

How to Communicate Effectively during the Sales Process

by John Chapin

In theory sales is pretty simple: **communicate the right way with the right people, and you'll make sales.** It's in practice that most people complicate the issue. So how do you keep it simple?

Assuming you're selling something where someone has to deal with you for any length of time, in other words, you're not selling batteries at Walmart, **you need to get several points across, one: you care, two: you're trustworthy, three: you understand their problem, and four: you're competent and can solve their problem.**

That said, **effective communication begins with mindset.** First, you must be completely sold on and have confidence in your product, your company, and you. Next, you have to have empathy for the people you're selling to and you must put them first, before your company, your product, the sale, and even before you. If you enter the sales conversation with confidence, caring, and compassion, putting the other person's needs first, you're off to a good start.

Next is preparation. You need to know your product, the competition, how to identify the needs, wants, and desires of the prospect, how to present your product solutions, answers to objections, and you must be able to close.

Once you have the proper mindset and are prepared to sell, here are the other communication rules to follow:

Rule 1: Be honest and authentic.

Rule 2: Agree with people. Never argue or debate. Rarely will you get anywhere by beginning a conversation by disagreeing with someone. When you push back, most people dig their heels in even further. Start by agreeing, let them be right, build some rapport, and then start to shift the conversation.

Rule 3: Listen well. The better you listen, the more people will like you because most of us are not listened to during the day. While we are speaking, the other person is thinking about what they're going to say. Especially on initial calls, you want to be listening far more than you speak, about 70 to 80% of the time. Take notes if necessary and make sure you actually hear what is being said. Read between the lines and wait five seconds after someone is done talking before you speak.

Rule 4: The most important part of communication is the mindset of the audience. What is going through their brain? What are they thinking? If they think it's green and you think it's red, you'd better figure out *why* they think it's green and how you may be able to educate them as to why it's actually red. If you're going to connect and communicate effectively, you need to be able to see things from their viewpoint.

Rule 5: People listen via their favorite radio station: WIIFM (what's in it for me). Focus on the other person and what they are interested in. Why should they be listening to you? Why should they care about what you're saying? Use "you" versus "I" language and ask good questions to find out what's important to them.

Rule 6: Always speak in benefits. Never give a feature without the resulting benefit. Again, what does the feature mean to them? How does it save them time, money, effort, energy, headaches, or make their life better?

Rule 7: Be extremely responsive and answer client/prospect communications as quickly as possible. Also answer calls and e-mails at night and on the weekends.

Rule 8: Do what you say you'll do when you say you'll do it. Then go one more step and go above and beyond, doing more than you promise.

Rule 9: Everything affects your communication and how people hear you. You will be judged what you wear, how you speak, the car you drive, the pen you use, and everything else that the senses can pick up.

Rule 10: Make sure your body language, facial expressions, eye movements, tone of voice, and words match the point you're trying to get across. Most of communication is non-verbal.

Rule 11: Don't use industry-speak, jargon, acronyms, or words the other person is not familiar with.

Rule 12: Speak intelligently about your product or service. If you don't know the answer to a question, be honest, and then follow up with an answer as quickly as possible.

Rule 13: Deliver important communication in person and don't delegate it.

Rule 14: Document communication when necessary.

Rule 15: Be scripted and know exactly what to say in each and every prospect and client situation. Role play and practice your scripts constantly with others and yourself.

Rule 16: In most cases too much communication is better than not enough.

Rule 17: Don't wait to communicate. When there is a potential issue, the more time passes, the worse the situation usually gets.

Rule 18: Always follow an e-mail with a phone call or text message (whichever medium the person prefers) and sometimes a physical mailing. You can't assume they saw your e-mail.

Rule 19: Communicate based upon facts, not assumptions. Clear up assumptions by asking questions. An e-mail in all capital letters may mean it's easier to proof-read e-mails before they go out, not that the person is mad at you.

Rule 20: Communicate based upon facts, not opinions. “It’s cold in the room”, is an opinion. “It’s 65 degrees”, is a fact in that it can be proven to be either true or false. When people start to argue opinions such as religion and politics as facts, that’s when we end up in wars. When someone says, “I can’t sell in my territory because of our pricing structure.” The first question to ask is, “Is that a fact or an opinion?”

Rule 21: No negative talk. Prospects don’t want to hear about bad traffic or the latest bad news on the radio. Keep prospect and customer interactions positive and upbeat. People like to do business with positive people.