

EBOOK

Retailer's Pocket Guide to Increasing Sales



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Introduction

You can have a prime location, eager staff, and the right products at a great price, but a little sales ability & customer service will go a long way to aid in your success. Without it, customers could be turned off & your sales could flatten after novelty wears off. But don't fret, in these pages you'll find some advice that will help you sell more & give you some tips for providing great customer service. Read on to learn more!

6 Tips to Bolster Your Sales



To attain exceptional levels of success in the retail business, you have to be willing to go the extra mile. In addition to designing a store that people want to spend time in and filling it with merchandise that they want to buy, you need to be on top of your game in terms of using effective sales strategies. The importance of training your salespeople effectively cannot be overemphasized. You can't hope to train them properly, though, if you're unaware of how to maximize your store's sales potential. Tips for doing just that are outlined below.

Educate Yourself about the Products that You Sell

Large, impersonal chains don't have to be super knowledgeable about what they sell – their low prices give them a huge edge over the competition. To compete with the big guys, you have to have in-depth knowledge about every item that you sell. Learn the pros and cons of each item that you carry. Keep up to date on new developments, and try to stock the most current models. When training new staff, try to get them up to speed on how various products work. Do your best to keep your employee turnover rate low, because replacing a knowledgeable salesperson is costly and time consuming.

Be Enthusiastic about Your Products

This point dovetails nicely with the previous one. A customer is a lot more likely to buy what you're selling when he gets the sense that you're genuinely enthusiastic about it. It helps tremendously to be a fan of the products that you sell. It's smart to hire people who are truly into the things that you have on your shelves. When conducting interviews, then, try to get a feel for whether or not they care at all about the nature of what you sell.

Be Friendly, Not Oppressive

If you've ever been harassed by a store salesperson, you know how off-putting and aggravating it can be. Give a customer that kind of experience and you can forget about earning any repeat business from him. You should make your presence known and be friendly, but you shouldn't hover over your customers or breathe down their necks. Suffocating a customer is a surefire way to chase them away. Breathing space is essential here, so resist the urge to follow their every move. In the long run, this strategy will work out well.

Ask the Customer Questions

Asking questions is a lot more effective than pushing a product on a customer – at least, it is if you want to make lots of sales. Even if you are dying to unload





a lot of a particular item, you shouldn't alienate your customers by endlessly extolling its virtues. When you ask questions about what they want or need, you show customers that you care. This is especially effective when it is done in a low-key and laid-back way. Keep the pressure to an absolute minimum and make it clear that you genuinely want to help them find the right thing.

Avoid Asking “Can I Help You?”

How many times have you walked into a store, been asked if you need any help and said, “No thanks, I'm just looking?” It's probably happened more times than you can remember. Asking a customer that is like handing them a card that excuses them from interacting with you. A better way to go is to let them walk in and get the “lay of the land.” Once they've roamed for a minute or so, ask them a question based on where they are browsing. You're less likely to be blown off that way.

Sell Add-Ons, But be Savvy About It

Cross-selling related items to a customer is a tried-and-true way to boost sales. It tends to annoy people, though, when you do it at the register. By that time, the customer has made his decision and is ready to move on with his life. Being pestered to buy even more can sour the whole experience for him. Instead, suggest additional items while he is still out on the floor. If possible, put a personal spin

on things by relating stories about the related items that you've put to good use.

Putting stellar sales techniques and strategies to use can make an amazing difference in your overall success in the retail game. It's even better when you can bolster those strategies with salespeople who are knowledgeable, friendly and genuinely enthusiastic. The ultimate goal here is to make people want to come back again and again. When they leave with positive thoughts about the sales staff, they are a lot more like to come back. Repeat sales are crucial to developing a robust business, so do your best to keep the above points in mind. Happy customers develop through unaggressive, friendly sales techniques that gently steer people to buy what you have to sell.

Sell More by Providing Great Service



Many a small business has fallen prey to the commoditized nature of businesses like Walmart and Amazon. As difficult as it may be to coexist with such behemoths, it is perfectly doable. The trick to succeeding is to shift your focus from trying to excel on all levels to excelling primarily on one important point: customer service. After all, there is no way that you can hope to offer lower prices than these types of businesses; you're not going to be able to offer your customers the dizzying array of options that these retailers can, either. To set yourself apart and run a truly profitable and successful business, you have to be a shining star in the world of customer service.

Put Service First

Filling your shelves with merchandise and setting up a cash register aren't nearly enough to cement your odds of success. If someone is giving your store a chance instead of sticking with the big guys, he must be open to giving you his business. In most cases, those who wander into independent, small businesses do so because they're looking for a more personalized level of service; many times, they're also eager to support the local economy. Show them that they have made the right choice by providing consistently superior service. There are many great strategies that you can use to

stand out in this department, and a few of them are outlined below.

Emphasize Your Store's Unique Offerings

Major corporate retailers excel at offering rock-bottom prices and enormous selections of goods. Beyond that, though, the playing field is remarkably level. In fact, you hold many distinct advantages that you should emphasize in order to earn repeat business. For one thing, the process of requesting a special-order item at a major store is cumbersome and frustrating; make it easy and hassle-free at your store. For another, huge corporate retailers rarely offer free samples and hardly ever provide a lot of interactivity. Make those services the cornerstones of your business, and you are sure to attract plenty of positive attention.

Become a Trusted Advisor

At most, the employees of a huge store like Walmart are able to help customers to locate specific items within their stores. If you were to ask such an employee for specific information about any given product, however, most would have little to offer beyond blank stares. As enormous as such stores are they simply can't educate their employees about each and every item. You can score many points here, then, by becoming an expert on everything that you sell. Walk each customer through





the process of finding just the right thing, and be at the ready to offer your advice and assistance whenever it is needed. People remember that kind of service and will reward it by returning again and again.

Build Relationships with Your Customers

If you're the type of person who has a knack for remembering names and faces, you're way ahead of the game when it comes to building relationships with your customers. People love being remembered, so make an effort to do that. If that skill doesn't come naturally to you, you might want to keep a small notebook handy; jot notes about various customers into the notebook to increase the odds of remembering who they are. People will be flattered that you remember them and will look forward to returning to your store in the future – and that kind of service is nonexistent at major retailers.

Act on Comments and Suggestions

Some major retailers have comment cards that can be filled out to provide comments and suggestions. Few people bother to use them, though, because they know that their advice won't be heeded. If you keep hearing the same comments and suggestions over and over again, though, you should try to act on them. If someone gives you constructive criticism and returns to see that you've done something about it, they will be impressed. Their

esteem for your store will skyrocket, and you can expect to see them a lot more in the future.

Encourage Social Media Interaction

It never hurts to take your top-notch service out of the store and onto the Internet. In fact, it's a great way to bring your service to a whole new level. Set up accounts on Facebook and Twitter. Maintain profiles on Yelp and Google Places. Let your customers know that they can find you online. You could even encourage them to do so by offering incentives. Knowing that there's one extra way to get in touch with you will enhance your image to your customers considerably.

Stand Above the Rest With Exceptional Service

The road to retail success isn't easy, and the unfortunate truth is a lot of small businesses don't make it. All too often, it is because their focus was in the wrong place. Cutting your profit margin to practically nil isn't going to make things better. Most people understand that they are going to pay a little more to enjoy the superior service of a small business. Play up that angle and do your best to differentiate yourself from the big guys in a positive way. With superior customer service, you're a lot more likely to enjoy real staying power.

Discount to get Add-ons and Repeat Customers



Independent and small retail stores go through periods when daily sales receipts are down. To increase sales, attract new customers, and retain current customers, many retail stores implement various sales promotion techniques. While most business owners would love to sell products at full price all of the time, sales promotions have proven effective at increasing the overall bottom line in many retail stores. Understanding how to effectively run and track your sales promotion campaigns are essential to increasing the profits in your store.

An effective technique to increasing sales is to offer certain products at a steep discount, which are called loss leaders. The importance of loss leaders is the ability to draw new customers into your store. Most customers not only buy products that are steeply discounted, but also other products that are selling for regular price. Loss leaders are effective for selling overstocked items, increasing traffic into your store and building brand awareness. Running loss leader campaigns on a regular basis will lead to customers regarding your store as a place that always has good deals. You should inquire with the manufacturers of products you sell to ensure that offering a steep discount is an available option.

Another sales promotion technique is to offer point-of-purchase items. These items are placed on the counter near the cash register. Many retail stores place items, such as jewelry and makeup, near the register. Customers often buy point-of-purchase items on an impulse. Many retail owners believe that point-of-sale products result in an increase in revenue.

Repeat customers are essential to the success of a retail business. One method to encourage customers to return is through reward programs made available to loyal customers. A more recent phenomenon is offering coupons to customers who 'Like' the store's Facebook page. This not only leads to customers coming to your store to use the coupon, but also allows you to send messages to your customers through Facebook to keep them informed on new items & sales. Another option is to send a coupon or sale notification to all of its past customers that are on the store's email list. The incentives work well to build loyalty and repeat sales because customers have a previous history of shopping at the store are likely shop there again.

Offering free samples is a promotion method retail stores use to entice reluctant shoppers to make purchases. A free item offered in a promotion should be a low-cost, high-value item. A sample of a new



perfume may be a good product to give away for some retail stores. It is important to strategically plan a free sample promotion. Some customers will purchase other items, while others will take the free sample and leave. If not executed in the proper manner, a free sample promotion campaign can cause your store to lose money.

Sales promotion campaigns must be effectively managed to receive the greatest benefit. A business owner must track the percentage of sales resulting from a promotion campaign. Assigning a tracking code to the particular items that are on sale or coupons offered to customers is one way to manage a campaign. By putting these tracking methods in place, you can return to your point-of-sale software to run reports to gauge the effectiveness of your promotions. Placing a timeline on your sales promotion encourages customers to act quickly. A deadline also allows you to analyze your data and compare it to identical time periods without promotions to determine if the promotion was successful.

Turning Window Shoppers Into Customers



If you run a small retail business, you have almost certainly met your share of browsers. These visitors spend time looking around but leave without making a purchase. Browsing or window shopping was more popular in decades past, but today's savvy shoppers seem to have streamlined the way they look, learn and compare options. While many people still regularly browse without making a purchase, increasing numbers of consumers are taking a more efficient approach. Nine out of ten shoppers know exactly what they are going to purchase before they ever enter a store. About 83 percent already know what brands they will buy.

Most retailers would prefer that shoppers were not quite so organized; more time spent inside a store can lead to impulse purchases, and it gives the staff more opportunities to establish positive connections with prospective customers. It is easy to track and evaluate the browsing habits of online shoppers, but it is difficult to estimate the prevalence of browsing that occurs outside of the Internet. Careful observation is your best bet for determining how many browsers your brick-and-mortar store attracts.

Why Have Browsing Behaviors Changed?

Access to information through search engines, retail websites, mobile phone apps and social media outlets gives people a way to research products and brands and

compare prices among different sellers without ever leaving the comfort of home. By starting the buying process online, they save physical energy, gas and time. With the help of online consumer forums, targeted advertising campaigns and readily available product specifications, today's consumer need never make an uneducated guess.

The recession also plays a role. After several years of economic strain, many consumers have developed razor-sharp bargain-finding skills. Once a shopper is educated and knows how to find the best deals, there's no reason to ever pay too much for a product or service again. Pre-shopping online has become a mainstream practice, and it has replaced some of the need for browsing through merchandise in person. Fortunately, the Internet cannot provide fragrance, taste, spatial perception or tactile information, so retailers of some types of products don't feel the impact as much as others.

Smarter Shoppers and Better Discounts

Increased consumer awareness of available discounts and promotions has made competition tough, especially for the small retailer. To keep up with their peers, many sellers are offering deeper discounts, more special offers and increased loyalty rewards. Today's shoppers



aren't surprised to find a great deal; they expect to find one, and they already know a product or brand's baseline retail price range before they enter your store. For about a third of today's consumers, 70 percent of the items in their shopping carts are discounted or on sale. To impress today's window shopper without offering painfully deep discounts, a business must stand apart and provide something that the Internet doesn't.

Browsing Behavior Traits to Keep in Mind

→ While many shoppers start the buying process online before visiting a store, many others browse in person but order online later.

→ More complex products such as automobiles and electronics attract more browsers than simple items like groceries.

→ Collectors and aficionados browse specialty retailers to keep abreast of current product lines and models.

→ Before arriving at a store, 93 percent of shoppers know exactly how much they should have to pay for a specific item.

→ People who browse stores in person tend to be more educated about the products and services they are browsing.

How to Court and Keep the Browser

Don't underestimate the potential value of the window shopper. Browsing is related to opinion leadership, and this is an important factor in word-of-mouth referrals and the ultimate success of new products and services. If you impress the browser, you'll see his friends soon. Here are a few tips to help you create a more positive in-store experience that attracts curious window-shoppers and keeps them coming back.

→ Make memorable signs. Customers prefer clear, concise messaging and basic, bold color palettes.

→ Encourage personal connections. Associates who connect with shoppers influence what they buy and even how they pay. Never miss a chance to make a good impression; browsers who encounter positive interaction with associates stay in the store longer.

→ Make sure your sales floor is well-covered. Customers who are actively approached by associates consistently rate their visits more favorably.

→ Shoppers are more likely to notice items at eye-level and below; keep this in mind when developing your merchandising and signing strategies.

→ Know your demographic. Consumers notice the

marketing images and slogans that are relevant to them. Stores should feature images and promotional materials that focus on the relationship between the specific population and the merchandise or services offered. Timing is also important. Structure promotions and employee work schedules to reflect the times you are more likely to attract your best prospects. For example, if you sell business or professional clothing, and you notice a traffic spike during lunch hours, increase floor coverage, and schedule your strongest salespeople to be present during this time.

→ Make an impression with music. A store's atmosphere is warmer and more welcoming with subtle background music. Be sure that your choice of music appeals to your target demographic and is appropriate for the geographical area. Avoid music that is too loud, too outdated or potentially offensive.

→ Keep your store clean and organized. No browser wants to fumble through a disaster area to see what you have to offer. Dirty shelves and disorganized merchandise are instant turn-offs, and visitors who see them are likely to spread the word. The same applies to your staff. A professional appearance is important to your customers. Your associates should be clean and dressed appropriately.

Harness the Power of Technology

It may have stolen some of retail's former glory, but the Internet can still be a powerful ally. Your ties to the online world can actually help you in the brick-and-mortar environment. Your mobile outreach and social media efforts can keep your brand on everyone's mind and entice new customers to your store. Post valuable content to Facebook, Google+ and Twitter accounts regularly to keep potential visitors curious and engaged.

Sometimes, Browsing is Encouraged

At the end of the day, shoppers who enter your store represent a valuable asset (even if they don't buy anything). Make them feel welcome. Creating an environment that encourages browsing can pay off in the long run. In today's connected world, those who browse hold more power than many of your peers may realize. If you make their presence part of your strategy, you may be able to gain an edge over your competition.



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