consistently beat the competition.

NOTICE: More important than WHAT you provide, is HOW you provide it.

So much attention is paid to the WHAT, the HOW often takes a backseat. Yet it's the quality of your HOW that determines whether the sale is made or lost. Buyers focused only on price are likely to be one-time visitors, but even they sometimes decide the cheapest price just isn't worth it. What's important to customers is:

1. How well they're treated.

People (even business buyers) care about the human touch. They want to be treated with respect and fairness. They want to feel like valued customers, whose time and opinions matter. If people can't trust you to treat them right, they certainly won't trust you with their money. Whether or not the sale occurs depends on whether the customer feels taken for granted - or taken.

Equally important is how the business deals with problems or complaints as they arise. Making mistakes needn't be fatal. Customers understand that mistakes occur. However, the willingness to fix mistakes and minimize their impact on the buyer is crucial. Solving them immediately, with the right attitude, can even strengthen the bond. But fumbling the ball a second time simply isn't forgiven.

2. How efficiently the buying process went.

From start to end, did each step of the sale go smoothly? Could the buyers get the answers or help they needed? Could they find what they came for (or why not)? Was the operation arranged to accommodate them in their time frame? Were prices and payment options clear and easy to deal with? Can most buyers complete the transaction without triggering number three?

3. How much aggravation they had to endure. Aggravations are of two types, those that shouldn't have happened (glitches) or those that happen to everyone, such as long waits, multiple visits, shortage of parts, etc. A buyer is willing to endure a little inconvenience, but not for long, not every time. Your job is to minimize inconveniences so they don't arise, not treat them like business as usual.

Here's where the helpful, informed employees will make or break the business. First in building customer rapport, anticipating their concerns, and avoiding problems in the first place.

4. How many mind games are played on them.

Sorry to say, the word "sales" gets misused too often. Selling isn't an opportunity to manipulate the potential buyer to do what the seller wants, rather than providing the buyer what he or she wants.

No one wants to feel like a sucker or to be misled about prices, delivery dates, or terms of the sale. Even a hint of such treatment kills trust, kills their willingness to hear you out. And if a person feels tricked into buying, they won't buy again. Or they might cancel the sale afterward from buyer's remorse.

5. How well the business has its act together.

Starting with the first impression, did everything about the business live up to its promise or reputation? If every part of the operation works smoothly as an integrated whole, consider the customer well served. When the parts are mismatched or full of snags, it screams "small potatoes." That scares business away. Even if the issues are minor, they pull the plug on trust. Fortunately, a focus on your HOW yields big benefits from quick and inexpensive solutions.

Get your HOWs in order, and you'll drive the competition crazy. Customers notice when they're treated well. Let your uniqueness shine in the HOW of customer-pleasing practices. It pays off in your bottom line.