



Canadian Professional
Sales Association

Since 1874

5 SALES SKILLS TO SHARPEN

TO AVOID BECOMING DULL



As any good cook knows, it's important to keep your knives sharp. Even a five-star Michelin chef with years of experience and access to the fanciest ingredients in the world will falter if they let the tools of their trade get dull. It's going to be hard to get the job done effectively even under perfect circumstances.

The same common wisdom can be applied to salespeople. Whether you're a veteran or still green, there is no excuse to grow complacent or get too comfortable when it comes to your selling skills. We live in a fast-paced world full of change. In our rollercoaster economy, innovation and creativity are more highly prized than ever before. Customers are also more diverse and just when you think you've truly mastered the market, it goes ahead and changes on you. New strategies and concepts are developed at lightning speed. How can any salesperson hoping to be successful let their guard down for even a minute?

It can be an exciting time for your career, if you want it to be. But you have to be willing to shake things up a little. Working in sales should be challenging, rewarding, and enriching. Many successful sales teams foster an environment of constant growth and development, aiming to learn at least one new thing every day. Staying within your comfort zone is no longer an option. Even if you think that you've got strong core sales skills that will never lead you astray, you should think of your skills as a muscle—if you neglect them for too long they'll go soft and flabby. You want to work out and flex your sales skills as often as you can to stay in shape.

Sure, you've got a toolkit full of sales skills. But how often do you dust them off? Are they sharp enough for the competitive, ever-changing industry?

Here are five sales skills to revisit and sharpen up to be the most effective salesperson you can be.



1

REDISCOVER YOUR INDUSTRY

Self-improvement is key, but it's important **to remember that the sales industry is not static.** Before going ahead and sharpening the tools (skills) of your trade, think about how well you *really* know it. If you want to evaluate your own performance and how best to improve, you need to keep up with the swiftly moving sales industry.

Are you reading books by highly regarded, inspirational sales leaders

and listening to insider podcasts? Are you using the endless, easily accessible knowledge of social media to your full advantage by keeping abreast of different sales trends and innovations? How about networking and communicating with other sales professionals out in the field?

It's a big world out there and it's changing fast. Stay connected and stay sharp.



2

KNOW THE PRODUCT

As we've mentioned, innovation and creativity are more prized than ever. That goes for many industries—including (and especially) sales. Whatever service or solution you're offering, you better **know just how unique and valuable your product is**. Understanding your product's worth and uses, as well as knowing how it will benefit the lives of your customers, is absolutely essential.

Can you make a compelling case for your product in 30 seconds or less? If not, work on your elevator pitch. Get innovative about how you position your solutions, and make sure you can custom-tailor it to each individual buyer's needs.

To truly believe in what you're selling, you're going to have to become reacquainted with your product often enough to remain sharp.



3

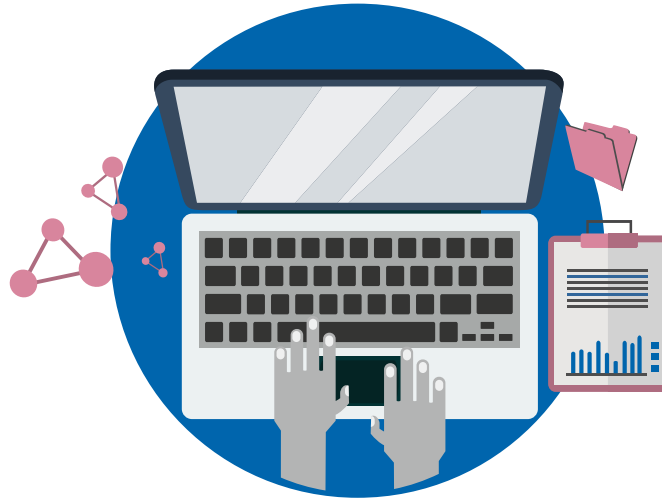
KNOW THE BUYER

And just how will you be able to custom-tailor your solutions to each individual buyer if you don't know the first thing about who you're actually selling to? Getting to know your customers can be the most fun and rewarding part of the job for any good salesperson. The world is large and diverse—you probably encounter a variety of personalities and people who come from all walks of life on a daily basis. And **it's your job to enrich their lives.**

However, as an effective salesperson knows, trying to sell to absolutely everyone is a waste of time and resources. Do you know who your

ideal customers are? If you were put on the spot, could you write up a profile of three buyer personas that you and your sales team should be targeting? Get to know the lifestyle and habits of the customers whose lives will be most enriched by the solutions you have to offer. Conduct some market research.

It's important to remember that people and situations change. If it's been a while since you've mapped out your buyer personas, chances are that it's about time to go back to the drawing board. To foster meaningful connections, remember to stay sharp, listen attentively, and focus.



4

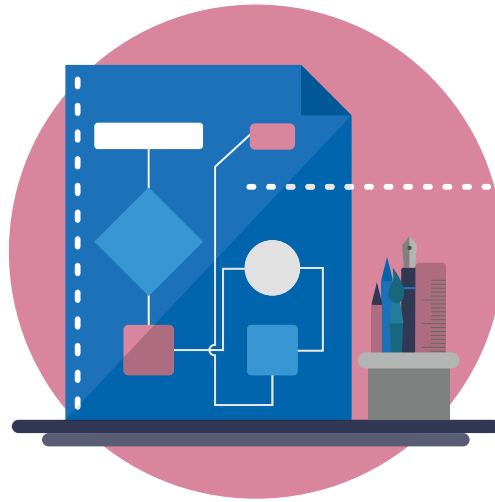
GET WITH THE TIMES

As a salesperson looking to advance in your career, there's no doubt that you're always striving for maximum productivity and efficiency. However, no matter how hard you try or how good your intentions are, **you'll never catch up to industry leaders if you're still stuck in prehistoric times.**

Today is the day you get savvier when it comes to the variety of digital resources at your fingertips. Do you still write everything down by hand in an agenda or address book? Do you have a LinkedIn account? Do you even know what an "app" is? There's a whole

new world out there to explore! Using tech to your advantage can make the average sales cycle shorter and more efficient. If you use technology properly and to your benefit, it can give you the gift of more selling time. Less of your precious resources will be wasted on menial tasks, mind numbing paperwork, and correcting careless mistakes.

There's a reason why dinosaurs are extinct. Don't let your claws get dull. Open up your computer or smartphone and teach yourself a couple of new things.



5

MERGE SALES AND MARKETING

If you're a salesperson and you know absolutely nothing about what's going on in the marketing department, you've got a problem. The days when the two departments ran as completely separate entities should be banished for good. If you're looking to sharpen up your sales skills, make sure you're looking to the marketing department to learn a thing or two (ditto for marketing looking to sales!).

Partnership is key. Customers come first, and if you want your sales funnel to be smooth and simple, **make sure the relationship between sales and marketing isn't rough and bumpy.** Educate yourself on how the two are intertwined, and

take steps to bridge any divides. For example, plan a weekly meeting that includes both sales and marketing teams, or implement a system where both departments work on content creation together. One thing both marketing and sales professionals should have in common is a knack for creativity—so use your imagination!

Bottom line: Sales drive your business. Marketing is the fuel to get you where you want to go. To stay in good form, make sure both are running smoothly.

Sometimes sharpening your knives on your own can be difficult. Need additional resources? Check in with the experts.

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