



LESSONS LEARNED | BY GERSON ROSENBLOOM

Add-ons on Steroids

As a student of sales, I love shopping for cars. It's an education in the very best and the very worst of salesmanship. In my most recent experience, the salesperson was masterful at the add-on. Soundproof undercoating, extended warranties, window tinting, graphics, remote start, and on and on. I figured that if I bought everything suggested during the selling process, I could have added a solid 20 percent to the cost. And the funny thing is, considering all that stuff was a lot of fun for me as the buyer.



Think big with add-ons. The person coming in for a mic cable could be a customer for an entire recording setup

It got me thinking about our industry. The good people know that add-ons are crucial to the profitability of sales. They add strings and straps to guitars, music stands and books to band instruments, and so on. If you add a couple of small items to every sale, you clearly improve your bottom line. And if you add bigger items or more items, then you really start to make a serious difference.

The best example I've ever heard was during a NAMM University session with speaker Eddy Kay. Some of you may have heard him tell the story of a customer, years ago, coming into his A/V shop, asking for Betamax videotapes. (Set the "way back" machine, Peabody.) Kay said, "Would you like one of these nice, new portable Betacam recorders to go with those tapes?" And lo and behold, he made the sale. The moral of the story: If we don't ask, we don't receive.

ADDING UP

I took this as an important lesson learned. I'd been under the delusion that if I asked for an expensive add-on I'd lose the deal. Instead, I found that customers in a buying state of mind were often very receptive to massive amounts of purchases beyond the base unit. So when I sold a keyboard, I recommended a home studio

to go with it, along with the normal array of cables, cases and extra sounds. A drum kit was accessorized with not only sticks, bags and cymbals but the suggestion of an electronic kit.

Sometimes, the major purchase is the add-on. When someone comes into your store asking for a mic cable, could there ever be a better time to ask, "What mic cable are you currently using?"

That opens the door to suggestions about better mics, signal processors, the latest digital mixer and so on. The customer looking for a MIDI cable is a candidate for the latest software or a new computer. Someone coming in for a piano instruction book is well-served being shown pianos.

I've even translated this into ideas I use now that I'm in the manufacturing sector. At Wechter, we make a purpose-built Nashville-tuned guitar. The thing about Nashville tuning is that large portions of the guitar-playing public have never actually tried a Nashville-tuned guitar, even though they've unknowingly heard it on countless recordings. (Think "Hotel California" and "Wild Horses.") This makes a Nashville-tuned guitar the perfect add-on. A skilled sales professional, after selling a requested pack of guitar strings, could ask a customer, "Do you have a couple of minutes? I'd like your opinion on something brand-new."

This type of add-on selling is a numbers game. You clearly won't be successful every time. Still, sometimes you will succeed. And the more often you try, the more often you'll surprise yourself and sell something that the customer didn't even realize he wanted or needed. **MI**

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