



Lizz Insights

# 10 Urban Sales Myths

## And How to Overcome Them by Lizz Chambers, CHA, CHE

I think it is time to put those old myths about being a Hotel Sales Manager to bed. You are a Sales Leader in your hotel and part of the hotel team and that is the way you should be perceived by your hotel team.

Having been a Hotel Sales Associate for most of my professional life I have had to endure many misperceptions of what I actually contributed to the operation on a day to day basis. I found early on that there were ways to take these negative perceptions and turn them into actual teaching moments or at least opportunities to become a part of the hotel team. This helped to move my career light years beyond those who simply ignored the statements feeling that they did not have to defend their position. While I understand that feeling... it does nothing to create the bond that should be present between operations and sales. I hope these 10 Sales Myths do not offend anyone but I must tell you I have heard each of the 10 statements below more than once in my career. It is time we, as Sales Professionals, put things right.

### I. "All sales people do is go to luncheons and meetings. When do they actually work?"

What is wrong with asking a team member to accompany you to a luncheon or a meeting? Introducing your Executive Housekeeper or Guest Service Manager over lunch to a potential or a key account could be a very positive step toward building support for the concept "everybody sells." Your client may have questions on how their group will be handled by these key departments. Meeting the person responsible can help put their mind at ease.

Meetings such as CVB and Chamber functions would be excellent opportunities for team members accompany you. Introduce a special housekeeper, maintenance or guest service person to people in your community. The sales person will not be the only team member with which they interact when booking business with your hotel.

### II. "Going to a conference is just an excuse for a mini-vacation."

When you return from a conference, hold a meeting with the staff and share all the valuable information you learned at the conference. Share all the workshops, general sessions and networking opportunities. Most of all, let your team members know how you can help contribute toward their success because you attended this worthwhile conference. Assign tasks to key team members which will help you achieve the objectives from the conference. Be sure and praise the results.

### III. "Sales people look down their noses at operations."

Take time to work beside operations associates. When you have a large group checking in, after you greet your PIC, get behind the desk and assist with check-in. It doesn't hurt when you have a large check in to go back and talk with your housekeepers during the morning stand up and let them know how important their efforts are in making this group a success.

Be sure after the group leaves to pass out praise for a job well done.  
Create incentives for "Everybody Sells."

Have lead sheets at the front desk for LNRs or group leads, let housekeeping and the dining room know that any lead results in a booking will be rewarded. Be sure and thank your team for every lead you receive and keep them informed of your progress in pursuing the lead they gave you.



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**IV. "They promise THEIR groups the world and we have to deliver." (or worse..."They promise the Dream and we have to deliver their Nightmare.")**

First of all explain it's "Our" group. It's the responsibility of the entire team to make the group a success and make it a repeat booking. You only sell it the FIRST time. Your team gets them back. Always complete a detailed group resume, no matter how small the group. Hold a Precon whenever possible and introduce your contact to the key staff members who will be responsible for delivering the service the client expects. Discuss the details and make sure everyone is clear on their responsibilities and feels comfortable with what has been promised.

If a Precon is out of the question, be there when your group checks in. Greet your PIC and introduce them to as many staff members as possible. Let your contact know that you are the one ultimately responsible and make sure your team members know that you are all in this together.

**V. "They want to give away our rooms to the lowest bidder. That isn't selling that's giving."**

Many times group leaders need extra incentives to stay with a particular hotel. Let your hotel team know the reasoning behind a complimentary room given to a potential client. Make it clear that you will only give a complimentary room to a guest, because you know your team will make them feel welcome and convince the client to buy so you don't have to sell them. A successful complimentary stay equals a loyal guest/group in the future.

Meet with your key department heads and discuss new business. Explain the process in which you arrived at the rate quoted. Let your associates know the total potential of the group and share with them your displacement analysis. That way they know you did your homework. Remember the rate you are offering and the logic behind it are not trade secrets. Treat this as a learning opportunity for your staff. The more you take the mystery out of the sales process the more respect you will gain.

**VI. "When they make mistakes with a group, we have to take the blame."**

You must simply own up to any mistakes made. Take responsibility and fix it fast. Of course you will do your best to communicate with your client the same information communicated to your hotel team but there are times things slip through the cracks. Be available to your contact during their stay and correct any errors immediately and WOW them with your solution. Show your hotel team that you are solution oriented not problem oriented. Be the example on how to take control of a situation and make it right. Afterwards, do not shy away from the fact it happened. During the wrap up at the next staff meeting, bring up what went wrong and why and what you did to correct it. This will go a long way in the respect department. Always remember to place blame is to give away your power.

**VII. "9-5 Monday through Friday and we're 24/7 and who makes the money? Not Us!"**

A true sales person NEVER stops working. You should be there on property to meet that Friday night or Saturday group arrival or to make sure that Banquet you sold goes off just right. You do not have to stay for the entire event but you should be visible and introduce the PIC to the key people on the weekend shifts. Let the weekend or evening team know that you trust them to take care of the client.

During staff meetings be sure and discuss the fact that you continue to sell even when you aren't at work. Report on the company names you wrote down off the side of a truck on the interstate or during your drive through of the competitions parking lots or even the people you spoke with at a restaurant, if a conversation is overheard while eating with your family. Discuss what you have learned while reading the newspaper or a magazine, watching TV or surfing the web. Let them know that you are always looking for leads and have that constant urge to get that new business in town at OUR hotel. Encourage them to do the same...Everybody Sells.



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## VIII. "It's all about Sales. Without us who would take care of their groups?"

Once again it's OUR groups. Yes, many times when a big group is booked sales gets the spotlight. It's up to you to refocus that light on the ones who are going to make it happen. You may even spotlight a particular team member who went above and beyond during your site inspection with the client that helped you make the sale. Make them Sales Team Member of the Week with some special incentive. Let your team know that it's not all about you and that you can do nothing without them.

You have to convince the client to buy but you do that because you believe in your property and your hotel team members. If not, you would not be very convincing. Let your team members know that fact every chance you get. Everyone that works in the hotel is a sales person in their own right.

## IX. "Why should I show around an after hours sales lead. I'll never get the credit if they book."

You should establish an "Everybody Sells" program at your hotel. This program allows all team members to get credit for sales efforts. You cannot be at the hotel 24/7, so you need the help of your teammates to take care of prospective clients when you are not present. Include them in the lead process and keep them up to date of the results of that lead. Celebrate each and every lead and reward each and every booking. Before long, each member of your hotel team will feel like they are truly a member of your sales team.

## X. "When they are out on "so-called" appointments, at times they come back with a new haircut, perfect nails or a couple of shopping bags."

This one is difficult. First of all, be aware of the message you are sending when you schedule personal errands during times when you are off property knowing that your team members do not have that freedom. We all know that our clients go to lunch and during that time (unless there is luncheon scheduled with the client) it is difficult to schedule in office appointments. If we go back to the hotel we may get "stuck" and there goes the rest of the afternoon. So we may use that time to schedule a personal appointment over our "lunch hour." When you absolutely must schedule personal errands during "selling time" be up front...put the personal appointment on your sales calendar. Talk to associates why it was necessary and be sure and report out on the wonderful appointments you did schedule and the results of each.



Reach out to Lizz with any comments, feedback or questions. Scan to contact.

