

FACE TO FACE SELLING SKILLS
MODULE 3 – SALES COMMUNICATION SKILLS
Pre-Tutorial

ACCOUNT MANAGER'S WORKBOOK



Welcome to Module 3 – Sales Communication Skills

Welcome to Module 3 of Face to Face Selling Skills. In this Module we shall explore the most common mistakes made by salespeople and then focus on the importance aspects of effective face to face communication.

It may sound strange to start a Module with mistakes. However we have found that it is very useful to air these common poor behaviours early in the process because almost inevitably each of us will be guilty of at least one and many of them relate to some aspect of communication.

The reality is that it is easy to slip into bad habits and as we discuss best practice in the Program is it useful to have already reflected on your own performance and behaviours so that you have an awareness of things that may require correction.

So this Module will identify some of the most common mistakes from the sales meeting. We have identified them by asking a wide range of customers to think about the poorest sales people they know. It is difficult to be self-critical and to assess our own mistakes but it becomes a little easier when we see others making these mistakes.

This Work Book contains the preparatory work for the Group Tutorial.

When you are ready to start, turn to the next page and the first Task.

Topic 1 – Do I make mistakes?

This is a tough question to ask ourselves because we all think we are pretty good. Yet it is only by recognizing ways to improve that we will have real impact. Inevitably there will be aspects of your work which deep down you know could be improved – this is your opportunity to face up to some of them!

Answer this question

If you were to assess yourself, what would you criticize about your current sales approach?

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Now watch Video Unit 1 in Module 3 (M3) Introduction which will introduce the sequence of role play videos illustrating the most common mistakes observed.

Topic 2 – My thoughts – Insufficient product knowledge

Now watch video 2 (M3U1) in Module 3 – Insufficient Product Knowledge. The video takes an extreme case of a sales person with no knowledge at all on a forthcoming product. It is extreme to make the point. Most of the time the sales person has a lack of depth of knowledge which makes it hard to tailor the benefits to the specific customer – so the sales person becomes a ‘product peddler’ – every customer hears the same message.

How confident are you with your own product knowledge on a scale of 1-10?

Are there any obvious deficiencies?

What must you do to increase this score?

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Topic 3 – My thoughts – The Feature Dump

Now watch Video Unit 3 in Module 2 (M3 U2) which illustrates the opposite of too little knowledge. Here the sales person can't stop talking either through nerves or because he or she feels more comfortable talking about something they know all about. The problem here is that the customer is not part of the conversation. Too many sales people are too keen to present the solution before they have taken any time to understand the customer's situation and needs. As a result they just talk about features not benefits – and the customer turns off.

This is a very common problem which even the best sales people admit to – we just love talking about our products and services.

Ask yourself - in your most recent sales calls, were there any times when you talked about the product or service before you have defined the real needs? Do you ever talk about features rather than benefits? (remember benefits are those things which meet the customer's stated needs)

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Topic 4 – My thoughts – Not listening

Now watch video 4 in Module 3 (M3U3) Not Listening. Again a very common mistake and one which often appears close to the top of customers' list of complaints. Again the core of the problem is often that the sales person is keen to talk about the products or services rather than hear what the customer has to say. The video role play takes an extreme example to make the point and for some comic effect of course and here the sales person is only interested in a sale - but again most of us have made this error at some time.

Think about your most recent sales calls – did you always give the customer enough time to talk?

On a scale of 1-10 how effective do you rate your listening skills?

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Topic 5 – My thoughts – Using jargon

Now watch Video Unit 5 in Module 3 (M3 U4) Using Jargon which discusses another common problem – using terminology which makes sense for you but not the customer.

Most of us use jargon and it can be a very good shorthand.

Can you think of any situation where you experienced a sales person (maybe you) using jargon with another person who clearly did not understand the jargon?

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Topic 6 – My thoughts – Not talking to the right person

Now watch Video Unit 6 in Module 3 (M3 U5) Not Talking to the Right Person which discusses another common problem – selling to the person who does not make the buying decision. This can take various forms. It could be the simple case illustrated in the role play or perhaps in a more complex sale it may involve not recognizing that more than one person makes the decision or influences the sale. Sometimes you will find yourself talking with a person when you should be talking to his or her boss.

Have you ever had a situation when you were trying to sell to someone who was not the decision maker?

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Topic 7 – My thoughts – Poor preparation

Now watch Video Unit 7 in Module 3 (M3 U6) Poor Preparation which illustrates what can happen when you get into a routine – meeting because you always meet. This can be a problem if you have been calling on a customer for a longer period. You get into a comfortable routine and you don't question what you are doing or why – everything becomes too easy.

Consider those customers whom you have known for some time – could there be any aspect of assumption or too much routine? What could you question?

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Topic 8 – My thoughts – Not thinking like the customer

Now watch Video Unit 8 in Module 3 (M3 U7) Not Thinking Like the Customer which illustrates what can happen when you make assumptions. In the role play illustration, the sales person becomes patronizing and offensive. Most of us never get to this point but some sales people are guilty of making assumptions about the customer's level of knowledge and understanding. Just because you know does not mean that the customer knows. Your knowledge will always be much greater than the customer's and part of your role is to guide and educate the customer.

Can you think of a recent example when you assumed too much knowledge of the part of the customer?
What was the impact?

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Topic 9 – My thoughts – Not clear why the customer should buy from you

Now watch Video Unit 9 in Module 3 (M3 U8) Not Clear Why the Customer should Buy from You which illustrates the problem faced by many sales people - the difficulty of positioning themselves and their products and services in a competitive market. Most of the time we will have products and services which are very good and will meet the customer's needs. The difficulty is that so do our direct competitors. If we can't demonstrate why the customer should favour our offer then we will be just another supplier and the decision comes down to price. However in most cases there will be one or two things which give you an edge – something that this customer needs which you can provide and it may be as simple as being very helpful, having the right information or being easy to work with. The key is to find out exactly what will encourage this customer to buy from you rather than your competitor.

Think about one of your most recent customer calls – why should this customer prefer your offer over your competitor?

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Topic 10 – My thoughts – No close or agreement about the next steps

Now watch Video Unit 10 in Module 3 (M3 U9) No Close or Agreement About the Next Steps which illustrates the problem faced by the sales person who avoids getting a firm agreement.

Some sales people don't want to hear a rejection – others assume they have agreement even though it was never spoken.

Most of us have been trained to 'close' the sale – in other words to ask for the order but quite a few of us will leave a more complex sale meeting without formally agreeing what will happen next and who will do what.

Do you feel confident to ask for the relevant agreement at the end of the meeting?

Have you experienced the situation in which you thought you had agreed something but the customer did not follow through?

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Topic 11 – My thoughts – Criticizing your own company

Now watch Video Unit 11 in Module 3 (M3 U10) Criticizing Your Own Company which illustrates the problem of not presenting a professional approach to the customer. Many sales people themselves complain that service or support personnel who visit the customers fall into this trap.

As a customer have you ever experienced this situation? How did it make you feel about the company?

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Topic 12 – My thoughts – Not following up

Now watch Video Unit 12 in Module 3 (M3 U11) Not Following Up which illustrates the problem of not completing the sales process – in this case the sales person does not do the things she agreed to do. Again a common customer complaint and you have almost certainly experienced this as a customer. In many cases it is not because the sales person deliberately avoids the work but rather than other issues come up and other customers have to be served.

As a customer have you ever experienced this situation? How did it make you feel about the company?

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Topic 13 – My thoughts – Summary

Now watch Video Unit 13 in Module 3 (M3 U12) The Worst Sales Person. This is really a somewhat frivolous attempt to fit all the common problems together just for fun.

Are there any other mistakes or errors which sales people make based on your experienced which have not been discussed?

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Next step

Now that you have completed all of the pre-Tutorial work, we will look forward to seeing you at the next group session.

In the Tutorial we shall select a few of these topics and consider the more positive side – in other words what can we do to avoid these problems and be more effective in some of the critical aspects of the sales call.

FACE TO FACE SELLING SKILLS
MODULE 3 – SALES COMMUNICATION SKILLS
Post-Tutorial

ACCOUNT MANAGER'S WORKBOOK



Post Tutorial Work Book

Welcome to the second part of the Module 3. This Work Book covers the post-Tutorial activity.

When you are ready to start, turn to the next page and the first Task.

Topic 1 – Common mistakes – self reflection

Individual Task

Consider the common mistakes most often made by sales people in the face to face sales meeting reported by customers – of all the mistakes, which is the one you think you might be most likely to commit? What can you do to avoid this in the future?

Most likely to commit

What can I do about this?

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Topic 2 – Listening skills - Buddy Task

Consider a recent customer visit. Reflect on the way the meeting flowed. From your point of view what went well and what would you do differently next time?

Consider the following questions – then make a time to review your answers with your Buddy:

What went well?

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What would you do differently next time?

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What have you learned?

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Topic 3 – Listening skills

Assessed Task – part 1

Think about the discussion in the Tutorial about listening skills. Prepare a 5-10 minute presentation to explain the main listening skills we discussed and add examples of each skill from your own experience.

Deliver your presentation either to your Line Manager.

Topic 6 – Listening skills

Assessed Task – part 2

At the end of your short presentation, ask your Line Manager to compete the assessment form.

Listening skills - Assessed Task – Line Manager’s Review

Having listened to the short presentation on listening skills, are you satisfied that the Sales Person:

Has understands the main listening skills? **Yes/No**

Has been able to explain the ideas to you so that you understand them? **Yes/No**

Has been able to provide useful examples of each? **Yes/No**

Would be a good person to have in a sales meeting? **Yes/No**

Comments:

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Signed:

Name:

Position:

Module 3 - Key Points Summary

Use this summary to remind yourself about the key points in this Module – note any point which is not clear and raise this at the next Group Tutorial

- **There are a number of common mistakes made in the sales call**
- **You should be familiar with them to ensure to avoid them**
- **Listening is a core sales skill**
- **There are various skills for effective listening**
- **Non-verbal communication or body language often shows what the other person is thinking**
- **Body language should be interpreted with groups of gestures**
- **Irate or emotionally charged people must be calmed down**
- **Constant self-reflection is important to developing good communication skills**

My Capability Scorecard

Complete the Scorecard for this Module. Identify any issues which need further development. You can discuss these in the next Group Tutorial if you would like input from the Group or with your Group Buddy, your Line Manager or by booking a one-to-one coaching session with a Group Coach.

| CAPABILITY BEST PRACTICE SCORECARD - SELLING SKILLS MODULE 3 SALES COMMUNICATION SKILLS | | | |
|--|--------|----------------------------|--|
| <p>This Scorecard defines the Best Practice for Module 3 of the Face to Face Selling Skills Program – Sales Communication Skills. Having completed the Module, each Delegate should be able to answer 'Yes' with a high confidence level for each of the 10 Best Practice Criteria</p> | | | |
| Best Practice Component | Yes/No | My confidence level (1-10) | Is there anything I must do to improve this? |
| 1 I can explain the most common mistakes made by sales people in the sales meeting | | | |
| 2 I recognise that communication skills are core to effective selling | | | |
| 3 I can explain and demonstrate the four skills of “attending” | | | |
| 4 I can explain and demonstrate the four skills of “following” | | | |
| 5 I can explain and demonstrate the four skills of “reflecting” | | | |
| 6 I can explain the core ideas of non-verbal communication or body language | | | |
| 7 I give examples of body language which would cause me to investigate the listener’s issue | | | |
| 8 I can explain the simple sequence to deal with an irate person | | | |
| 9 I know the 6 core questions to test effective listening | | | |
| 10 I regularly take time as part of my call review to consider my listening skills | | | |

