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## RETAILING TONY GATTARI

# Giving the chop to poor sales techniques

**BARBECUES ARE** generally an emotional purchase for males. A man might struggle in the kitchen, but do not try to tell him that he cannot master the outdoor kitchen – the barbecue.

If a man was to shop alone in this retail outlet, generally he would be afraid to come home with such a large purchase (you cannot exactly hide it), so to get acceptance on the purchase the man would bring his wife along. The wife's motivation was to keep the husband in check, and not spend too much.

This salesperson fully understood how the game was played. The salesperson would wait until the husband and wife approached the barbecue before commencing any dialogue. He would start off by establishing what they were wanting in a barbecue, and the husband would give the normal answer of cooking sausages and steaks when friends and family came over. The wife would nod in agreement. Then the salesperson started the process of asking deeper questions "Have you ever roasted on a barbecue before?"

"No" the husband would reply, looking at his wife. They were now both curious, wondering how on earth do you roast something on a barbecue. The salesperson would show them where to place the baking tray, how to control the burners so that the heat would cook around the roasting meat, how hickory chips could be added to give the meat a smokey flavour, and how the hood had a temperature gauge. He would then show them how they could use a rotisserie, and cook chickens just like in the take-away shops. The couple would be amazed, the husband would start to dream about the banquets he could have.

"Do you normally cook stir fry?" asks the salesperson, and the wife would reply,

"Yes". So while the husband was still dreaming about banquets, the wife was now in her own little fantasy, dreaming about cooking stir fries, and not just preparing salads. The salesperson would show the wife how to use a side burner, with a wok.

While this was going on, the store manager would have the local scout group cook a barbecue in the foyer of the store to raise money. The familiar smells of summertime feasts – sausages, steaks, and onion – would filter through the air. Now the dreams were becoming real, through the sense of smell and the sounds of a sizzling grill.

The husband and wife were sold. They would, on average, come in for a 4-burner barbecue, but then would walk away with a roasting hood, a rotisserie, a side burner, and a bag of hickory chips. After the defensive mechanisms were broken down and after making a decision on the big purchase, the salesperson would ask a question about prolonging the life of the barbecue. "How do you normally clean your barbecue?" and the husband would reply, "Oh, I just use warm soapy water."

The salesperson would look at them in shock, and would educate the couple that if you wash the plates and grill with soapy water, they would rust. So the couple took the salesperson's advice and would purchase the cleaning pack. Plus a gas bottle with gas, as well as gas gauge so that you could detect if the gas bottle had a leak, and a bag of fat absorbers, to reduce the amount of 'fat fires'.

On average, the couple would spend more than double on added value items than the main product, the barbecue. This was achieved because the retailer:

- Had a salesperson that was trained to ask questions about the total use of the

barbecue. Poorly trained salespeople only sell the barbecue, because it is assumed that it is the only purchase the customer wants to make. The customer generally has an issue, problem or a need that they want to be solved. Asking deeper questions reveals what the customer really is after. In this case the husband wants an experience and to show off his new toy, the wife wants to be more involved in the barbecue experience; instead of just preparing the salad in the kitchen she can now cook roasts and stir fries.

- The 'total experience' was packaged in the store. The smells and sounds of the barbecue cooking, and the demonstration by the salesperson, made the couple feel like they were physically cooking the barbecue, rather than looking at a product. Engaging the customer in the experience is very important in the purchasing process.

Your business needs to find out the customer's needs and develop a package of solutions. At Harvey Norman, our success in the computer industry was because we developed a 'one-stop shop', where you could buy all your hardware, software, and peripherals. This is called adding value through servicing the channel. The channel is your consumer, whether it is an individual or another business, they both have needs that need to be serviced. ●

■ The author, Tony Gattari, is the Managing Director of the Achievers Group. He built Harvey Norman's computer business from \$12 million to \$565 million in nine years.

Website: [www.achieversgroup.com.au](http://www.achieversgroup.com.au)  
Email: [tony@achieversgroup.com.au](mailto:tony@achieversgroup.com.au)  
Phone: (02) 9440 7373