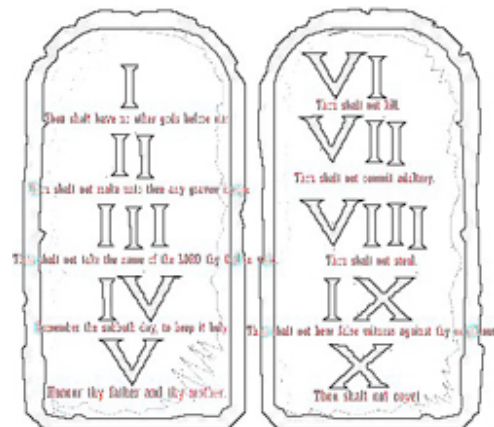


Undersell, Overdeliver

One of the commandments of sales

*Do not trust all men, but trust men of worth;
the former course is silly, the latter a mark of prudence.*

Democritus (460 BC – 370 BC)



By Henry Ching, Sales Trainer & Coach @ Progress-U Limited

Undersell, overdeliver.

The term 'salesperson' had earned a bad reputation in modern times.

Even inside organizations, some of the employees are uncomfortable dealing or working with salespeople. Personally, I have been involved in companies where salespeople were generally viewed as people who were overpaid and indulged at best, and in some cases seen as devious and liars.

But when you think about it carefully, you cannot do away with sales. It is the lifeblood of a business. Having great products or great service or great marketing is essential in today's business climate. But it all means nothing if no-one sells anything. A large American IT company used to have an internal slogan "Nothing really happens until someone sells something".

So why does sales have such a bad reputation?

As usual, most business problems are people problems. Most people can spot a 'salesperson' from a mile away. But what this statement fails to really say is that most people can spot a 'bad salesperson' from a mile away.

So what is it about a bad salesperson that generates so much derision. Why do people avoid 'bad salespeople'? I think it's to do with one major issue and that is to do with broken promises. I know this sounds like I am talking about issues that belong more in the school-yard than in business but I think these lessons are fundamental. It really boils down to this. Trust.

Trust is a delicate thing. It may take a long time to build trust and a second to destroy. If you do not trust someone then you want to avoid dealing with that person. If you do not trust someone, then you are always looking for ways to mitigate the risk of working with that person. You are wary of being misled or conned or betrayed.

Undersell, overdeliver.

So how does a salesperson stand out as someone special? If the sales person manages to be perceived as a Trusted Advisor. Because a salesperson who is a Trusted Advisor transcends the tag of 'salesperson'. That person becomes someone who is not avoided but rather someone who people seek out for their advice.

How does a salesperson become a Trusted Advisor?

Undersell.

Simple, isn't it? Yes, simple in theory - not so simple in practice.

In the heat of the moment when competing to win business, many salespeople get a little desperate or excited and oversell. This may help get the business but it does set up an interesting scenario. When you oversell, the consequence is that you set up your delivery team for a problem. They inevitably underdeliver. This causes a chain reaction and then the client or customer becomes justifiably disgruntled if you do not deliver what the salesperson says you will. This causes dissatisfaction problems where the customer may want remedies. They may want you to replace the product or do the job again. Which costs more money and takes up more resources. Even worse things can happen if things do not get resolved satisfactorily. There may be legal implications. This can happen if salespeople oversell. Overselling is no way to build a long standing, satisfied customer base.

Chances are very good that through overselling you may get one deal and never sell again to that customer.

Let's look at what happens when salespeople undersell.

Firstly, their behaviour is different. They are not usually making grand claims or exaggerate aspects of their solution. They seem more cautious and calm about the actual claims they do make. They may even acknowledge certain minor disadvantages of their solutions and call out any precautionary knowledge so that

Undersell, overdeliver.

the customer can be informed of these caveats. This makes these salespeople more professional when looking at the customers' problems and recommending solutions. Please note that I am not advocating that salespeople act timid or nervous or lack confidence or that they are reluctant to point out their value propositions. The salesperson can still ask powerful questions and seek to get to the real issues. It's just that there is a less boastful element to their selling.

The customer also feels that there is less pressure applied to them and that there is more diligence applied to working out the solutions. In fact, the customer feels really cared for – a major element of building trust.

So if the customer was to agree to purchase this solution everyone is aware of all the details of the solution. 'Eyes wide open' as they say.

The consequence of this is that delivery of the product or solution is more in line with the expectations set up during the sales cycles. There are few surprises for the customer (if any) and if there is something uncovered that was not attended to during the sales cycle, then both parties can work together to sort it out.

All in all, a much more pleasurable experience.

Promises that are made have been kept. Children understand this - adults ignore it at their peril.

Undersell, overdeliver.



Henry Ching is a Sales Trainer and Coach at Progress-U Limited. Henry works with sales managers, salespeople, entrepreneurs and anyone else who want to further develop their sales skills and methods using Best Practice thinking.

Today, even top sales performers face ever-increasing challenges in:

- How to shorten the sales cycles;
- How to avoid being drawn into a margin destroying price war;
- How to qualify better so they work on higher quality deals;
- How to close effectively and
- How to maximize the return on investment on the sales efforts made.

Henry assists his clients in tackling these challenges through Progress-U's innovative and unique "Stop Selling!" approach and by sharing his extensive experience gathered during his corporate career.

Henry is known for his creativity and humour when it comes to tackling difficult sales situations or working on complex deals. He has developed sales strategies and training that have helped many clients address their sales challenges.

During his corporate sales career at IBM Australia, Fujitsu and Information Builders, Henry has worked with Blue Chip clients like Mercedes Benz, HJ Heinz, Dun & Bradstreet and the Australian Defence Force. He succeeded in highly competitive sales environments that required thinking 'outside the box'.

Undersell, overdeliver.