



DO YOU SET THE RIGHT EXPECTATIONS?

Every time a potential customer has contact with you or your company, an expectation has been set as to how the business relationship is going to work. If a website promises 24/7 technical support, it creates an expectation. Or if you promise installation within 24 hours, the customer now expects it. Why? Because you told them to!

It's been said many times that prospects must feel they can trust you before they will buy from you. But what does "trust you" really mean? It's simple really. Prospects need to know they can depend on you and your company to do exactly what you tell them you will do. It's nothing more than that. When they believe you will fulfill your commitments, you have created the trust needed for them to buy. If you over-promise and under-deliver however, you may lose the opportunity forever.

So why do sales people have a difficult time building trust? Because prospects have been let down before. They have been disappointed by sales representatives who made commitments they couldn't keep, and now they are leery of all sales representatives. They just don't believe you to be trustworthy, so you are going to have to prove it! You can't change the past experiences of your prospect, but you can start early in the sales process to show the prospect how you do business.

Every time you receive a compliment from a customer, ask if you can quote them. Make a list of all of these testimonial quotes and include one or two every time you correspond with a prospect. When you send a prospecting email, include a quote from a happy customer. Include a whole list of testimonials with every proposal.

Ask for reference letters from all your customers. Have copies with you at all times in your pitch book. Frame them and hang them on your office walls where visitors can view them. Giving prospects references before they ask for them is extremely effective in building trust.

Above all else, never make a commitment you can't keep. If you are not prepared to do service calls, don't tell customers to call you whenever there is a problem. They will only get frustrated when they get delayed in your voice mail. Provide them with a "Who to Contact When" list instead. You are the quarterback of the team, not the whole team.

Do what you said you were going to do, when you said you were going to do it, and you build trust. Exceed a customer's expectations, and you have set yourself as a trusted business advisor. Break one promise, however, and you have done more damage than if you never made the promise in the first place. Remember, when in doubt, under-promise and over-deliver!

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Susan A. Enns is managing partner of B2B Sales Connections, Canada's premier niche job board and career training website for business to business sales professionals. She has a proven track record of success, with over 22 years of direct sales, management and executive level business to business experience. She has written the downloadable e-courses "Action Plan For Sales Success" and "Action Plan For Sales Management Success", and as the B2B Sales Coach, she writes and edits the company's newsletter, AIM HIGHER. Participating on the Leadership Executive of the Sales Professionals of Ottawa since 2008, she is currently the association's Vice President. For more information, visit www.b2bsalesconnections.com or contact Susan directly at senns@b2bsalesconnections.com or www.linkedin.com/in/susanenns.