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RETAILING

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Enthusiasm that sells

I WAS IN MELBOURNE a couple of months ago having been invited to do a couple of speaking engagements to small business owners. When I am in Melbourne, I love to visit the famous Lygon St, Carlton, and have dinner with friends or clients.

Because of my passion for selling, I enjoy the experience more. When I am approached by various restaurateurs to dine at their establishment, I haggle with them to get the best deal, while the people who come to dine with me either burst out in laughter or go red in embarrassment.

At one particular establishment, Alpino, I was absolutely blown away by one gentleman who was approaching by-passers. He would move up smoothly and state “I can only promise you that if you eat here tonight it will be the best meal you ever had! And just to prove it I will give you a free round of drinks”.

I replied “A free round of drinks!” He could see the excitement in my eyes, he knew he’d won me over and as he gently put his arm on my back and pointed us to the tables he said “I see there is five of you, come sit down, you won’t be disappointed”. We all sat down, and in the space of 30 minutes Alpino went from only three tables full to being absolutely packed out, as they brought out more tables and chairs to meet customer needs.

It’s the reward that motivates

I learnt that the gentleman was one of the owners of the business. He had skin in game, hence his passion and persuasiveness in ensuring that we buy his product and have a memorable experience. Generally this is the case in retail businesses; the owner of the

business is the best salesperson, because they believe in what they are selling. What lets a lot of retail businesses down is the total lack of passion and sales skills from the staff on the floor.

Characteristics of a great salesperson

There is one thing which separates a good sales person from a great salesperson. If you want a sure way to convert more sales and make more money, live by this – Sell yourself before you sell the product (or service). In other words, people buy you before they buy your product.

To be able to do this there are three key things that you need to do:

1. Believe in yourself
2. Believe in your product
3. Believe in your company

People love to buy off people who are enthusiastic, and generally that enthusiasm is developed when the salesperson believes in what they do and are passionate about it. This passion is transferred in the sales process, and this ‘transfer of emotion’ is when a relationship with the customer is born.

Think of it in this way: when my wife goes shopping with her friends, and they are trying on clothes and deciding what to buy, my wife would more likely make the purchase when her friends get excited by a particular dress she tries on. This is the same as any normal sales process; if the salesperson is excited when selling to the customer, the customer will more likely buy the product because this emotional transfer has broken down all the barriers, and built a relationship of trust.

What holds people back from being a great salesperson? There are two main limitations which hold most people back from achieving their potential in sales:

- **Poor self-esteem:** The biggest barrier holding you back from becoming a success in sales is your ‘self esteem’. How you view yourself will determine how you believe others look at you. If I don’t like myself, I will be scared the customer won’t like me, and so I probably won’t have the confidence I need to make the sale.
- **The fear of rejection:** This is the greatest limitation, which will prevent you from achieving sales success. That is being scared of the customer telling you to ‘rack off’! Guess what, most people say NO the first time, so get over it!

The lesson learnt

So here is what you can learn from Alpino. Motivate your staff by giving them a commission that rewards them for their efforts. I always say that ‘flat fee equals flat performance’. Also you need to find enthusiastic people who can transfer that enthusiasm to the customer, and train them so that they are experts on selling, picking up those vital buying signals (as my friend at Alpino’s did as he guided me towards the table) and experts on your products. Selling can be brutal at times as rejection kicks in, but your best salespeople understand it is a numbers game, and that they just keep going until someone buys. ●

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