

THE RETAIL DOCTOR | BY BILLY CUTHRELL

Sell Relationships

In my last two articles, I discussed the two worst sales calls I have ever had the displeasure of receiving. The mistakes, poor manners and unprofessionalism combined with a general lack of understanding for my business needs could make the calls a great case study at any business school.

However, I recently received a really good sales call. The salesman understood the benefits of a long-term customer relationship and taking the time to build a solid foundation on which to grow future sales.



John (salesman): Good afternoon. Is Billy Cuthrell available please?

Me: This is Billy. How can I help you?

John: Hi, Mr. Cuthrell. My name is John, and I work for Acme Guitar Widget Corp. based in Houston. I wanted to speak with you for a few minutes about the Grand Guitar Widget that we manufacture for guitar teachers and students. If it's not a good time for you to talk, I will be happy to call you at a day and time that's more convenient for you. Or, I can give you my contact information, and you can call me anytime.

Me: No, now works well for me.

John: Great. Again, Mr. Cuthrell, I appreciate your time, and I will not keep you long. We don't have a local sales rep in your area yet, so I wanted to call and introduce our product and myself since I will eventually oversee the local reps in North Carolina. As I said, we manufacture the Grand Guitar Widget, along with several other guitar products, and we are opening new dealers in the southeastern part of the country. However, out of all our products, I think the Grand Guitar Widget is probably a good fit for you. Have you heard of the Grand Guitar Widget?

Me: I don't think so.

John: OK, no problem. I was looking at your website, and I did some research on your company and your lessons. From what I read about your teaching staff and your curriculum, I think our widgets may work well because of our proprietary learning software built into the widget. If I can get your e-mail address, I'll send you some links to our online tutorials and YouTube

videos, so you can see the widget in action. I'll call you back in a few days or e-mail you if you prefer to discuss it further and answer any questions. Would that be OK?

I gave him my e-mail address, and we set a day and time to talk the following week. I received his e-mail that afternoon with links to the product and a nice follow-up thanking me for taking the time to speak with him. His e-mail ended with a reminder that he would be in touch on the day and time we agreed on. About two days later, a package arrived. Inside was one of the widgets with a handwritten card telling me to pass it around to our teachers and see what they thought. Three days later, John called me to follow-up.

John: I hope you received the complimentary widget and had a chance to look it over with your staff and teachers.

Me: I have looked it over, but I unfortunately have not had the opportunity to follow up with my teachers.

John: That is not a problem, Mr. Cuthrell. I'll plan to touch base with you in a few weeks.

THE REAL SALE

I'm sure you're probably asking yourself, "How can this be a great sales call? John didn't sell anything." Sure he did. John sold me a relationship. He did several key things your sales

How one telephone salesman formed a lasting business relationship

IDEAS

staff can do to build a relationship with customers.

First off, John pronounced my name correctly the first time and continued to call me Mr. Cuthrell.

Second, he did research on my company and figured out that his product would probably work for us. John also had a relaxed tone, wasn't pushy and was considerate of my time. If his life depended on making this sale, you wouldn't have known it. He had an easygoing demeanor that set me at ease.

'I've stuck with them even after they moved on to other companies because they care about my business.'

Third, John surprised me by sending a sample product and included a handwritten note thanking me again for my time. I got the feeling John believed his product was right for my company.

Lastly, John seemed more interested in developing a solid relationship and not making a quick sale. Relationships are important, and good salespeople protect them.

There are two sales reps that I've had a relationship with in this industry for more than 15 years, and it all started when they called me out of the blue. I've stuck with them even after they moved on to other companies because they care about my business. They introduce products that they think will work for my shop, not a long list of products that are priced outside of what sells in my stores. They listen when I tell them what's happening with our customers and respond by showing me the appropriate products.

John had the same qualities that I've seen in the other two sales reps that I'm friends with. I think as long as John continues to call on me, I might be ordering products from him in another 15 years. **MI**

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