

The logo for HauteCELERATOR™, with 'Haute' in a script font and 'CELERATOR' in a bold, sans-serif font.The text 'MODULE TWO' centered in a white box.The text 'SALES &' centered in a white box.The text 'PROFIT' centered in a white box.

Sales & Profit: Ask for the Sale

The quiz you took at the end of last week will help you understand why you may enjoy or dread asking for the sale. For someone who enjoys sales, everything you do is leading up to the moment when you can finally put everything on the line and see whether it was enough to get someone to make a purchase. For those who enjoy marketing, you may find yourself doing anything and everything to avoid this final moment of the sales process. But whether it is something you enjoy or something you dread, everyone can learn techniques that result in more sales. Finding the techniques that best fit your personality, company culture and products will enable you to improve your bottom line and reach your goals.

One of the more important things to remember is that customers want you to help them decide to make a purchase. Giving them reasons to do so, as well as providing a sense of urgency to make that decision will actually help a potential customer decide to make the leap. That being said, it is never wise to provide false feedback: *No, we don't have this dress in a bigger size, but this size simply enhances all your curves - you look amazing and should buy it before someone else does!* - will usually backfire, since the customer will eventually come face to face with the truth and lose their trust in you. But giving them a push in the direction of making that decision for themselves won't backfire: *I'm sorry, but we don't have that in a bigger size, but it is a fantastic style on you. At this sales price, you could likely get a tailor to alter the seams enough to make it comfortable.* One manipulates the customer; the other gives them information that helps them make a decision they are comfortable making.

Here are some proven techniques for you to explore. Understand that none of them will feel completely natural at first if they aren't something you're already doing. But all of them are proven within the sales industry, so try them on and see which you can add to your current process to increase the number of sales you are making.

KNOW THE CUSTOMER'S TIMELINE

If your current sales process does not follow the timeline of your customer's purchasing process, you may be missing out on sales simply because your ask is at the wrong time, comes too soon in their process, or waits too long past when they were actually ready. Make sure you understand whether there are additional approvals that are part of your customer's

purchasing process. If the usual approval cycle takes six weeks and you write them off after three weeks, you are not following up long enough.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE REASONS FOR NOT BUYING

Customers will actually trust you more if you articulate the reasons they already have in their head for not purchasing from you. And once you say them out loud, the customer will feel more comfortable voicing the objections they already have - giving you an opportunity to acknowledge their concerns and then alleviate those fears. If you dismiss their concerns as not valid, they will disengage with you and stop listening. Once you tap into their concerns, they will resonate with the empathy they are hearing and be more comfortable believing what you say about why they can move past those concerns. But, as always, make sure what you are telling them is truthful about why they shouldn't be worried.

ALIGN YOUR ASK WITH THEIR BUDGET

If the software you are selling costs \$30,000 a year for unlimited licenses for a corporation, but your potential client only has a budget of \$10,000 to spend on a software solution, you can be the best sales person in the world and fail to close the deal. By understanding what they have to spend, you can structure your ask to fit within those parameters - or move on to a new prospect that is a better fit for your product. One way to close a sale with a customer with a smaller budget - if they have the potential to increase that budget - is to offer a limited trial or limited access option. While your company may make less profit margin on this sale, it gets your foot in the door with a prospective customer who will potentially make a much larger purchase should they be happy with your product.

SWEETEN THE OFFER

If you need to meet specific price goals for your products, offering reduced rates may not be an option. In this case, one of the best ways to still make the sale is to find ways to sweeten the offer. Often these enticements are not monetary but include perks or insider access that make a customer feel more special than your ordinary customers. Invitations to exclusive events - online or in person - for customers who make purchases within a specific time frame can push customers to go ahead and make a purchase to take advantage of the perk you are offering.

PUSH THEM OUT OF THEIR COMFORT ZONE

While this may seem contradictory, but when people are too comfortable, they don't make purchases. The purchase is usually an action to resolve discomfort - whether it is in buying a new cosmetics product, signing up for a new service, or purchasing new technology. If your customer is dawdling because they don't feel any real pressure to buy now rather than six

months from now, artificial deadlines are one way you can create a sense of urgency that makes the customer more uncomfortable with not making the purchase. Just make sure you don't draw needless "lines in the sand" that cause a customer to walk away. If someone says they need to do more research, they may need to do more research. If their objection is valid, acknowledge that it is valid and then create a new deadline for when you will follow up so they feel that same sense of urgency to complete their research before you call again.

ASK THEM IF THEY HAVE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS

Don't assume you've done enough to answer all their questions or that your website has all the information needed to make a decision to purchase. The best way to find out whether you've provided the right information is to ask. Whether you are making a formal presentation to a team or you are selling online, you need to engage with the customer. If your sales are virtual, make sure your platform offers multiple ways to engage the customer - prominent buttons that connect them with FAQ's, chatbots, online sales reps, email inquiry forms, etc. If it is not easy to ask you questions, the customer will move on to somewhere that is answering all of their questions. And if your sales are in person, make sure your pitch ends soon enough to provide time for Q&A - and make sure you let them know that you are opening up the time for questions. If no one asks a question, start listing a few that might be in their heads to make it feel safer to raise an objection in the group setting. Sales are quite often closed because of a customer being impressed with how you handled their questions more than how you handled the pitch.

AVOID INFORMATION DUMPS

While you need to provide enough information to allow a customer to make an informed decision, there is such a thing as too much information. Provide a resource online with white papers, studies, research findings, etc. so that they are available for deeper dives, and make sure you have a clear plan for educating your customer after the purchase if there is a learning curve involved with using your product - but you do not need to provide all of that education up front. If you provide too much information, you make it harder for them to make a decision, not easier. It is overwhelming, seems too complicated, and the thought of having to dig through all of the information provided will result in a potential client walking away to something that is easier to purchase.

GIVE THEM REASONS NOT TO BUY

Yes, this sounds crazy. But it works. It also filters out high maintenance customers who can drain your time and energy. By defining who your product does not serve, you can often help a customer decide that you are right for them: *"If you're looking for a simple plug-and-play product that you can use as-is, you need to know that we are probably not a good fit for you. Our product is really designed for the person who isn't happy with the basic model and wants to customize their experience. We are a higher price point, but it is because we are focused on*

providing the ideal experience that our customers expect." This approach does two things - weeds out customers who aren't interested in the unique features of your product and makes sure that the customers who do want those features see themselves and more savvy and refined than just a basic, old customer.

ASK THEM TO BUY

Don't forget to finally get to the point in the conversation where you actually ask them to make a decision. The answer is always "No" unless you ask for the sale. Use any wording that feels right for you, but you need to ask for the sale. If you are confident that your product or service will solve your ideal customer's challenges or meet her needs (by doing the research and exercises we have given you so far), then you have every right to ask for the sale, and are actually doing a disservice to your ideal customer by NOT asking them to buy. Don't let fear keep you from asking confidently for their business. You can say something as simple as, "Are you ready to move forward?" "Can I have my staff send you the engagement agreement?" or "What credit card do you want to use to make this purchase?"

EXERCISE

Are you already using any of these techniques? Which ones? Are they working well for you? If not, why do you think they aren't working?

Which of these techniques that you are not currently using resonate the most with you? Why?

Which do not seem to fit your product or culture? Why do you think they are not a good fit?

Write out a scenario for the top three techniques - include what you would say - that you are not currently using but would like to try out. Practice saying the words you've written until they feel natural, and change them if what you end up saying is different every time. Once you're comfortable with the new technique, try it out. Document what went right and what went wrong. Continue to refine the process until it is natural.