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LET'S TALK SALES

By Leanne Hoagland-Smith, M.S.

Right now, grab your sales results and see if you are on track to hit your monthly or annual sales goals, ahead of those sales goals or, hopefully, not behind. This past month I once again realized why some salespeople, and even some small business owners, have success and others not as much.

With my relocation to Northwest Arizona from Northwest Indiana, I decided to fill up some of my non-productive time by embracing another career path – real estate sales. What I have learned in these first five months confirms what I have come to know after a 40-year career in sales:

- *People buy from people they know and trust.*
- *20/80 rule for sales is probably closer to 10/90*

In spite of some salespeople and some small business owners saying they really want to increase sales, what they really mean is they want to increase sales only if it doesn't interfere with their own personal time. Let me explain.

Currently, many property owners from California are seeking property in Northwest Arizona as well as other states such as Texas. This means anywhere from a 10-hour-plus drive to four to six hours of windshield time just traveling from California. Scheduling showings, especially residential, must be confirmed with the listing agent to ensure availability if something doesn't work like the lock box or the directions.

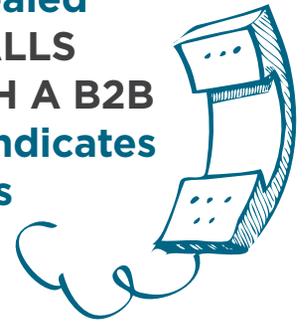
Even though I am new to real estate sales, I am not new to sales. I have always crossed my T's and dotted my I's when it came to sales appointments. For this

particular client, I reached out to the listing agent and explained my client was coming in from California on Sunday and was prepared to make a cash offer around \$300,000 if the property met her needs. To say this listing agent was not the most cooperative is an understatement.

When my teammate who had access to this MLS (Multiple listing service) system attempted to use her lockbox key, the key didn't work. She verified it was updated and had just worked the day before.

We called the listing agent's office and the voice mail recording said the lockbox was on another MLS system (one county away) even though the listing paperwork confirmed it was on the current MLS system. Calling the realtor on the sign proved fruitless as her voice mail said she would return all calls on Monday. Our final effort was to

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call the listing agent who said she lived 30 minutes away but had company in from out of town. The listing agent's response was “I don't know what to tell you.” Again, I emphasized to the listing agent that the buyers had just driven six hours and if the property met their expectations, they would be making a cash offer.

As you can probably ascertain, my buyers were not happy campers. Fortunately, because of my actions prior to this terrible experience they had come to know me and trust me. I had volunteered to drive to another property in my county (about 25 miles away) to preview a property for them. The pictures I took showed it wasn't the right property for them. They appreciated this effort as it saved them 12 hours of drive time, not to mention fuel and food costs.

Working with another client from California, we toured vacant land over a two-day time frame. With maps and directions in hand, we discovered the directions in many instances were not the best.

In speaking again to the listing agents, I learned out of the six-plus properties we viewed; only one listing agent had actually seen the property. Can you imagine selling something and never seeing it, especially property? Directions were taken from Google or some other mapping service. In most instances, the directions were not the best way to travel to the listings.

Another buyer who was relocating from Idaho expressed how his first real estate agent did not even take the time to learn about what he wanted. All the real estate agent did was to send him listings that in many

instances would not have met his financing structure. She never took him to a property.

Yes, time is money. However, time is more than money. Time is an investment on both sides of the sales process. By demonstrating you, as a salesperson, value your customer's time can have incredible impact on your sales results.

Sales research continues to affirm why 20 percent, or probably closer to 10 percent, of all salespeople secure 80 percent or 90 percent of all sales.

The National Association of Realtors reported in 2017 that 5.51 million existing homes were sold along with 612,000 newly constructed homes according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Given currently there are about two million active real estate licensees in the U.S.; this suggests on average, licensees sold 3.06 homes each. Having been in the real estate industry for less than five months, I have sold two homes and two vacant land properties with other opportunities in the sales pipeline.

SalesForce.com reported it takes six to eight touches to qualify a sales lead. Yet past sales research suggested the majority of salespeople stopped after the third contact.

Hubspot's sales research revealed it takes an average of 18 calls to actually connect with a B2B buyer. Research from Sirius indicates the average salesperson makes two attempts to reach a prospect.

If you want to increase sales, then the first step is to look in the mirror and ask yourself these questions in this sequence:

- 1 Are you truly willing to do what you need to do to increase sales?

In other words, how much do you really want to increase sales? Is your motivation internal or because others want you to increase sales?

② How do you know what you need to do to increase sales?

③ What actions will you take to learn what you need to know to increase sales?

④ When will you take the necessary actions to learn what you need to know to increase sales?

When answering each question, it may make sense to write down your answer and date it. Then start tracking how many times you connect with a qualified sales prospect. Of course, knowing if your sales lead is really a suspect (aka tire kicker), a prospect or a truly qualified prospect works to your advantage.

What I have learned is that a truly qualified prospect has the following characteristics in this order: (1) Makes the buying decision (decision maker); (2) Has a demonstrated want or need; (3) Has the funds or wherewithal financially to make the purchase; (4) There is urgency to take action; (5) The buyer is committed to taking action.

These five characteristics could easily be reframed to define a professional salesperson: (1) Consistently earns the sale; (2) Has the ability to ascertain wants and needs both expressed and unexpressed; (3) Has the resources to move the sales through the sales process; (4) There is urgency to respond to ALL sales leads; (5) Commitment to the sales lead (customer or client) is demonstrated in all interactions.

Being in sales is a dynamic, evolving process where no two experiences are exactly the same because the wants and needs along with the buyers, clients or customers are unique. This is not a profession for lazy, unmotivated people who aren't willing to go the extra mile or to make the extra effort or efforts.

When talking about sales, it is much more than talk. It is 100 percent about results from how many sales leads are in the sales funnel to the number of contacts as well as to all those resources and skills

necessary to turn the sales lead into a paying customer. In spite of what some futurists predict about salespeople being a dying breed and technology replacing sales people, good salespeople will always be needed because at the end of the day "sales is the transference of feelings." How you as a salesperson are able to

transfer those feelings will determine your sales success. **N**

Leanne Hoagland-Smith is the Clarity Strategist, solving people and process problems. As a thought leader who challenges the status quo, she turns tomorrow's goals into today's results. Follow her on Twitter @CoachLee.