

Miniatures Marketplace - December 2000

SALESMANSHIP - MEETING YOUR CUSTOMERS NEEDS

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Miniatures BY BARB

The first time I took a seminar in salesmanship I was surprised to find that there were some tried and true techniques that helped in selling my miniatures. I always thought that a sales "pitch" was intended to sell something to someone who didn't want to make a purchase. By taking seminars and reading about salesmanship I realized that the purpose of salesmanship techniques is to open communication between seller and buyer.

This communication starts when the customer enters your shop or booth. What is the first thing most sales people say? "Can I help you?" The customer response is....."Just looking". That didn't start much of a conversation did it? I have learned that your opening remark to a customer should have nothing to do with the business at hand. The idea is to establish a person to person relationship. Ask a question, so that the customer needs to respond. Always look him in the eye.

Another important fact to remember is not to judge the customers intention to buy by his appearance. Some of my largest sales were from customers I did not expect to make a purchase.

Consider each customer as being able and willing to buy. Treat them as though you are their host. Once conversation is underway your job is to determine the wants and desires of your customer. This is the probing process. Try not to ask questions that can be answered with a yes or no. You will find out more information if you ask open ended, fact-finding questions. "Are you looking for something for your dollhouse or for another project?"

The demonstration should come after you have determined your customers needs. This should emphasize a feature (an important aspect of the item), an advantage (why the item is better) and a benefit (what that advantage will do for your customer). I will use my ceramic dinnerware as an example. The feature of my dinnerware is that it is handcrafted. The advantage is that it can be made up in any combination of patterns or colors. The benefit is that you can have the dinnerware and coordinating accessories made up to the specifications of your miniature setting.

After you have demonstrated the advantages of a particular item you need to close the sale. This is the time to ad another item or items to the sale. Clues to these items should have been discovered during your conversation with your customer.

After the sale is completed is the time to confirm the customers purchase. Have other sales people comment about the purchase. The idea is to reconfirm the customers confidence in his purchase.

It is easier to sell to a repeat customer. Give the customer a reason to return to your shop. Ask them to please stop by and let you know how the purchase looks...fits...or goes together. Suggest that they bring in a photo so that you can see the progress of the project.

This article just touches the surface of salesmanship. Understand the techniques and practice them. It is important to review these techniques with the other salespeople in your shop.

I was uncomfortable at first using these formulas. Through practice I have found that I have a closer relationship and understanding with my customers. I am more comfortable selling because I have learned the needs of their particular shop and attempt to fill them. I am not trying to sell them something they do not want or need.

I would like to thank those of you who have taken the time to contact me. Your positive response is appreciated. Your suggestions and opinions are interesting and informative and will be addressed. I will be presenting my next seminar at the CIMTA trade show in Las Vegas in January. We will discuss some of the topics addressed in this series of articles in greater detail and explore new ones. I look forward to seeing you there.