
UNIT 4 RETAIL SELLING SKILLS

Structure

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the fundamental differences between retail & other forms of selling
- Develop a basic understanding of varying job requirements in different formats of retail selling
- Develop an appreciation of the prerequisites of selling

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Any sale of a product or service to the end customer / consumer is considered as a retail sale. The sale occurs at the retail premises belonging to the retailer. The word retail is derived from Latin which means to sell a part of. In a retail sale rarely does the salesperson get an opportunity to study the prospective customer in advance. In many other forms of selling the sales person has time to analyze, who his prospective customer is, develop a thorough understanding of his requirements in advance.

For example the direct selling salesman of a vacuum cleaner will have the advantage of knowing where the potential customer resides. By having this prior knowledge he will be in a position to gauge the customer's financial strength thereby having an idea which model the customer may be interested in. In retail setting the salesman in a consumer durable outlet will not have a complete idea with regard to the walk-in customer's financial strength. He will only have a few minutes to understand his prospective customer's needs!

4.2 SELLING IN DIFFERENT RETAIL FORMATS

1) Self Service

Self Service format can be best explained through an example of fast food retailing Ex: Mc Donald's

Customer first arrives at the cash counter on entering the outlet and is asked what he would like to order. In case the customer is undecided, the sales **person/cashier** offers him a choice from the menu board located above the counter. Here the job of the salesperson is directly to start with the order taking and may be to increase the sale value by asking whether the customer would like to go in for a combo meal etc. He is supposed to also clarify the doubt of the customer if any. Once the order is taken it is immediately processed within a minute or two and the customer picks up the filled tray from the counter & takes a seat. The role of the salesperson is restricted to trying to increase the bill value. It's taken for granted that the customer once he has entered the queue has decided to buy food.

In the case of outlets like Subiksha which is into food retailing the customer directly picks up what ever is on display. It's more or less a discounted store where minimal selling takes place.

2) Self Selection

Self selection format can be best explained through an example of a Discount store like Big Bazaar. Here the job of the salesperson is restricted to ensuring the customer finds what he is looking for. Consultative selling rarely takes place in this model.

3) Full Personal Service

Full personal service selling can be explained through an example of a Lifestyle model store like Shoppers stop where the salesperson is expected to carry out suggestive selling, **carry** out consultative selling with the customer. He is expected to help the customer & wait on the customer while the customer decides.

Example:

Sunita who lives in **JayNagar** visits Bangalore Central which is 8 kilometers away to buy a new mobile phone although she has an option of buying the phone in a shop near her house. Further Bangalore Central is 25 minutes away by auto. One would ask why Sunita would make this effort. The attention that Mohan gives his customers is what makes Sunita put in the extra effort to visit **Bangalore** Central.

Mohan will bring out nearly 20 mobile handsets from the display. He will show her how each phone works. He will advise her which phone will suit her budget, which features on the phone she would most often use; he will demonstrate every phone. He will never **try** to sell her a phone which she doesn't need. Mohan is a salesperson who will demonstrate the phone to a customer even if the customer is not planning to buy at the time. He **enjoys** showing the product to his potential customers. To many customers, sales people **like** Mohan are the retailer. Most of the time they are the only employees with whom **customers** come in contact with. Sales people help their customers satisfy their needs by providing good customer service. Sales people help their stores by selling merchandise. Just like Sunita there are many customers who return back because of the positive **experience** sales people like Mohan provide.

4.3 PREREQUISITES FOR SELLING

Employees directly interacting with the customers are the most crucial resource for a **retailer**. They are in a position to recognize the wishes and demands of the customer by watching and asking questions. They are able to instantly follow up on the quality of the **service rendered** and undertake corrective actions as soon as a problem occurs. "What **makes these** people so special are things that cannot be taught, qualities that are intrinsic to the **people**, qualities they would bring with them to any employer **energy** can't be **taught**, it has to be hired. The same is true for **charm**, for work **ethic**, for **neatness**. Some of these things can be enhanced with on-the-job training or incentives But by and large, such qualities are instilled early on" (Rosenbluth)

Given **below** are the prerequisites for selling from a salesperson's point of view.

1) Attitude

The **attitude** of the salesperson is likely to affect the outcome of the sale. A positive **attitude is easily** recognized or felt by customers walking into a retail store. A positive **attitude gets translated** into positive body language. A salesperson with a positive attitude **looks forward to meeting** the customer. The sale to the customer is only a by product of

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his eagerness to meet and interact with a customer. When a salesperson has a positive attitude he seems more relaxed and is keen on giving the browser or potential customer a great shopping experience. Remember, how many times have you as a customer visited a store and within the first few minutes felt you wanted to either deal with the salesperson at the counter or move onto another counter or store?

2) Positive Self talk

A salesperson with a positive attitude always practices positive self talk. Some of the mental statements made by a salesperson with a positive attitude could be as follows:

"The customer is looking forward to dealing with me"

"I **am** going to show the customer my entire range of merchandise"

"**The** customer is going to ask me to demonstrate the product, I am sure he would like to buy the product because of my demonstration"

A **salesperson** with a negative attitude always practices the reverse of positive self talk. Some of the mental statements made could be as follows:

"Customers come in only to pass time & window shop"

"It's a waste of time demonstrating the product because the customer will finally say that it is too expensive or it's not what I **am looking** for"

3) Sales Affirmation

An **affirmation** is to talk to yourself & say things which you believe in sincerely. The words you use to describe your day need to be filled with sincerity, conviction, faith & intuition which are like highly explosive vibration bombs, which when set off, shatter the rocks of difficulty most sales people have. You need to avoid speaking unpleasant words to yourself, even when true. Sincere words of affirmation, when repeated again & again, with complete understanding, feelingly, & willingly create the desired results.

A salesperson should make the following **affirmation** before he commences his first sale of the day.

Some of the statements are as follows:

- a) Customers **are looking** forward to meeting me this morning
- b) They know I will show them the entire range of merchandise in my section
- c) They know that I will sell them things which look good on them or things which they will find really useful.
- d) They will thank me for giving them a really good time shopping
- e) They will want to come back & deal with me
- f) They will **recommend** that their friends visit my counter

Activity

Make a list of all the positive statement you would like to make before **you** meet the first customer for the day.

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4) Personal Hygiene & Appearance

Personal hygiene is often overlooked by salespeople. Personal hygiene would include the following:

- a) Having good body odour. This means that the customer should not at any moment feel uncomfortable standing next to you because of poor body odour emanating from you because of perspiration. It is advisable to have a bath on a daily basis followed by the usage of a deodorant with a neutral odour.
- b) Hair should always be neatly combed or tied up in a bun if the salesperson is a lady
- c) Nails should be regularly trimmed
- d) If the salesman has a moustache, it shouldn't fall below his upper lip
- e) Shoes should be neatly polished & the laces should not look ragged
- f) Clothes should be neatly ironed
- g) A conservative watch should be worn
- h) Your teeth should be brushed after any big meal. It is advisable to avoid eating garlic & onion when you are at work as these odours take a long time to go.

Activity

Visit a few retailers and make a note of their personal hygiene & appearance. Make a comprehensive list of the do's & don'ts of personal hygiene & appearance after your visit

5) Preparing yourself

The sales person should have complete understanding of his store before he moves on to the shop floor.

Presales preparation would include the following:

- a) What does the shop sell? Salesperson should have complete familiarity of the same.
- b) How many levels or sections does the store have?"
- c) Be aware of the merchandise & brands available in all sections.
- d) You need to know where the amenities such as **toilets/drinking** water is located.
- e) What are the store policies with regard to exchanges & mode of payment.
- f) What is the special offer for the customer for the day?
- g) Need to be aware how customer schemes work.

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- h) Get your section ready & clean.
- i) Display your goods as per the visual merchandise plan.
- j) Replace stocks sold out the previous day.
- k) Ensure ~~that~~ the display look attractive to draw customer attention to your section.
- l) Ensure that price tags & security tags if any are in place on the merchandise.
- m) Need to know the sales achievement of the previous day & current day target.
- n) Ensure lighting & convenience facilities are in order.
- o) Refresh product knowledge of existing range.
- p) Acquire knowledge of new range.
- 6) The customer walks – The magic Moment!**
- a) Are you positioned near your merchandise on the side or is your back towards the merchandise. Always remember to face the customer & never have your back facing the customer.
- b) Are you rushing towards the customer? If you rush then the customer feels that you are trying to sell & will tell you that he is just **looking**. If you **approach** the customer too soon, you will not give him or her **enough** time to see the merchandise. If you approach her too late **he/she** may change her mind & move on to another section in your shop
- c) Always observe **the** customer when they walk in to understand his/ her interest **.Remember that they are also watching you & you never get a second chance to create a good first impression.**

Things to remember before you approach a customer

- a) Body Language communicates with your customers at the speed of light. Impatience, over-eagerness and annoyance are telegraphed immediately. You want to appear to be open and friendly. Your whole being would be saying, "Hi," "**Welcome," "Wow!** I want to meet you! I am so glad that you're here!" While customer are watching you, notice their body language as well. Don't prejudge and don't let your observation go in one eye and out of the other!
- b) Understand the importance of your face. Let your face glow instead of presenting a natural mask. **A mask that says, "I am efficient" or "I am just doing my job" will not do. Let your face become a reflection of what you're seeing and feeling, but make sure that you are feeling upbeat, open and respectful. Your smile doesn't need to be the broad grin or toothy projection of a "snake oil" salesman. Let out a genuine smile that says to your customer, "This is my special smile. It's there simply because I like the way you look and enjoy working with you." Don't play Mona Lisa. Your smile has to let her know exactly what you're thinking.**
- c) Your eye contact: The most successful salesperson focuses only on the customer with **whome** they are working. They would never lose that focus, that connection. Their concentration is intense! Their eye contact says, "I care about you. Your **needs are most important to me.**" **Don't stare, don't glare, just focus. Make your customer feel he or she is the most important person in the world. If you don't look into other's eye and allow them to look into yours, your message and presence are somewhat 'soulless'. Eye contact is a powerful transformation. It creates intimacy**

and connectedness. It is the highway on which communication travel. This shows how much power, and influence is created when somebody looks directly in the eyes. What about people who won't look at you? These people normally fall into one of two categories, They **are** rude or borrowers. When you encounter a rude customer, you may be thinking, "Great, just what I need... another rude one. I've had enough rejection today. If they won't look at me, I won't talk to them!" This is a normal reaction, but it won't help your store or your sales career. When people don't look at you directly in the eye, it's uncomfortable and unsettling. Go on a mission. Look at these people. Really see them and make a connection. Make a visual commitment to them. Eyes are called "the windows to the soul" for a very **good reason.**

7) Keep your professional **tool** kit ready

Salesperson should keep his sales **kit** ready if any. It could include a tape if measurements **are** required, a **notepad** if the customer is **asking** for any specific merchandise which is currently not available, should have the necessary brochures ready. The requirement of a tool **kit** would vary from retailer to retailer.

8) Importance of Product Knowledge

- a) **Knowing Your Products Can Mean More Sales:** Knowledge is power and for retailers, product knowledge can mean more sales. It is difficult to effectively sell to a consumer if we cannot show how a particular product will address a shopper's needs. Read on to learn some of the benefits of knowing the products you sell.
- b) **Strengthens Communication Skills:** Having a thorough understanding of the products on the shelves can allow a retailer to use different techniques and methods of presenting the product to customers. Stronger communication **skills** will allow a salesperson to recognize and adapt a sales presentation for the various types of customers.
- c) **Boosts Enthusiasm:** Seeing someone completely enthusiastic about a product is one of the best selling tools. As you generate excitement for the product, you remove any uncertainty the product may not be the best solution for that customer.
- d) **Grows Confidence:** If a customer isn't fully committed to completing a sale, the difference may simply be the presence (or lack) of confidence a salesperson has towards the product. Becoming educated in the product and its uses will help cement that confidence.
- e) **Assists in Overcoming Objections:** Objections made by customers may be struck down with factual information regarding the product. That information usually comes in the form of product knowledge. Being well versed in not only your products, but similar products sold by competitors, allows you to easily counter objections.

How to build product knowledge

- a) **Marketing Literature:** Most products sold in retail outlets have product literature that comes in the form of brochures or in the form of product literature. For example a shirt which has anti wrinkle properties will have a tag attached which describes **the shirt**
- b) **Sales Representatives:** Most branded products sold in retail outlets have sales representatives who educate the sales people selling their **merchandise** at the counters.

- c) *Training Sessions:* Training session is another effective way of gaining product knowledge. All doubts with regard to products can be cleared in training sessions. During training sessions the salesperson can understand whether the product has gone through any special manufacturing process. They will learn about the various styles/models & colours the merchandise will be offered in. They will learn about the pricing structure of the merchandise. They will also learn about the origin & history of the product. Further they will be taught how to demonstrate the product to the customer. They will also learn about the warranty of the product, after care tips etc.
- d) *Testimonials:* Testimonials provided by customers plays a vital role in educating salespeople about merchandise since customers are the most frequent users of the product.
- e) *Role Playing:* Role playing is effective learning method because it puts the salesperson in the shoes of the customer. So the salesperson will be able to understand the most frequently asked questions by customers.

It may take a while to easily articulate your product knowledge, especially with new products, but over time you'll become comfortable and confident in providing the correct information to shoppers.

4.4 LET US SUM UP

In a retail sale rarely does the salesperson get an opportunity to study the prospective customer in advance. Also the role of the salesperson may vary depending upon the type of retail format like self service, self selection or full personal service. The prerequisites for effective selling by a sales person include attitude to sell, positive self talk, sales affirmation, personal hygiene and appearance, preparation for selling, managing the magic moment, keeping professional kit ready and proper product knowledge. The unit gives you detailed practical tips on the above issues.

4.5 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

- 1) How does the role of salesperson vary with the different retail formats? Explain giving suitable examples.
- 2) List out the prerequisites of selling. Briefly explain each one of them.
- 3) What are the factors to be considered by a salesperson while making presales preparation?
- 4) Explain the importance of product knowledge for a salesperson. How can you build product knowledge?