

How not to sell

Here we are—it's Black Friday, and plenty of businesses want your business. Between extended (way extended) hours and special deals, people are being lured in to buy. Most of these people have a very specific need in mind (a Christmas gift for their child or a flat screen TV for the family room) and are going in with focus.

Which leads me to an experience I had on Tuesday (the day I went to the mall, because, frankly, there is nothing I need so much that I will fight people and crowds today). It was a classic case of how not to sell.

I went in to a shoe store—with the intent of shopping for SHOES. I selected a couple of pairs and asked the clerk for my size. She said "We are having a sale on our handbags—20% off." I nodded. Then, she brought the shoes out. I slipped them on, and found that they were a bit loose in the heel. She hadn't been paying too much attention to me, and finally asked me how they fit. I said they were loose. She offered to measure my foot...I declined (I already know my shoe size). Then I selected another pair. She brought them out, and she told me the store has a great deal on socks...get a hole in them and get them replaced for life. I nodded once again. I left the store with no shoes, socks or handbags.

The salesperson was trying to sell everything except what I wanted. Most likely, "corporate" told its people to upsell and gives a bonus/commission for every non-shoe item sold. But, in this case, this particular salesperson lost sight of what her job is in essence—to sell shoes. In order to do so, she would have had to focus on what I wanted. She could have asked if I was looking for a casual or dressy shoe or whether I needed a wider width, or offered an alternative suggestion when I told her the shoes she brought did not fit. **Instead, she ignored my needs and focused on her script (mention sale on purses,**

mention lifetime warranty on socks). How not to sell, plain and simple.

To sell, you have to focus on what your customer wants. That is also plain and simple.

The number 1 marketing tip

Are you trying to sell something? A product or a service? You probably are if you are reading this post, and my blog generally. You want more people to know about what you do, what you produce, what you sell. That is the entire point of any marketing communications effort.

However, beyond your product brochure, your social media strategy and your web page lies something much more important in your quest to sell: what it is that you are selling, exactly. Are you selling a product? If so, what is that product? What makes it good? What gives it the edge over other similar products in the marketplace? Are you providing a service? What does that service do for the customer? Why does the customer need that service?

I bring these questions up because the number one marketing tip is this:

Know your product or service.

If you don't, you will not be able to sell it to anyone. Period.

Let me give you an example. I was shopping for mascara the other day at a department store cosmetics counter. I wear contact lenses so mascaras that flake are not an option, since it would make my eyes water. I had been buying one particular

type but wanted to try something different. I asked the saleswoman about several different types. She could not explain what the differences were, and whether they would be suitable for me other than to assure me that they would be fine. I was not convinced because she did not seem to understand her product. I ended up buying the same old product because I knew it. She did not sell me. And the reason she did not sell me is because she simply did not know her product.

I don't care if you are selling mascara or high end real estate. If you don't know what you are selling people will not buy it. It really is that simple.