

## ► Connecting with your customer

For patients and customers today, the relationship comes before the product or service itself. Products are complex, and most people are unable to make an accurate judgement purely on details. They have to depend upon how they feel about you and your claims. The development of trust is everything! We develop this by asking the customer about their needs and then listening intently to the answers given.

### Listening is power

There are different levels of listening. Active Listening is the most effective. The listener has to have full concentration on the words spoken but also on the feelings the words convey. When people speak to us they are communicating thoughts and feelings. Try and listen around the words for the emotion in the sentence, look at body language, pitch, tone and eye contact. It is a difficult skill to develop but definitely worthwhile!

### The art is in the question

The flip side of listening is feedback. This involves strategic questioning. We are looking for clarification of thoughts and feelings. It gets you on the same wavelength.

A good question will grab the interest and attention of the customer.

For example, "What do you think of when I say...."

"What would you expect to gain from using this product/ having this procedure?"

"Do you want to involve anyone else in this decision?"

It often helps to keep a notebook of great questions, which you can add to when you feel inspired!

## Do not close the sale - confirm it!

Closing a sale is a traditional sales model and it often offends! It implies manipulation and insensitivity.

By the time you reach the confirming stage, you will have an idea of your customer's behaviour and ways of interacting with you. If we are tuned in enough we will know when the time is right to offer up a confirmation. Body language is important too. Here are some signs to look for.

- If the customer is leaning forward and listening carefully, then interest is being shown.
- Watch for body tension, a customer is usually in a relaxed posture when they decide to buy.
- Happy animated facial expressions indicate the customer is relating well to you and your delivery.

Now is the time to confirm. This can be carried out in a few different ways. The first is a pilot, an assuring technique where a customer can try the product for a given length of time, once they have committed in principle. If they are not satisfied they can have their money back. This is a great technique and most people see the results they were promised and do not send the product back.

Secondly, there is asking for a confirmation. Here you need to learn to use open questions, for example, "How do you want to go from here?" or "Shall I book you an appointment to proceed?"

If the outcome is good, create an opportunity for a review of the product or service at a later date, either in person or by telephone. This assures the customer that they are being looked after. It creates a personal service and shows a friendly commitment.

## Never be afraid of rejection - it is an opportunity!

Sometimes, despite asking all the right questions and doing all the right things, a customer may not be convinced. Do not feel bad - you cannot change the world. Be friendly and remember relationships take time. In a year, when the relationship is stronger, the customer's response may be different.

Be pragmatic, say, for example, "I don't want you to buy anything you do not want or need." This gains you respect and credibility.

Take time to reflect, try a different tactic the next time. The non ethical sales person knows that a result is worth waiting for...

I hope you enjoy putting this into practice and begin to enjoy the ethical sales process.

### Further reading:

Be a Sales Superstar by Brian Tracy

Non- Manipulative Selling by Tony Alessandra, Wexler and Barbera

