



Professional Development Unit Bundle

Competency: Professional Sales Conduct

PDU Value: 3 PDUs

Why do Professional Development Unit (PDU) Bundles exist?

Whether you're maintaining your CPSA Designation, or wishing to develop your skills in sales, our PDU Bundles are made to strengthen and reinforce the skills you need to help reach new heights in your career.

Maintaining your designation gives evidence of your commitment to the principle of lifelong learning and ensures that your professional sales skills are developed as markets, customers, and innovative technologies evolve.

As the holder of a professional sales designation, you are required to meet the annual Professional Development Units (PDU) requirement. This process ensures that you are up-to-date on the most current issues and practices in sales.

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Section: Acting with Integrity to Drive Results

How to Encourage Integrity in Your Sales Team

Author: Canadian Professional Sales Association

Integrity is about more than simply being honest, though that is certainly part of it. Having integrity means having strong moral principles. This is crucial for anyone working in sales.

In the past, the perhaps unfair [reputation of a sales rep](#) was that they were a little slimy and maybe even underhanded; the type of people that would do and say anything to make a deal.

Today, those values wouldn't get anyone very far in the highly visible and accountable world of social media and sales. What's more, sales pros who truly have integrity are more successful in the long run because they don't take short cuts or make questionable deals that come back to bite them. And most importantly, customers trust sales reps who have integrity- and we all know that a successful, long-term customer relationship is built upon trust.

We know we want our sales teams to have integrity but in the highly competitive, pressurized environment of sales, it's easy for people to make mistakes. Here's how to encourage integrity in your sales team and create a working environment that's perfect for sales success.

Model the Behaviour You Want to See

The old saying goes, the fish rots from the head, and it's often true that issues and problems in departments can be traced back to the leadership. If you want to encourage integrity in your sales team, you need to ensure you are modelling the behaviour you wish to see. Don't just talk the talk; you must walk the walk. The key to integrity is consistency: it's important that you always hold yourself accountable to a high moral standing. Be transparent, honest and fair. Don't compromise your values - if you make a mistake, own up to it quickly, apologise and explain what you will do to rectify the situation.

Share Your Vision of Sales

Integrity shortcomings in sales teams often come down to a difference of opinion about what sales actually is. If a sales rep believes that [sales is about solving problems and helping customers](#) improve their lives in some way, then it's likely that they'll approach new opportunities with enthusiasm to improve a customer's situation. If, on the other hand, they view sales more cynically as the art of selling people things they don't really need... Well, it's quite clear where that will lead... False promises and half-truths, or worse. Encourage integrity by asking people about what their vision of sales is during the interview process. Remind your sales team frequently about your vision of sales: that you are helping people find the solution they need to improve something about their life or business.

Believe In Your Product and Make Them Believe Too

If you don't believe in what you are selling then selling with integrity is impossible. However, if you truly believe that your product or service solves a problem, then you have nothing to fear. Just like their vision of selling, your rep's belief in your product can all too easily get forgotten in the hustle and bustle of trying to meet quotas. It's your responsibility to make sure that this doesn't happen. Regularly remind your team of why they are out there every day working hard - talk about how great your product is and why it's needed. How is it helping people and making their lives easier/better? Start off team meetings by praising your product/service; share positive reviews and feedback from customers; draw your team's attention to positive online mentions and press.

Reward Integrity Not Just Numbers

We know that reps are competitive and that's a great thing. But too often, bonuses and commissions are only focused on hitting targets. This can be dangerous; it's when a rep feels under too much pressure to meet targets that their ethics can become compromised. Of course, you want to drive sales and ensure your reps are meeting quota but don't forget about rewarding those behaviours that demonstrate integrity. Try different reward types for reps who go above and beyond to help a customer or who secure a great deal because of their excellent customer relationship.

Does being “Consultative” Mean Recommending Your Competitors?

Author: Canadian Professional Sales Association

A consultative selling approach fosters strong trust with a buyer. Instead of using pressure or charisma in your selling approach, you can opt to work like a consultant alongside the customer. This means defining the problem and providing advice that is in the best interest of the customer. This is especially effective around technical or complex problems that your customer may be dealing with.

However, what if you discover that you cannot provide an adequate solution to the customer's problem? Should you recommend your competitors? After all, you are consulting with your customer and you have expressed a commitment to help them with the best solution. The difficult position of finding a right fit, whether it is with your company or another, can pose a perplexing dilemma in light of various considerations.

Ethical Considerations

Depending on the circumstances, sometimes referring a customer to a competitor can fly in direct conflict with the interests of your organization. Getting clarity on how your company views competition is important to understand in order to avoid any issues with management. This can differ between industries based on how competitors relate to one another.

Furthermore, your competitor might be better positioned in the market to service your customer – or vice versa. A good litmus test is to consider whether this customer could ever do business with you.

If the timing is not ideal, then it might be best to revisit the requirements at a later date and not recommend your competition. If your capabilities make doing business unrealistic, then you can create goodwill for both your competitor in a different segment of the market and with your customer.

Referring new business in a tactful and professional way can open up future opportunities. This is especially true if you can have a candid conversation with someone at your competitor's business indicating what you are seeking to do to help the customer, and what you hope to gain in a loose relationship with both the customer and the competitor. Remember to encourage all stakeholders to be explicit in stating their expectations.

However, be sure to abstain from such contact if you sense it will be in direct conflict with the interests of your own organization. Ask yourself the following questions if you feel unsure:

- If my managers were to know about this gesture, would they support it, or be against it?
- What is the clear hope or expectation I would have of my competitor?

- What would this do for the relationship with my customer?
- Would I lose business?

Your first fiduciary responsibility is to your company. The secondary interest is to help the customer solve their problem, and it can be handled in multiple ways.

Positioning As the Trusted Advisor

Even if it is awkward, unethical or compromising to recommend your competitors, you can still remain seen as a reliable advisor to your customer. Doing so keeps your relationship intact and communicates your care and helpfulness.

One way to do this effectively is to provide clarity around the problems that your customer is seeking to solve. Record clear notes and outline exactly what they are trying to solve. Then communicate considerations they might explore. You are not necessarily referring a competitor, as the customer will still need to do some of their own research. You also don't need to forge a relationship with a competitor at this point, but doing so may be desirable if there is a conflict of interest.

When you point your customer in a certain direction, try phrasing your recommendation in the words, "If it were me, I would look at these options." Refrain from supplying specific names of companies, but provide what they need to find the answers.

Additionally, be sure to clarify your position and where you can be most helpful. This is an opportunity for your customer to understand your value proposition more clearly. Let them know that if they are seeking a solution that fits your capabilities, then you are readily accessible. Make it easy for the customer to feel comfortable to come back to you with questions or future business. This keeps a relationship open for better timing, fit or referrals.

If you choose to be consultative with your customers as your selling approach, then your goal should be to build trust with helping them understand their problems and their options. You are a guide.

Your first customer, however, is your company. Keep your priorities and remember to stay loyal.

Ultimately, being consultative enables you to build opportunities and relationships with competitors who may help you with reciprocating sales leads. If there is such an opportunity, be clear on expectations and take your time building such relationships. Lastly, always remember: these connections should not compromise the integrity of your relationship with your company or your customer.

Building Lasting Rapport - The Art of Relationship Building

Author: Canadian Professional Sales Association

Building lasting rapport with your prospects and customers is a crucial step in achieving sales success. Not only will a good relationship help you seal the first deal with a customer, but it will also lead to recurring revenue, upsells and referrals. Relationship building is no small feat, it's not about creating one-off connections but continually nurturing and growing relationships. In fact, relationship building is an art. Read on to learn how to build a lasting rapport with your customers that keeps both your relationships and your bottom line, healthy and growing.

Be Genuine

There's a lot of things you can do to build relationships as outlined in this article, but if your motivations seem disingenuous - as if you're just out for a sale - then your efforts will have the opposite effect. If you really want to succeed in building lasting rapport then it's important that you [avoid clichés](#) and show you actually care about your product, your customer and your business. But what steps can you take to avoid coming across as insincere when you actually do care? For starters, never fall into the trap of over-promising or over-committing. This not only stinks of desperation but worse will leave your customers feeling lied to and let down. Always act with [authenticity](#), honesty, and integrity and take ownership of your mistakes.

Know Your Customer's Personality Type

Another part of the art of relationship building includes taking time to assess your prospect's [personality type](#). A lasting rapport will look completely different from one customer to the next. While some people are happy to discuss their home life and interests, others prefer to keep things strictly business. Yet you can still build lasting rapport in both cases just make sure you understand your customer's comfort level when starting out a new relationship. Whatever their preferences, a meaningful relationship is always built on mutual trust and respect.

Listen

Discovering your customer's personality style and earning their trust and respect requires you to pay attention. [Listening skills](#) are perhaps the most important tool in your toolbox when it comes to building lasting rapport. Through active listening, you'll be able to start discovering their needs and preferences from your very first interaction. But building lasting rapport is not a onetime thing, you need to keep listening carefully as the relationship progresses. If you do, you'll remain up to date on what's important to them, how your product is working out, and what their changing needs may be.

Think Win-Win

No relationship is ever without conflict. The key to successful [negotiations](#) and overcoming objections with customers without damaging your relationship is to think win-win. In the consultative selling approach, you are a trusted advisor trying to do your best for your client and your company - always keep this in mind. Work hard to put your customer's needs at the forefront and frame your proposals in negotiations as a way for both parties to get the best result.

Share Some of Yourself

A real relationship is a two-way street. You can't hope to come across as genuine and build lasting rapport if you close yourself off. Of course, what you reveal is up to you and your own comfort level as well as that of your customer. But if your customer shares a personal anecdote, it's a good gesture if you share one too. Sharing some of yourself also means being yourself. Don't try to be someone you're not in sales; a successful approach is not one size fits all. To build lasting rapport you'll have to find your own way with clients - you can't simply copy what you see working for another rep. If customers feel that you're being yourself, they're far more likely to trust you and want to work with you. So let your personality shine!

Section: Being an Effective Team Player

How to Support Your Team to Drive Sales

Author: Canadian Professional Sales Association

Did you know that the most successful sales teams have a 30% higher level of sales support than average? It may appear to be a large margin, but according to a recent study by the [Harvard Business Review](#), it seems that sales support staff really are key to driving sales success. The study looked at 40 technology companies and analysed their sales data. What they found was interesting; the amount of [sales support](#) employed by the various organizations significantly impacted the efficiency of their sales departments as measured by ROI.

The pattern that emerged was that all the companies in the top 25% for sales ROI had a 30% higher level of sales support. In fact, the increase in sales support resulted in a sales ROI that was more than twice that of the bottom 25%. Pretty compelling figures. The team found that there was a "Goldilocks", optimal amount and type of [sales support and management](#). Companies had to be hitting this sweet spot of just the right level of sales support in order to reap the rewards.

Using the Harvard Business Review's findings, we've put together a step by step guide on how to support your team to drive sales in the tech sector:

Step One: Find the Sweet Spot of Sales Support

Structure your sales team so that 50%–60% of staff are in support functions. It may seem cost effective to hire less support staff, but this is a false economy, since those companies that devote less than 30% of their sales staff to support functions wind up with lower sales ROI. But beware going above the 60% mark for support staff. Having too high a share of sales support could also relegate you to the bottom 75% of sales ROI.

This makes sense. First of all, employing the 50%-60% level of support staff will free up your sales reps to go out there and SELL while at the same time saving you money since sales support staff cost less than high commission earning reps.

Step Two: Get the Right Composition of Support

Make sure you have enough operations and administrative support staff. These are invaluable team members because they let reps get out there and spend time with customers or [focus on inside sales duties](#), so think twice before you cut them in cost-saving programmes. The study found that the most successful companies had twice the number of operations and administrative support staff (at 27%) than those that performed less well (whose number of ops and admins was on average 12%).

Step Three: Balance Non-Managers to Managers

The report showed that the optimal ratio of non-manager to managers was 8:1. Those managers who had to supervise more than 10 people were ineffective, impacting the ROI. While a lower ratio was far too costly to be efficient.

Step Four: Use Digital to Become “Lean” Across the Entire Sales Process

The last big finding of the report was that going digital and automating some support processes helped increase efficiency. Digital support activities can enhance the efficiency of the process of matching sales bids to sales reps, reducing the time spent per bid by up to 50%.

It's clear that support staff are critical to driving up sales. By following the suggested support staff structures and ratios above, you can [optimize your sales team](#) and give your reps the support they need to focus on delivering sales.

Template: Decision Makers & Influencers

PURPOSE: Using the chart below, identify the various decision influences within a chosen key account from your sales territory.

ACCOUNT: _____

DECISION MAKERS & INFLUENCERS

ROLE	BUYER NAME	DECISION CRITERIA/ MOTIVES	PURPOSE OF MEETING & HOW OFTEN DO YOU MEET?
The Final Authority – signing the contract			
Users – day-to-day users of solution			
Advisors – key influencers in the process			

Coach(es) – biggest supporters			
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Is It More Important To Get Your Customers To Like You Or Trust You?

Author: Tibor Shanto

Sales is not without its share of wives tales or empty sayings, passed down from one generation of sales people to the next. Some are considered universal, despite the fact that it has been a long time since they related to anything in specific to selling consistently and successfully. But they sound good, and you generally get “bonus” points for saying them in the right discussion, on social media or sales seminars. In most instances, these are completely wrong, or off the mark, but go undisputed because they have taken cultural roots in the sales mythology.

One of these is the notion that “people buy from people they like”, which is not true at all. We have all bought from people we did not necessarily like or would want to spend time with outside the business at hand. What people really mean is that “people buy from people they trust”, but many sellers have difficulty building trust, and have a much easier time “getting liked”. Some are good at being likeable, others go to the most common denominator and resort to buying adoration. One fellow I was discussing the issue with this week, offered this when I asked him how his team achieves being liked: “a couple reps taking prospects to the Giants Rockies game on Thursday couple reps taking prospects to the Giants Rockies game on Thursday”. Gee, what do you do in non-Major League towns?

This is no different than the reps that say, “I’ll bring the coffee, how do you take it”, rather than dealing directly with objections or giving a sound reason to a buyer for meeting.

Sure it is effective, it perhaps gave you an illusion of being liked, until someone more “likeable” comes along. You don’t know how many times I speak to reps who lost existing accounts who say, “I thought he liked me”; sure he did till someone more likeable came along.

Instead, if you know how to grow, build, and maintain trust, you will gain a more solid foundation for a business relationship. And that is what we are dealing with a business relationship, if you are trustworthy in the way you do business, in how you help them reach their objectives, you will be on a much safer ground than if you pretend they like you. There are people we all trust that may not be at the top of our “like” list; but they are at the very top of the reliability list, capability list, straight intentions list, and so on. If you’re interested in starting to work on your trust index, there are a lot of options, I would recommend you start with Charles H. Green and work from there.

I have had clients who I knew did not like me in any particular way, but when it came to giving recommendation to others, and relying on for honest advice and helping their business, I have been their go-to person for years, because they trust me, and relied on the kind of work I do.

How to Get the Right Motivational Messages Through to Your Sales Team

Author: Canadian Professional Sales Association

Motivation is like water; it provides life for your team and organization, but it can so easily escape. Motivated teams have stronger business results, and so there is a strong argument to be made that managers and leaders are obligated to inspire and encourage their salespeople. However, [many are not successful at motivating teams](#), and their employees and organizations can pay the price. There are ways that you can ensure that you are getting the right motivational messages through to your sales team, however, and we've outlined them here.

Build Trust on Your Team

You can put up all the posters and make all of the speeches you like, but they will all be wasted if you don't have a strong foundation of [trust on your team](#). If your team doesn't believe that you have their interests in mind, or they don't believe that their other team members are there to support them, it is unlikely that they will suddenly feel inspired from a motivational message. Have an open and honest conversation with your team and work to fix the problems that they point out. When they see that relationships are headed in the right direction and that the team is stronger, they will be much more enthusiastic and willing to listen.

Understand Your Team Members' Goals

Any attempts to motivate your team members will fail if you are addressing the wrong goals and incentives. You need to first understand what your team cares about if you want to motivate them. Listen to them and pay attention to the things that excite them – their [commission is likely a factor](#), but they may be enthusiastic about team outings, contests, or praise and recognition. If they are looking to progress in their career, the prospect of a promotion will likely work to excite them. Once you understand the factors that really matter to your team, you can ensure that you use the right things to motivate them.

Pay Attention to Timing

Like everything in life, timing matters. Consider the frequency of your motivational messages, the context, and the method. It is important to offer motivational messages when your team succeeds, but also when they fail. It is also important to inspire everyone before you [kick off a major new initiative or target](#). You should also ensure that you use different channels to communicate. If you send emails with encouraging messages but you never say anything motivational in meetings, your team may begin to doubt your dedication to this cause. You also don't want to constantly repeat motivational messages because this will seem disingenuous. It will take some trial and error to get the balance right, but eventually you will figure out when to get these messages across.

Unlike water, motivation cannot be frozen and kept in a steady state indefinitely. You need to continually work to ensure that you are adapting your messages and your

methods to keep your team motivated. However, by following these guidelines, you will be able to adjust and alter to keep your team motivated long into the future.

Section: Engage in Continuous Learning

Template: Sales Development Planning

SALES PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING TOOL

PURPOSE: A Sales Professional Development Plan will map out a career plan to inspire your sales skills to reach a higher-level sales position. Document your 5-Step Closed-Loop Goals with S.M.A.R.T criteria to map out your long term and short term professional development goals to improve your sales skills or earn a sales position promotion.

Specific – Identify exactly what you want to achieve.

Measurable – Set out goals in such a way that you can measure your progress.

Achievable – Set smaller, more achievable goals and update them frequently.

Relevant – Goals should be relevant and consistent with the other objectives in your life.

Time-bound – Set a specific time frame for completing each of your goals.

UVP Creation & Competitive Advantage

1. Long Term Goal: 3 to 5-year goal

ie. To become the subject matter expert in... (relative to your industry) and present at industry/client conference by December 31, 20XX.

2. Short Term Goal: 3 to 5-year goal

ie. To research and write 4 articles/blogs on the topic of _____ by December 31, 20XX.

3. Weekly Plan:

ie. I will post one tip on Twitter and LinkedIn each week for a total of 50 tips this year.

4. Evaluate Your Activity: Evaluate your actions after each call

ie. Meet with my Sales Manager each quarter to evaluate progress and feedback from customers/industry.

5. Reset Objectives and upgrade the plan: The more activity, the greater the volume

ie. Revise Long Term Goals – I am going to become a subject matter expert, present at a conference, and win the _____ industry award for_____.

How to Inspire and Invigorate Your Team with Sales Training

Author: Canadian Professional Sales Association

Most people wouldn't associate corporate training with feelings of "inspiration" or "invigoration"; they are known more for dim meeting rooms, dry speakers, and uncomfortable chairs. However, training sessions don't have to be this way. Well-run [sales training](#) has the power to motivate and activate your team. Use these tips in your training to inspire your sales team.

1. Explain How Each Role Contributes to the Company Goals and Vision

People are more engaged in their jobs when they feel like their work is impacting the organization. Since many sales team members generate revenue, they are more likely to understand how they contribute to the company goals; however, emphasizing everyone's impact will remind the team that their work is valued. Use training as an opportunity to remind everyone on the team why each role contributes to the company vision in order to build engagement and inspire the team.

2. Strengthen Employee to Employee Relationships

Employee relationships are critical for engagement and results. A team that has great [inter-personal relationships](#) is more likely to share knowledge, feel motivated in their roles, and deliver results. Use training sessions to help fortify these relationships. You can incorporate team-building exercises, role-playing, and celebrations for recent successes into your training sessions to grow employee bonds and invigorate the team spirit.

3. Focus on Skills for Career Development

Salespeople are ambitious; they want to develop their skills and move up in their career. However, they can get caught up in day to day tasks that make them feel like they are not building the skills they need for their next role. Ensure that your training is focused on [career-development and skill-building](#) so that team members feel like they are growing.

4. Improve Processes and Eliminate Inefficiencies

Manual processes, repetition, and inefficiencies cause the team to feel frustrated and bored. Gather feedback from your team to determine where [processes can be improved](#), and use your training sessions to showcase and train the team on the improvements that you are making. The team will value that you are taking their feedback, and their job duties will become more interesting with the inefficiencies removed.

Sales team members that feel excited about their jobs are more likely to hit targets and deliver results for the organization. Don't overlook opportunities to inspire your team and reinforce their value. Use these strategies during your training sessions to motivate your team.

Identifying Your Team's Weaknesses and Training to Reach Success!

Author: Canadian Professional Sales Association

Remember when you were asked “tell us about your biggest weakness” in a job interview? Unfortunately, it's no less awkward covering weaknesses in a coaching scenario than it is in a job interview. However, uncovering and addressing your team's weaknesses head-on is the only way you will improve and succeed. The best sales leaders are [continually training and teaching](#) their teams. Find out how you can identify the areas for improvement on your team, and drive your organization to meet their goals.

Monitor Results on Several Different Projects or KPIs

Once in awhile, your team will have a bad week, a bad month, or a bad quarter. This isn't necessarily a reflection of their strengths and weaknesses – perhaps a key prospect or client was fired or quit, maybe the organization had delivery or supply chain problems, or weather affected demand. That's why it is critical to [measure your team's performance](#) over several different projects, months, and KPIs to get a true sense of their weaknesses. Only the trends will reveal the true picture. Once you have a few months and projects' worth of data, look at different stages of the funnel, the reasons that deals fell through, recurring revenue, or any other key metric that applies to your organization.

Talk to Your Team About Their Concerns and Areas for Improvement

Go straight to the source – the team – for the best information. [Hold one-on-one meetings](#) with your sales team and ask for feedback about the other members, where they feel they are struggling, and what resources they need. When you get some consistent responses, you'll know where the team needs assistance. Discussing failures and feedback can often seem risky to sales people, and they may fear that the feedback will be used to punish them in some way. Create a culture on your team where people feel comfortable talking about their failures without risking their job, and where this discussion is used productively to help the team improve.

Address Training Right Away

Sales teams are held to quarterly, monthly and sometimes even weekly goals. In this fast-moving field, there is no time to waste on putting together lengthy training plans. When you identify a weakness on your team, address it and [train your team](#) on the correct method as soon as possible. For instance, you may learn that your sales team is having trouble selling a new product or feature. It may be ideal to have training videos, documents, and other materials to help the team begin selling, but this could take weeks. Instead, focus on using what you do have, and train the team to know how to handle any objections that arise.

Success in sales is not the result of making more phone calls or being more aggressive (though you may need to do these things too). Success in sales is about carefully improving your overall practice every day and every week. You may not see overnight changes, but improving your team's weaknesses will lead to achieving your organization's goals.

Section: Developing your Personal Brand

Sell Yourself! The Art of Online Branding

Author: Canadian Professional Sales Association

Whether you're looking to connect with like minded people to expand your network, to find a new job, or to drive sales, online branding will be an integral part of your game plan.

In reality, how can someone know what you do or what you can offer if they don't know your name or how you can help? This is where online branding plays a huge role in helping you tell your story and connect with a wider audience.

When done effectively, online branding will help you position yourself as the go to solution for your audience by providing them with answers or solutions to a specific niche.

Getting Started with Online Branding

1. Decide on a Niche

You can't be everything to everyone. Zero in on who your [target market](#) is, and who you are best suited to connect with. Whether it's technology, wellness, food, entrepreneurship, sales, or anything in between, you need to position yourself as an expert in your chosen field.

2. Start Blogging

Assuming you already have a website (and if you don't it's time to create one), the next step is to create a blog. Your focus should be on quality over quantity. Start off by creating long form, informational posts that serve your niche. Blogging is a form of [inbound marketing](#) and it's an excellent way of building trust with your audience, and when your customers and audience trust you, they will follow and buy from you as well.

Make sure the look and feel of your blog is consistent with your website and the logo, colours, fonts, images, etc. all complement each other nicely. All of this makes up your brand so it should not be overlooked!

3. Share on Social Media

Now that you have a blog, you have great content to share with your social networks. Whether it's Facebook, Instagram, YouTube or LinkedIn, it's important to have a social presence.

Make sure your social profiles all match the same message you have on your website

and blog to maintain consistency. Most importantly, don't be afraid to show your personality, it's what will help you stand out!

Although this approach is not expensive, it requires an investment in time to get things going. By getting started with this three step approach to online branding, you'll be well on your way to creating a personal brand and connecting with others.

Now what are you waiting for? It's time to start branding yourself!

The Importance of Representing Your Company & Personal Brand

Author: Anthony Iannarino

Representing the Company Brand

Every company has a brand. That brand stands for something. It means something. One thing a brand does for a company is to differentiate it from its competitors. Great salespeople represent their company's brand. They tell the story of what that brand means, what the company stands for, and how it is different. They understand how to use this differentiation to win deals.

If a salesperson can't differentiate their offering in a competitive marketplace, they can't pull themselves out of the pack to get the prospect or client's attention. If they can't explain what makes their brand better than the other offerings (and do so using real, true brand-defining differentiators), they can't persuade prospects that choosing them over their competitors will make a difference. Customers select a brand because they believe what it stands for is better for them.

The downside to representing the company's brand alone is that it is no longer good enough.

Representing Your Brand

In addition to your company's brand, you must have your own brand. You have to stand for something. What you stand for has to be different than the many salespeople that call on your prospects and compete for their time and their business. It has to mean something more.

Your brand has to, in part, stand for the ability to create greater value for your customers. Your brand has to stand for doing what is right for the customer even when it is difficult. If your brand doesn't have meaning, your company's brand can't mean anything either ... you are your company. And sometimes, when all of the entries in the multi-attribute model spreadsheet are entered, the only thing that separates the deal winner from the deal loser is what your brand created. Did it create a vision of a better outcome? Did it create trust? Did it create the confidence that the customer's business results will be attained?

Conclusion

You have to develop your personal brand yourself. This is truly about personal and professional development. Only you can and develop the skills necessary to deliver on your brand's promise. You alone are responsible for your growth and development. I hope that these ideas have inspired you to think about the attributes that are essential to succeeding in sales today.

The Importance of Personal Branding in Sales

Author: Canadian Professional Sales Association

Today's top salespeople don't rely on acting like gatekeepers during the sales process. It is no longer just about qualifying and converting leads which come your way.

The highest-performing sales professionals are those that actively position themselves as a go-to resource within their given market. Let's consider some key steps to help your personal brand grow.

Distinguish your Personal Brand

Building a personal brand with a unique selling proposition - based on your expertise, experience, or skills - will help show you to be an influencer in your field and stand out from the crowd and set you up for longer term success.

To stand out from other sales pros out there vying for market share, start by identifying what makes you a better guide than your peers when it comes to helping prospects navigate through the buying process.

Consider what unique attributes you own which will show you to be a credible resource:

- Is it a particular skill such as social selling or pitching?
- Is it your experience within a sector?
- Is it your ability to share authentic and helpful content with buyers?
- Perhaps you already have a strong network and are ready to leverage that community to share ideas and grow your personal brand?

Build an Online Presence

Providing education through content is a powerful and trusted channel for salespeople wishing to develop and grow their online brand within a specific market. Content, of course, comes in many forms and can include written articles, podcasts, videos, webinars and in-person speaking sessions. For now, let's focus on your online brand.

A key part of building your personal brand as a sales professional is to own a digital base that belongs to you entirely and where you can publish your content and interact with your audience and social media presence on a channel that you (not your current employer) owns.

In the shorter term, you can start sharing your expertise through social channels such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook.

To be taken seriously as a thought leader, you'll need a to connect your channels through a website or blog and build out a longer term content calendar. With so many simple CMS options out there, anyone with modest online skills can create a site quickly. The bigger challenge is often writing the copy for your pages, articles and insights to grow the longer-term following. Be mindful, however, of your employment contract and any restrictions it may place on business-related projects you can and cannot manage outside of brand properties.

Leveraging Your Brand and Social Selling

Once you've established your brand, it is time to put it out there. Arguably the biggest and most impactful way to leverage the power of your new personal brand is through social selling.

If you're going to start small, it's key that you choose a channel where your target audience demographic 'hangs out' so that you can maximize your exposure and engagement to them.

As the selling landscape continues to shift, (social selling becomes the norm, and AI continues to streamline processes), the top-performing companies of the future will be those who invest in providing their sales execs with the knowledge and tools to grow their personal brands and exploit communication technologies.

What Are You Waiting For?

Start building your personal brand today. It takes time so why not start laying the foundations?

Ideally, your company will recognise the longer-term [benefits to their bottom line in helping your efforts to grow your personal brand.](#)

To those managers out there who are worried about their employees growing their personal brands and then flying the nest...sure, eventually salespeople will leave the company with an enhanced personal brand. That's inevitable. But while they are with you, they will open up new networks and opportunities with which companies who are still afraid of allowing employees to utilise newer social selling methods, simply cannot compete.

Personal Brand Damage Control: 8 Tips to Stay on Top at Work

Author: Brenda Bence

Every day at work, you run the risk of damaging your personal brand - even if you don't think you have one. How is this possible? Well, your personal brand is the way people perceive, think, and feel about you in relation to others. The people you work with already have perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about you, so just by virtue of being "you" in the workplace, you already have a personal brand.

The question is whether you have the personal brand you want. Is your brand bringing you greater success, or is it actually holding you back? Not knowing the answer to that question can mean the difference between a career that stays land-locked and a career that skyrockets.

So, what are the best ways to keep personal brand damage under control?

1. Get clear about what your current brand stands for right now. This means discovering how people perceive, think, and feel about you in the present moment. Enlist a friend you trust to ask several work colleagues for the top five words they would use to describe you. Are you described the way you want to be? If not, your personal brand needs some adjustments.

2. Determine where you need to make changes. If you aren't happy with the results of your research, that's good news. Why? Because it will clarify exactly what you need to change in order to create the brand you want.

3. Define carefully what you want your brand to be. Once you have an idea of where your current personal brand is failing, you need to define your desired personal brand. Most people struggle with their personal brand because they haven't taken the time to clearly define it. Not having a personal brand definition is like meandering from point A to point B without a map. You might get there eventually, but you'll make a lot of wrong turns along the way.

So, take some time to consider: How do you want to be known? What are your strengths, and how can you best fill the needs of your brand's "target audience" - i.e., your boss, your colleagues, and/or your customers?

4. Learn how to communicate your brand effectively. Defining your desired personal brand is an important first step, but if it remains on a piece of paper in a drawer, it won't do you much good. In other words, no one's perceptions, thoughts, or feelings about you will change unless and until you communicate the personal brand you really want. So, keep your personal brand definition in mind as you go about the top five activities that all of us do every day. These activities best communicate what you stand for: Your Actions, Reactions, Look, Sound, and even your Thoughts. The key to success is being consistent with these five activities - in what you say, do, and think - day-in and day-out. Do you act like someone with your desired personal brand would act? Do you stop yourself before reacting negatively to situations that arise? Do you look and sound like someone with your desired personal brand? And yes, do you think like someone with your desired personal brand? Thoughts are incredibly powerful and can not only affect your own feelings but how others perceive, think, and feel about you as well.

5. Avoid damaging your personal brand. After you have defined your personal brand and created a plan for communicating it, you also need to take special care to keep it intact. How do you do that? One way is to watch others, and learn from their mistakes. Even if you don't know anyone personally who has damaged their personal brand, you have certainly heard of celebrities who have made serious blunders. For some of them, the damage has been so severe that their careers have never bounced back. So, pay attention to what others do that damages their personal brands, and avoid doing the same things.

6. Be aware of your own mistakes, and fix them quickly! If you do commit a personal brand blooper, do whatever is necessary to fix it. Apologize for it, show that you take responsibility for your errors, and go out of your way to correct them. This works wonders to promote a positive personal brand.

7. Learn from your errors to avoid making them again. When you realize your brand has taken a beating after a mistake, ask yourself: "What did I learn from this?" Write down the lessons, and make a commitment to never make that mistake again.

8. Keep a good sense of humor! Most importantly, if you make a personal branding mistake, be willing to laugh at yourself. Everyone likes to work with someone who doesn't take themselves too seriously.

Remember: 24-7-365

The truth is: Your personal brand is either working for or against you 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you aren't taking control of it by consciously defining and communicating a brand that brings you greater success, you may actually be damaging it. You may even prevent yourself from reaching your full potential. So, create the personal brand you want today, and learn how to harness it. It can be one of the most powerful ways to move forward in your career.

How to Improve Your Sales by Strengthening Your Personal Brand

Author: Canadian Professional Sales Association

It's a widely known fact that brand preferences sway the decision making of consumers around the world. The greater the brand affinity that you're able to create between your prospective customer and your brand, the more likely a sale is to happen.

The same holds true when building your personal brand. Creating trust from your audience through your unique brand is the first step to increasing the likelihood of future sales and customer loyalty. There are several ways you can do this.

Clearly Define Your Brand Voice

Establishing and leveraging your [brand voice](#) is important. It paves the way for consistency in all that you do going forward. If your brand voice is consistent and clear, it becomes easier for your audience to understand what your product or service is, and why they should choose you over the competition.

Be Your Own Promoter

Actively [promoting yourself](#) on social media and blogs is vital, as your future customers won't necessarily stumble upon these pages by chance. Guest writing for other blogs is a great way to gain exposure with a different audience in your own industry that you may not otherwise have come across. Engage with your social media followers by responding to comments, just as you would do with prospective customers on the phone or in person. They could become customers as a result.

Become a Thought Leader

Building a personal brand takes time, and it can seem tricky to truly distinguish yourself from the competition. [Writing and publishing compelling thought leadership pieces](#) on your website and social media pages will allow you to establish your personal brand by showing your audience that you are invested in the industry. Keep on top of news and staying relevant is also important. Your potential customers are more likely to gravitate toward a brand that is ahead of the curve.

Grow and Keep Track of Your Contact List

Attend industry conferences, even if just to [network and socialize](#), and keep track of everyone you meet. You never know what opportunities can arise, not just for you, but also that might benefit one of your contacts. Being able to reach out, without asking for anything in return, is a way to keep your business top of mind for that person next time they or someone they know needs a product or service you can offer.

Strengthening your personal brand is a constantly evolving process, and one that you can continuously adapt as time goes on. By further developing the fundamentals of your personal brand, you will be well on your way to establishing recognition and building trust among your customer base, and improving sales in the long run.

Professional Sales Conduct Challenge: Become an Expert

Instructions: Now that you have completed reading the articles, apply your knowledge and expertise by answering the following questions.

1. Which of the following is not an example of how to encourage integrity in your sales team and create a working environment that's perfect for sales success?

- a) Model the Behaviour You Want to See
- b) Share Your Vision of Sales
- c) Believe In Your Product and Make Them Believe Too
- d) Reward Integrity Not Just Numbers
- e) Build a siloed work environment

Answer: e

2. From Harvard Business Review's findings, name the four steps on how to support your team to drive sales in the tech sector:

- Step 1.
- Step 2.
- Step 3.
- Step 4.

Answer:

- 1. Step One: Find the Sweet Spot of Sales Support
- 2. Step Two: Get the Right Composition of Support
- 3. Step Three: Balance Non-Managers to Managers
- 4. Step Four: Use Digital to Become "Lean" Across the Entire Sales Process

3. What is not a way of building lasting rapport with your customers ?

- a) Being Genuine
- b) Calling customers once a day
- c) Knowing your Customer's Personality Type
- d) Listening
- e) Thinking Win-Win
- f) Sharing some of yourself

Answer: b

4. What are four examples of how you can be motivated?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

- 1. Explain How Each Role Contributes to the Company Goals and Vision
- 2. Strengthen Employee to Employee Relationships
- 3. Focus on Skills for Career Development
- 4. Improve Processes and Eliminate Inefficiencies

5. In your own words, why is it important for sales professionals to have an online sales presence?