



The Three Biggest Sales Mistakes Small Business Owners Make

Business owners face many challenges – always shifting gears and wearing different hats. The sales hat, while critical to the company’s growth and revenue, is often a hat that the small business owner struggles with. There are many common sales mistakes. Here are three of the most costly ones that can derail your company’s success.

1. **Lack of Market Focus** – Most small business owners struggle with determining who the best market for their products or services is. They often are happy to sell to anyone that will buy; in other words, they’re going after the classic “low hanging fruit.”

There is often a palpable fear that if you narrow your focus, you will miss opportunities. Ironically, when you narrow your focus, you will actually create and attract more opportunities.

The concept is easy to understand when you think about doctors. There are doctors who are generalists like your family practitioner. Your family practitioner will see all types of people for all types of ailments and illnesses. There are also doctors who are specialists. They treat specific areas of the body.

There are a few key differences between generalists and specialists. Generalists make less money, see more patients (clients) and work longer hours. Specialists, on the other hand, make more money, see fewer patients, and actually get most of their business by referrals. Now, equate that to your business. Would you rather have the generalist model or the specialist model? Would you rather go after anything that you can do or specialize in what you do best?

The goal is to not only become a specialist (and trusted advisor) for your clients, but to be sought out as the expert. You’ll eliminate the competition, make more money and streamline your marketing and sales activities when you’re able to accomplish this. We call this approach **Bull’s Eye Marketing** and it will work for you if you take the time to analyze how you are different and better than your competition. Then, you must communicate your benefits in a powerful positioning statement and brand.

2. **Lack of Prospecting and Sales Systems** – Does the term “winging it” ring true with you and your business? In other words, you do a little of this and a little of that, but there is not a consistent process or sales system to make sure that the right things get done the right way on a consistent basis. This leads to a roller coaster ride of peaks and valleys when it comes to sales performance.

Without a proper and effective prospecting and sales system, your success is haphazard at best. It all starts with a plan. To simplify, there are four primary components – the 4 M’s – in developing a sales system and plan. The first is determining the right **market**. That ties directly into choosing a Bull’s Eye Market that is the right fit for you.

The second component is crafting the right **message**. In other words, how will you position yourself with your market? How do you make sure your message is concise and compelling?

Once you determine your message, you must figure out the right **methods** for reaching your market. There are many ways to connect with prospects. These include cold calling, referrals, networking, strategic alliances and many more. Some methods will work better for you than others. Once you pick the right methods, you’ll need to understand your numbers. In other words, what activities will you need to employ to reach your sales goals? Obviously, your activity and your numbers will vary depending on the method used. For example, your conversion rate for a prospect initially contacted by a cold call will be different than one that was referred to you.

The fourth component is the **marriage**. This is the depth of the relationship you are able to establish between you and your prospects and clients. At every stage in the relationship, you must nurture and develop a bond that is based on trust and respect. You must abandon the buyer-seller roles and truly create peer-to-peer relationships.

3. **Lack of Accountability** – When you’re the boss, sometimes accountability is tough. How do you make sure that your goals are being met and that your processes are being executed? Whether it’s just you or a whole team, there must be accountability in the system.

What happens when you hit your goals? What happens when you don’t? Are you accountable? Do you take 100% responsibility for everything that happens? Or do you play the victim, often blaming other people or circumstances for why things don’t get accomplished.

As a business owner, you don’t have a boss looking over your shoulder. Creating peer groups, getting a coach or finding a mentor can be valuable to keep you on task if you have a tendency to get sidetracked.

Accountability applies to your team as well. Do they understand what is expected of them? Have goals been clearly articulated and communicated? Are the consequences and rewards of reaching or not reaching their goals understood and enforced? Is everyone treated fairly and consistently?