

Getting to Yes

The first of four abilities that can get you there

By Terry Begue

As promised in the last issue of APC, I'll dive deeper into the four abilities that will put you on a different playing field from your competition. These same abilities have allowed me to consistently close eight out of 10 prospects in my painting business for years now.

Before getting started, it's important to know that in the eyes of our customers we all appear the same from a technical point of view. If all a customer is looking for is a good paint job, they can go pretty much anywhere, right? It's your responsibility to help your prospective clients learn:

- What you're all about as a person and as a professional
- What you truly stand for
- How you will make their life a little easier, a little better

The person who communicates the greatest value is the one who gets noticed, remembered and probably hired to do the job.

So what do people value? In a word - trust. But way before trusting you, they need to believe you genuinely have their best interests at heart. That's the very core of selling. Even before that your prospect must like you enough as a person to open up and allow you the opportunity to sell to him or her. Always keep in mind that when given a choice people prefer to do business with people they like. This is why "likability" is the critical first step in the process of positive persuasion that leads to sales.

Here are three things you can do today to help you to become the likable choice.

How's your Demeanor?

Are you a likable person? While you're trying to figure them out, they're trying to figure you out. They're judging everything you do, every word you say,

every move you make. You're in the driver's seat. You decide - good or bad, funny or serious - what that experience will be like for them ... and for you as well.

Enthusiasm is contagious. People naturally want to be around confident, optimistic people. Have fun with your customers; it shows that you're confident and you believe in yourself and what you offer. Treat them as though they're the most important people on the planet, because for the short time you're with them, they are.

- Are you smiling when you answer the phone? They can tell.
- Are you helping them solve ALL their problems or only the ones that pay well?
- Do they know you're there for them as a trusted advisor? People rarely make buying decisions based solely on technical skills or price.
- Are you treating them with respect? They value and pay more for the way you make them feel.

It's All About Them

Think about whom you like and enjoy hanging out with in your own life. Probably people who you feel listen to you, care about you and understand what's important to you. Show your prospects you care by taking the time to listen. I mean really listen and understand what matters to them. The more you take a genuine interest and ask about them, the more they will like you.

If you talk about yourself or your company too soon, they'll get a sense you're there only to sell them something. When that happens, ugly sales resistance rears up and makes your life more difficult. They can see you only view them only as your next paycheck.

Spend your time asking thought-provoking questions, listening and being impressed. There will be plenty of time later for impressing them. People prefer to work with people they believe understand and respect them.

Understand Buyer Motives

Selling is a process, and an important part of the process is knowing what they are really buying and then providing it. We've all heard the phrase "Sell the sizzle, not the steak." It's true.

When I first started my painting business, I thought I knew what people wanted. Painting, right? Wrong. Sure, painting was the end result, but as I said at the beginning of this article, they can find that anywhere.

Put yourself in your prospects' shoes. What would prevent you from purchasing what you offer? What important questions would go through your mind?

- Will this person really do what he or she promises to do?
- How can I be sure I'm getting the best value?
- What have others experienced when using this person's services?

These are questions that may not be brought up verbally, but believe me, they are in the back of your prospects' minds. When you answer them to their satisfaction, it will move you closer to a sale. Selling boils down to how well you communicate your value. What wins jobs is your ability to put clients at ease.

We feel far better about accepting a recommendation from someone who likes us and gives us a confident feeling over someone we feel uncertain or unsure about. Don't forget we're all in the relationship business first and foremost.

When all factors are equal, people do business with people who seem to care the most about them and the quality of their work. Never view your customers as just a paycheck. Treat them like good friends, and you'll be the likable choice every time. **APC**

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