

Welcome to Top Mark Sales Professional

This course is intended for those who have little or no experience of the subject matter, who may be starting up a business, or moving into a sales role.

To help you to understand the structure and processes involved in selling, as well as their practical applications, you will come across a number of challenging questions, and unit assessments. By the time you have completed the course, you'll also have drafted a Sales Plan and understood more about the sales process.

Objectives of the Top Mark Sales Professional Course

In the sequence of six units you are going to cover the following topics:

- The sales process – what is it and how it works
- The FAB principle- identifying features, advantages and benefits
- Telephone techniques to add to your success
- Making the most of first impressions, on the phone or in person
- Sales planning for continuous improvement
- Where to look for profitable customers
- Power listening and questioning skills
- How to turn objections into buying signals
- Key closing techniques
- How to evaluate your own performance
- The importance of aftercare

Experience has shown that this course will take about 12 hours to complete. Don't be concerned if it takes you longer than this average time.



Unit 1 What is Selling?

“God is on the side not of the heavy battalions, but of the best shots”

Voltaire

What is selling?

If you are planning to be a sales consultant, or are improving your skills by following this course, take a minute to write down here your own definition of selling.

Selling is

Whenever a person persuades another person to exchange goods, services, ideas, or information, for a financial or other reward, that is selling.

Because selling is something that a lot of people learn as they go along, it is very often an undervalued skill. This is particularly so in small to medium sized businesses, where the majority of the time and effort is spent on making the product or delivering the service, and that's hard enough without then having to go and sell it as well.

A lot of people also think that if they make or deliver a good service or product, then the world will beat a path to their door. Unfortunately it's not like that, and there's not even a magic pill which you can give people to make them better sales people.

The secret of selling comes down to understanding your customers, building trust, and paying attention to the details.

This Unit explains:

1. The sales process
2. Setting realistic targets
3. Understanding your product or service in terms of benefits

1. The sales process

In order to fully understand how you should operate as a sales consultant, you need to understand the sales process from both the buyer's point of view, and the seller's. This applies whether you are selling to a consumer, for his/her own use, or to a business.



While business buyers are people too, and have all the variations of humankind, there are several important steps which they take.

Question 1

What do you think those steps are?

Please think about this for a minute, then write your answers here:

The buyer's purchasing process:

- 1) "I need." The customer decides he/she needs to buy something. While some sales people can open up a need, the majority react to a buyer having recognised the requirement.
- 2) "It has to do x." Whether the intended purchase is personal or for business, there will be an element of function. It may be a practical solution, e.g. a software package which will analyse my accounts and do my VAT, or an emotional need, such as "I want to show how successful I am by driving a smart product/service". The buyer then starts to think about features and specifications.
- 3) "Who can help?" At this stage in the sales process, the buyer reviews his contacts, either formally or informally, asks friends or colleagues for recommendations, or, if you are very fortunate, you can introduce yourself to the buyer as a solver of his problem, at just the right time.
- 4) "What can you do for me?" The buyer wants to know if you can supply his perceived need, solve his problem, meet his specification. Professional buyers are tasked with finding "the right solution, for the right price, in the right place, at the right time". You are likely to be compared with other suppliers at this time, so you need to work hard to identify specific needs which will leave you clearly ahead of the rest.
- 5) "That's what I need!" Good sales consultants help the customer to buy, rather than aggressively selling things the customer doesn't really want. So when your customer has made his/her decision, it is because you have presented your case effectively. This is the stage where you sign an agreement, shake hands, or exchange the money for the goods.
- 6) "I'll put your details on file." Follow-up is essential if you want to sell to this customer again, or get him to recommend you to his peer group.



The sales process

- 1) Plan and prepare. Without careful planning, you will be wasting a lot of your time and effort.
- 2) Prospect. You should always be looking for new leads. This can be a problem for many small businesses- they get a big contract, and are so busy dealing with that, they neglect to top up the lead bank.
- 3) Understand your customers. The more you can think like them, understand their reasons for buying, and which part of the process they are at, the more able you are to win the sale at the right time.
- 4) Present benefits/solutions. Customers are only interested in what you can do for them, so focus on how your product/service can solve their perceived problem, or add value to what they are doing.
- 5) Deal with objections, and turn them into buying signals. If the customer is bothering to ask you any questions, it can be an indication of interest. Use this to your advantage.
- 6) Close every sale. By asking for the order, sometimes several times during a meeting, you can achieve your objective. The customer will not necessarily buy unless you create the platform to do so by asking for the order.
- 7) Follow-up. If you want more business out of this customer, be sure to follow-up to confirm his/her satisfaction with the deal.
- 8) Build in positive customer care- you want the customer to put you at the top of his list next time he goes out to buy. A positive customer experience can reinforce your suitability for the next deal.

2. Objective setting

You need to understand what you want to achieve, where you want to get it, and how much time and resource you plan to put into getting the sales.

BE SMART!

A sales plan must have quantifiable and clearly defined objectives. Many businesses use the SMART mnemonic- Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic, Timely.

