

Denver Business Journal - April 14, 2008

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## DENVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

Friday, April 11, 2008

# How to avoid being stigmatized as you go about your sales job

Denver Business Journal - by [Garry Duncan](#)

The dictionary defines stigma as "a mark of disgrace or infamy; a stain or reproach, as on one's reputation."

Selling tends to carry a stigma around it, especially with many non-selling professionals such as financial providers, engineers, accountants, consultants and other service providers.

This is probably because there are so many bad salespeople. Because most of us do more buying than selling, the chances of having more negative than positive experiences with salespeople are better.

But don't generalize. After all, we don't say medicine is bad because there are bad doctors, or that leadership is bad because there are bad leaders. It would be correct to apply the stigma only to select sellers, not the profession.

In the last couple of decades, the phrase "consultative selling" gained popularity; it means sellers thoroughly explore needs, have interactive conversations, and provide custom solutions rather than a one-product or service-oriented pitch.

Unfortunately, consultative selling is more often a label than reality. Too many sellers ask a few questions and then jump to a routine presentation, thinking they're doing a consultative sale. And therein lies the problem.

One reason for the stigma occurs when a presentation takes place too soon, or the seller gives too much information or irrelevant information. Eyes glaze over, body language retreats and the flee response sets in.

Ask yourself what your experience is when you make presentations, or suggest solutions based on implied or assumed need. Resistance and rejection occur most often when selling starts too soon. Consider your own experience, and you'll agree receptivity and closed deals increase when the client has asked for a presentation or has an acknowledged need.

If you have to sell, but don't consider yourself professionally in sales, you don't have to live with the stigma associated with selling. There are some things you can do to avoid looking and sounding like your worst dream:

- Stop assuming needs.
- Have conviction about what you do without overbearing enthusiasm.
- Build consensus with your client.
- Keep reality in perspective, because not everyone will buy.
- Recognize your own instincts and feelings, and be authentic.

Lawyers, engineers, accountants, financial professionals and others don't make assumptions in their due diligence. Likewise, don't make assumptions that others need what you're selling. Gain evidence of buyer need first.

Keep it simple. Is the need acknowledged and something that the prospect wants addressed? Can they or are they willing to give you a decision and to pay your fees should they like what you offer? After they meet these criteria, it's the right time to make a presentation, do a proposal or give a demo.

You should have passion about your offerings and the solutions they bring, and present with conviction. But also recognize that not everyone needs what you have. Until a prospect admits need, unbridled enthusiasm will only alienate, adding to the negative perception.

There are dozens of definitions for selling, such as providing solutions, facilitating buying, persuading, solving problems and more. Whatever you want to call it, remember selling is ultimately the exchange of something (usually money) for something else (usually a product or service). That means both parties have to agree or have consensus.

Selling isn't one person doing something to another. It's unrealistic to think everyone is going to agree with you or like what you have.

Don't let yourself get in the way of the sales process. Keep sales in perspective. Hearing "no" isn't the end of your business life or your world. Of course, no one likes it, but don't put unnecessary pressure on yourself by thinking you can sell to everyone. It's not going to happen.

Most professions have to work with "no." They all move on and learn from it. Learn to accept "no," or change professions.

Learn to recognize your own instincts and feelings. This makes it easier to recognize and involve the emotions of others.

Malcolm Gladwell, author of "Blink," offers examples of how our immediate instinctual feelings guide our decisions. Science is accumulating data supporting how the brain's amygdala (shown in research to perform a primary role in the processing and memory of emotional reactions) creates emotion and feeling before the nerve messages travel to the analytical component of the brain.

Perhaps now we can say selling to emotion is a scientifically proven process.

Be authentic and build trust. Talk from your heart, speak straightforwardly, follow up on doing what you say you're going to do, and say what you think respectfully and tactfully.

Be human and don't come across as if you're in a formulated process. Be humble and empathetic; it goes a long way.

Selling correctly is a great profession.

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