

Subject: Week 70 Learnings - Customer management Skills
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Dear All

[REDACTED] Watching the good presentations made me ask myself about the skills needed for great customer management

Customers are the backbone of a business and are the reason for the company's fortunes. For a company, the salespeople [REDACTED] are the interface between the customer and ABG business. A smart sales person gives an enormous advantage [REDACTED]. I have seen many senior managers not meet their key customers and delegate this as a chore to people below in the hierarchy. I believe a company wins when its salespeople have the following 5 skills:

1. Customer management skill No 1 : Knowing your customers business

Many sales people know their product, what they sell, why they sell it. Very few sales people know the customers business beyond that. Customers are happy when the sales person knows about their business. This needs the sales person to be curious about the customer business and how he can help the customer. The sales person can create opportunities for more sales if he knows this.

2. Customer management skill No 2 : Keeping a track of all meetings and commitments

Sales people end up in meeting after meeting without track of the last meeting and keeping minute minutes of the meetings. Technology helps a salesperson track every meeting, every action, and every update. Unfortunately, I have seen very few sales people do this. This also helps the senior management when they visit if there are proper records, we need to develop this in cement and textiles with the IT team.

3. Customer management skill No 3: Owning the company

I have seen many sales people say that production is the problem, factory is the problem, logistics is the problem and accounts is the problem. A good salesperson owns the company and seeks to resolve the issue. The customer is not bothered where the back end problem is, he or she wants the sales person to resolve it.

4. Customer management skill no 4: Listening

Many sales people are extroverts and love a good chat. When sales people are with senior managers, they want to talk a lot more in front of their customers. Great sales people listen more than they talk, they get the customers to open up. Listening to a customer is also a sign of respect that you value his business.

5. Customer management Skill No 5 : Making the connections in the eco system

We are in an era of dependent growth and hence a customer cannot grow on his own. A good sales person can help connect the person to others in the eco system for the mutual benefit of both. In the textiles business, the garmenter wants connection to someone who supplies a different yarn, someone who is a convertor etc. I feel we need to train our sales people better, equip them with more technology and get the discipline right.

Feedback welcome

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