

LESSONS LEARNED | BY GERSON ROSENBLOOM

Fresh Meeting Topics

When I ran my store, I conducted a daily training program called Sales Aerobics. It allowed my sales pros to practice their craft outside of prime time, much like a sports professional would do in training camp. Also, just having the team all together in one place gave us the opportunity to communicate better and address issues affecting company performance and customer service. It worked well because I committed to doing it consistently for a couple of decades.



The lesson I learned is that it takes a lot of prep time and ingenuity to come up with meeting topics every day! This month's column represents a greatest hits of some of my favorite meeting topics.

ROLE PLAYING

Nothing is more valuable than role playing a sales scenario and having the rest of the team evaluate what they've watched. The key is to make the interaction nonthreatening. Lay out the ground rules so that everyone approaches the exercise as a learning opportunity and not a critique of the players. Limit the role play to a minute or two. Having bite-sized pieces of an interaction allows everyone to focus on particulars. Be sure that comments from the observers include both positives as well as things to improve. And make sure that you tailor the role-play scenarios to the needs of your group. I often asked for people to share their difficult sales scenarios, and they became the source of the next role play.

STORE TOUR

Part of sales success comes from providing a beautiful buying environment for your customers. On occasion, I would start out our morning meeting sending everyone to "tour" departments that were not their own.

It's amazing the things that fresh eyes see that get missed by the people working in a space every day. We'd spend a few minutes jotting down observations, and then we'd reconvene to share our findings.

NO MOM ON DUTY

This meeting topic pointed out that no one's mom was working at our company, so there was no one around to clean up after them! Therefore, they were responsible for keeping things dusted, vacuumed, soda bottles discarded and so forth. Again,

a clean environment is more conducive to sales.

LANGUAGE COUNTS

Sometimes the most subtle differences in language can change the whole tenor of a customer interaction. For instance, one role play included a situation where the customer came in asking for a specific sales person who was tied up. They were told, "He's with a customer but will be right with you." Of course, that raises the question of, "Isn't this person also a customer?" Simply inserting "another," or better yet, "he's serving another guest" changes the whole feel.

ALWAYS BE A SHOPPER

I encouraged my staff to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of other salespeople and other sales environments, no matter where they shopped. Whether shopping for a car, a home or a loaf of bread, there were always lessons to be learned by what others did well or poorly. Sharing those lessons with the group always proved to be a powerful eye-opener.

Perhaps the greatest lesson in creating this series of Sales Aerobics was the realization that I couldn't do it all myself. I periodically assigned meetings to other team members. This got buy-in from everyone involved, brought fresh ideas to the mix and kept meeting topics relevant. **MI**

Gerson Rosenbloom is the vice president of strategic management at Sweetwater Sound, the former president of Medley Music and a past NAMM chairman. Email him at gersonmusicinc@gmail.com.

“Subtle differences in language can change the whole tenor of a customer interaction.”