

The Most Important Sales Skill

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If I asked you to vote for what you think is the most important category in selling, what would it be? Here's how others have voted.

First of all, attitude has received the most votes. But think about it, while attitude is the most important characteristic or attribute to have, it isn't a sales skill. Rather, it's the way someone thinks or feels about something whereas skill is ability and expertise. Granted, without the right attitude, sales skills are not as effective. But attitude can't be taught.

The second skill that earned the most votes was closing — this is the one I get the most request to train on, yet I don't believe it's the most important. Closing, by my definition, is helping a prospect decide on a course of action. It's the summation or score of how you did. It is not, in and of itself, the most important, but it's a great indicator of how you did with everything else.

Time management was third in the voting and again a critical part of a salesperson's success. Time is the great equalizer for all of us — we each get 24 hours in a day to work with. If we do well, we typically get

paid more. If not, we get paid less. I have heard it said the difference between rich people and poor people is whether they spend or invest their time wisely.

Product knowledge made the list too. I agree with this one — it's got to be the foundation of the training you give your sales team. You must know your product and services to be able to convey their features in a way prospects understand what they'll do for them. But be careful, a very technical salespeople can know the products inside and out but not be able to convey their benefits in a way the customer believes those products are worth the price.

Solution/presentation made the list too — this is probably my favorite sales skill. If you're selling a \$2,000 system, give your prospect a \$10,000 presentation! A great presentation allows a prospect to justify their purchase and makes the close so much easier.

This brings me to the one I think is most important... prospecting. I think most people think of this as strictly a physical activity like cold calling or door to door. However, this is

so much more. And, unless you have an endless pool of leads (and who does), you have to find your next sale. Because, as soon as you sell one, you're unemployed and must find your next paycheck.

So, no matter how well you present, close or know your product, you must find another prospect. Plus, you use all the skills in prospecting. You need to know your product and present it in such a way that the prospect becomes interested. You also must be able to close on an appointment and have the integrity and professionalism to get referrals. I believe for these reasons, prospecting is the skill that will make the biggest impact in a salesperson's paycheck.

Now, let the debate begin.

