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Why Creativity Is A Secret Weapon In Sales



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Creativity is a trait not often associated with sales professionals. Instead, the sales profession is commonly associated with routine activities such as cold calling and hitting increasingly challenging quarterly quotas.

The most effective sales professionals avoid routinizing their approach to sales. They leverage their creativity to gain a leg up on competitors. The payoffs can be enormous.

[Research](#) from the Aston Business School, one of Europe's largest business schools, found that sales professionals who were more creative generated higher sales than their less creative counterparts.

Imbuing creativity into the sales pitch

Far too many salespeople rely on boilerplate sales pitches and product demos. In conversations with prospects, there is a lack of personalization. They highlight the same features and value propositions. The result is cause for concern: [82%](#) of sales professionals are not aligned with the needs of the buyer.

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Creative sellers resist the temptation to adopt one-size-fits-all selling approaches. Instead, they tackle the challenge of selling with a consultative lens. They take the time to listen to and learn from customers so as to understand their specific needs. Armed with this intel, they craft scripts that are relevant to and customized for each individual buyer.

This personalized approach is highly effective. According to Infosys, 86% of consumers say personalization plays a role in their purchasing decisions. Customers appreciate sales professionals who are creative problem solvers and take the time to understand how their product or service is uniquely positioned to help each customer achieve his/her business outcomes.

Leveraging creativity to customize offerings and handle objections

In 1909, Henry Ford famously proclaimed, "Any customer can have a car painted any color that he wants, so long as it is black." While the statement is extreme, far too many B2B sales reps adopt a perilously similar philosophy. Most will offer one product with two or three pricing tiers (a free, premium, and enterprise tier, for example). They won't be flexible in terms of customizing offerings according to the needs of individual customers. By and large, sales offerings lack creativity and are often set in stone.

Creative sales professionals are a different breed. They don't conceptualize the sales process as a transaction, but rather as a problem-solving activity. They are flexible. If a

prospect or existing customer pushes back with an objection, they'll think creatively about how the problem can be solved. When, for example, price is an issue, they'll be quick to consider offering discounts if acquiring the customer offers benefits beyond monetary rewards (for example, added brand awareness, a strategic partnership, an opportunity for a lucrative referral or introduction, or an opportunity to enter a new sector or category of the market).

When, on the other hand, a customer pushes back on account of a product limitation, creative sales professionals get into high gear and problem solve. Is it feasible and prudent to build the feature that is lacking? Are there ways to imitate the feature by building a Zapier integration or leveraging an API? Throughout this discovery process, effective sales professionals collaborate hand-in-hand with internal product and engineering leaders so as to understand what is feasible in terms of winning a customer.

It's not that creative salespeople are more persistent than their non-creative counterparts. It's that they are naturally inclined to problem solve and customize offerings before dismissing customer objections as lost causes. In doing so, customers view them as valued collaborators.

Subjecting buyers to delightful "wow" moments

Creative salespeople consistently find ways to surprise and delight prospects and customers. They create “wow” moments. These “wow” experiences are, unfortunately, hard to come by. According to [TeleTech](#), 67% of customers rarely experience wow-worthy customer experiences.

After closing a sale, creative salespeople are naturally inclined to continually brainstorm ways to surprise and delight customers--to create “wow” customer experiences. It doesn't take a lot of heavy lifting to create these "wow" moments, but it does require creativity. The key is to find ways to make each customer feel special.

Many creative sales reps will keep abreast of current affairs and monitor events or developments that are relevant to, or may impact, their customers. If a customer wins a coveted award or lands a new marquee customer, for example, creative sales reps may send a note of acknowledgment. Creative sales reps will leverage social listening to monitor their customers' comments, feedback, and testimonials. If customers express a

concern, sales reps will proactively reach out to the parties involved and brainstorm ways to mitigate the particular situation. Many creative sales reps know the power of monitoring customer engagement with their offerings. If a customer hits a product milestone, they may send a handwritten note of congratulations. Some creative sales reps will even go so far as to connect two or more of their customers via a warm introduction if they see an opportunity for mutual benefit. Creating “wow” moments entails outside-of-the-box thinking.

The surprise associated with “wow” moments is one of the most effective sales tactics. According to an [article](#) published in Harvard Business Review, "surprise is like crack for your brain." Indeed, scientific evidence has confirmed that humans love positive experiences that give rise to an element of surprise. Researchers at Emory University and Baylor College of Medicine discovered that the pleasure centers of our brains are more active when we experience surprising positive moments, as compared to positive moments that are expected to unfold.

Surprise has value beyond tickling the brain's pleasure centers. We're more likely to remember surprising moments. University of Madgeburg [researchers](#) found that the brain's hippocampus (which processes and stores information) becomes more active when humans encounter unexpected stimuli compared to familiar stimuli. This heightened activity increases the likelihood that we'll remember an unexpected event. When you're trying to stand out from customers, this phenomenon is enormously valuable.

After we purchase a product, we don't usually expect to hear from sales unless we initiate contact. We're surprised and taken aback when sellers make us feel special and valued. We become more emotionally engaged. And emotionally engaged customers are typically three times more likely to both recommend a product and to renew their purchase, according to research by McKinsey.

Creativity is one of the most undervalued sales skills: companies that foster creativity are 3.5 times more likely to outperform their peers in terms of revenue growth. Many people erroneously believe that creativity is an innate trait. The good news is that [creativity can be learned and honed](#). [Research](#) indicates that genetics accounts for only mere 10% of differences in our creative output.

Sales teams intent on fueling creativity--and, ultimately, sales--incorporate role playing and improvisational exercises into their daily routines to develop their creative prowess. Some forward-thinking sales teams go so far as to incorporate mindfulness and meditation activities into sales training, as [research](#) has shown that these exercises ultimately enhance creativity. With creativity being such a valuable skill, the investment pays handsome returns in the form of sales excellence and results.

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