

STREETWISE SELLING | BY KENNY SMITH

Fighting a Sales Slump

Everyone in sales lands in a sand trap from time to time. As in golf, the key is to avoid digging yourself in deeper and to get out quickly. Using these basic techniques, you can help yourself get back in the game.

Attitude is crucial. Leave your luggage at the door. In sales, you'll often get only one shot, and no one wants to buy from somebody who's depressed or angry. Distance yourself from negative comments and advice from co-workers because this will only weigh you down. Remember, customers buy from salespeople with good attitudes more often, so keep your chin up.

Read 'em and weep reports. Salespeople in slumps don't like seeing their low numbers. In actuality, it helps them to know exactly where they stand and that you're concerned about their sales. Many times, I've seen salespeople rally to the occasion and start producing again by simply going over their numbers in detail.

Isolate the problem. There are a host of reasons for the sales slump. Frequently, the main cause occurs during the selling process itself. Many salespeople are oblivious to what they're doing wrong or not doing at all. Observe how they handle each step of a deal, and you may quickly discover the problem. Many times, you can help them out of a slump if you listen first and offer advice second. Stick to the basics.

Get back on the horse. Disasters can trigger a slump. In my 20s, I had four deals go completely south in one day. I was so bummed out, I went to my dad for a lecture. He said, "Kenny, any salesman who's trying his hardest is always going to lose a few deals, and even though it's not good when it happens, I worry even more about salespeople who never lose any deals. They may not be selling enough."

Pan for gold. Previous customers are twice as easy to sell to as new ones. Reach out to old customers. They may even know someone who needs something. Constant prospecting and follow-up are a key slump defense. The best salespeople are always either with a customer or on the phone with one.

Don't get pushy. Customers have a sixth sense for spotting desperate salespeople. If you try too hard to sell someone, especially if you're in a slump, it can do you more damage than good. Focus on telling them your story and showing them around for the first couple of minutes. This will relax both of

you and get things started on the right foot.

Bunt. Many times, salespeople, especially superstars, in a slump feel pressured to hit one out of the park, but instead, they end up striking out over and over. One cure is to bunt. Start by selling something small, and work your way up.

Re-demo. After negotiating and attempting different closes, if the customer seems close but is still going to walk, try this: Nonchalantly take him back to the product and demo the one thing he liked best about it. Then ask, one more time, to buy. When used correctly, your closing ratio will go up by a noticeable percentage.

Sell when it's slow. Create your own traffic by scheduling appointments with customers who've already bought from you. It helps you keep your fingertips sandpapered, it makes previous customers happier, and the extra traffic looks impressive to new shoppers. A word to the wise: When new customers need to be waited on, you can go back and forth if you have to. This is called spinning plates.

Think positive. When you're closing deals, envision your customer happily buying the product from you, and it will happen more frequently. Use the Force, Luke. **MI**

Kenny Smith is an industry veteran and consults both retailers and suppliers. He can be reached at kennysmith8888@gmail.com.



What to do when a usually good salesperson gets caught in a rut