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Old School Sales Skills **STILL RULE**

By Leanne Hoagland-Smith, M.S.

Funny thing about sales, regardless of the industry, I believe what many consider to be “old school sales skills,” still rule at the end of the day. Yes, all the technology tools can support one’s effectiveness as a professional salesperson. However, Zig Ziglar understood the essence of this selling when he said, “sales is the transference of feelings.” Many of the old sales skills evolved from what Ziglar perceived to be true.

I am writing about old school sales skills because I am walking another career path. Due to some unexpected life changes, I started selling real estate. And the reason for my success, including being named “Rookie Realtor of the Year,” is my old school sales skills.

Probably the first and most important sales skill is to answer the phone. I wrote about this sales skill last fall for *NBIZ*. What is beyond amazing is the number of realtors who don’t answer the phone or who don’t respond to emails or texts.

Having over 20 years of inside sales experience has been very beneficial as I walk this additional career path. Investing the time to listen to each sales lead and then to “honor your word” regarding what you promised to deliver within the conversation.

My inside sales experience also taught me the importance of keeping track of all incoming sales leads. Yes, customer relationship management (CRM) systems are great. The brokerage firm I work for has one and I regularly update it with all contact interaction.

Yet, I need to see the “big” picture and the “small” picture at the same time. Also, I must update both the firm’s CRM system and my own contact system. Since I receive sales calls when I am out and about, I required a tool to work with the volume of calls I receive. My solution was an old school sales skill—paper and pen.

I keep a small composition book on me at all times along with a printout of all current sales leads in an Excel worksheet. As I write this article, I have had 16 new sales leads in the first 15 days of January 2019, and I am working with 14 existing sales leads from the previous months. Using several different highlighters, I can see if the contact has been placed in my database, in the CRM system, on my Excel file and whether I have taken the follow-up action I promised to take. When I have completed all actions with the sales lead, I draw a diagonal line through the name, and I know everything has been handled. This way nothing gets lost in the sales funnel.

Another old-fashioned sales skill is to know your solution. In real estate, this means know your inventory.

One word of caution about educating sales leads.

NO ONE WANTS TO HEAR SOME “ROBOT-SOUNDING” SALES SCRIPT.

Your conversation should be interactive with pauses that will allow the sales lead to ask questions or just to confirm what was shared.

Imagine for a moment a waitress or waiter not knowing what is on the menu. How often have you asked a wait staff person what he or she would recommend? You have indirectly placed some trust, some feelings, into the wait staff person’s knowledge of what is best to eat.

What I have learned is that by investing the time to research and actually visit local inventory, I have an advantage when speaking with new sales leads. I can share with them that I have personally toured the house or spoke with the listing agent about the property. Here is where the old school sales skill of having specific processes is so very important.

Another old sales skill is educating one’s self. Reading what

is happening in the local market, securing continuing education units and looking for new technology are also necessary. With over 40 years of sales experience, I never relied on my employer to pay for education. No, that was my responsibility.

Even though my broker thought I would be selling more houses than rural land, just the opposite has happened. This has resulted in expanding my knowledge about rural real estate, everything from open range here in Arizona to legal fences to off-grid living. Additionally, I have attended hearings on water and local county monthly meetings to understand what is happening within the county and the State.

As for technology, one of the technology tools I use consistently impresses my clients because I can walk the actual property line. Another older technology tool are Excel spreadsheets. I can quickly tell what properties I have shared with clients, what properties I have visited and the status of those properties. For example, if a property that a client has visited has decreased in price or is pending, I can quickly send an email to the client telling him or her of the current status. By taking this action I have once again strengthened the feelings of trust.

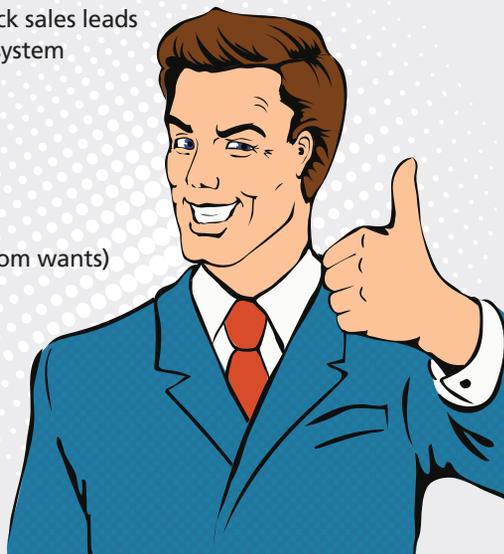
Educating not only yourself, but your clients as well, is old school. With many first-time buyers as well as out-of-state buyers in the market, buying real estate can be overwhelming. Again education, when done correctly, builds trust and strengthens the sales lead’s feelings toward you.

Education brings out another old school sales skill of “I don’t know.” Being forthright with your own knowledge again builds trust. I have

OLD SCHOOL SALES SKILLS •••

To recap here are my old school sales skills. You may wish to post this list somewhere. If you are not reaching your sales goals, possibly review this list and determine what old school sales skills you are missing or need to strengthen.

- Answer the phone, emails or texts promptly
- Honor your word
- Use pen and paper
- Establish your own processes to track sales leads and your activity beyond the CRM system
- Know your solution
- Educate yourself and your clients
- Be willing to say “I don’t know”
- Be forthright
- Build your own resources to share
- Confirm all facts (separate needs from wants)
- Stop the upselling
- Communicate with other team members or colleagues
- Document activity using technology tools
- Under-promise and over-deliver
- Learn to lead yourself first



received questions about financing, building codes, septic systems, power availability, trash pickup, “Wi-Fi” and internet connectivity. These questions had me create my own “Yellow Pages.” I share this document with sales leads and they are happy to receive the names, phone numbers, addresses and website URLs.

Of course, educating requires you to actively listen and confirm all the facts you hear, which means separating needs from wants with no “upselling.” Have you ever walked into a store and experienced a salesperson attempting to “upsell?” How did that make you feel? Did that “upselling” feel like you were being pushed?

One word of caution about educating sales leads. No one wants to hear some “robot-sounding” sales script. Your conversation should be interactive with pauses that will allow the sales lead to ask questions or just to confirm what was shared. Your continual goal is to build positive feelings. President Theodore Roosevelt said it best, “*No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care.*”

Today many small- to mid-size firms have more than one salesperson. Communicating with other team members can be very beneficial when the sales culture supports such behavior. Here is where documenting what you are doing is essential. Technology tools such as CRM systems and DropBox make that documentation far easier and quicker. Also, by asking other team members, or even other colleagues, possibly you can get that answer to your “I don’t know” responses.

Many experienced sales professionals have heard this old school skill of “under-promise and over-deliver.” Today is no different than 50 years ago when it comes to human nature. Most people, yes, there will always be a few “dunderheads,” are genuinely impressed and appreciative of salespeople who deliver more than what was promised. For example, telling a sales lead, “*I will get you an answer by tomorrow,*” and then delivering it that same day builds both credibility and trust.

Finally, many of these old sales skills return to the one self-leadership skill of time management. If you have difficulty working within your time frame, then you may have difficulty in employing these old sales skills. Successful salespeople work within their daily time constraints. They have learned how to manage their own behaviors because no one can truly

manage time since time is a constant. Remember, if you can’t lead yourself first, you can’t lead anyone else. **N**

Leanne Hoagland-Smith is a 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.