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## UNIT 3 STEPS IN SELLING

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### Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Preparing to Sell
- 3.3 Meeting and Greeting the Customers
- 3.4 Initiating Sales Conversations
- 3.5 Identifying Customer Needs and Wants
- 3.6 Matching Products to Needs and Wants
- 3.7 Handling Customer Objections
- 3.8 Confirming and Closing the Sales
- 3.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.10 Terminal Questions

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### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

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After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- **Identify** the components of preparing to sell and greeting customers.
- List the ways of initiating a sales conversation to identify customer needs and wants.

State the ways of matching company products to meet the customer needs.

- **Describe** the different ways of handling customer objections.

List the actions required in closing a sale.

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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The success of any retail organization is dependent on how many customer's buy the products from the stores and not on how many customers visit the store. **Therefore** every **customer** who walks into the store is a potential buyer and you need to approach each customer with a mind set to convert him **into** a buyer. In this **conversion process** there is a whole lot of work which needs to be done. This unit provides you the **knowledge and information** to assist you in the various aspects of selling directly to customers. This **unit** explains all the crucial components of selling right from greeting to initiating a conversation to handling objections. This involves **seven** steps, as explained below in sections **3.2 to 3.8**.

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### 152 PREPARING TO SELL

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One of the key characteristics of good sellers is that they are all well prepared to sell. As in any field of activity, be it sports, exams, preparation is the key to success in the sell world, especially in the retail context. This is because, now India is seeing a retail **revolution** with many Indian and Multinational retail companies setting up businesses in India and that only means competition is hotting up. With globalization, there is an increase in, the

diversity of the customer profile. Therefore the frontline staff in a retail store needs to be always prepared to deal with all **kind** of customers and aspects of customer service. There are certain important steps in preparing to sell. Each of these steps is crucial for your success.

### 1) **Positive Frame of Mind**

Good customer service is the basis of increased sales. Regular customers use their past experience of counter staff actions and attitudes as part of their decision to buy (or not to buy) more from those same staff. Customers prefer to buy products presented to them in a professional and customer friendly way. Customers, therefore, buy more than the products or services on offer- they also buy (or reject) staff attitudes and service levels. Sales staff must be aware of this and also their own attitudes if they are to contribute to increased sales.

One of the ways of remaining positive is to state, "Customers can buy (name your main Product) anywhere. But if they go somewhere else for it they won't get you. You are part of the package and you should be telling your customers, "If you aren't sure I make a difference- try me."

A sentence like this shouts a commitment to excellence and a commitment to serving the customer well. It shows customers what your attitude is. To be able to deliver on this sentence you must have the appropriate knowledge and skills.

### 2) **Know your Company and its Products**

We have understood the importance of having a positive frame of mind if we have to be successful while selling. If we have to have this kind of **mindset**, we need to be confident about our knowledge and skills.

Thorough knowledge about your company and its products are essential, The customer considers every frontline sales staff as an expert and therefore the customer would approach you to clarify any kind of questions about the company and its products.

One of the most important things you need to know about your company is: What is your company's unique points? Once this awareness is there in you, you are really able to sell more confidently to your customers.

Therefore it is your responsibility to continuously upgrade your knowledge about your company, its different products, its new products, and anything, which will benefit you to better serve your customers. There are different ways to upgrade your knowledge; training programs, your managers, company newsletters, advertisements, intranet etc. Make use of all these avenues and be totally informed about your organization. This will not only increase your confidence but also make you feel part of the organization you are working for. Once you have this **kind** of bonding with the company, you feel like contributing to the company's success and then customer service would be a habit for you,

#### **Activity**

**Read** about a particular model of a bike on internet. Gather information about the bikes performance, mileage, after sales service, finance option, price of the accessories and so on. Visit a showroom which sells that model and check if the sales agent is giving you **the** same information which you have gathered about the bike. Ascertain his level of **knowledge** on the product he is selling. Write down your feedback below.

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### 3) Know your company's procedures.

Good knowledge of your company and its products is the first step. The next step is to gain a very sound understanding of its operating procedures. Every company has its own policies governing both its staff and its customers. Knowledge of the staff related policies is important for your own welfare. but the knowledge of policies relating to the customer is really important.

Customers always have questions regarding store timings, payment policies, discounts, exchange schemes, sales promotions, returning products, payment modes etc. Since you are the one readily visible to the customer, they are bound to approach you to guide them. In case you are unable to assist the customer, they would start questioning your organization's professional quality and you may actually lose a potential sale. Therefore always have the company's policies at your fingertips. This would lead you to be more confident and be positive about your abilities. After all as it is said "Knowledge is Power"

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## 3.3 MEETING AND GREETING CUSTOMERS

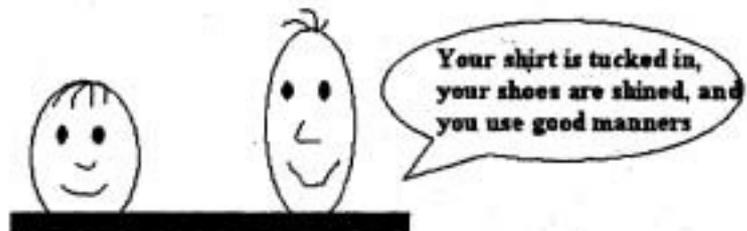
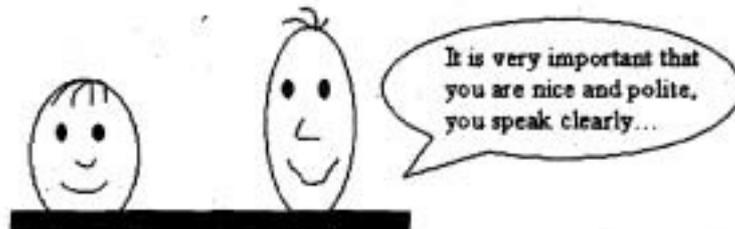
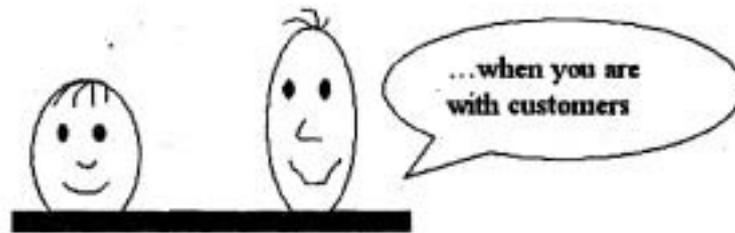
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First impressions are crucial in the sales industry. Especially in the retail industry where huge number of customers step into the stores every day, it's really important to display the right kind of enthusiasm towards the customers. This, however, doesn't mean that you should impose yourself on the customers. Some observation clues that should be identified before you decide to approach a customer are given below :

- a) Customer feels the merchandise
- b) Customer looks at price tags
- c) Customer spends more time in particular section
- d) Customer's hand are full, carries a basket
- e) Looks around to catch your attention
- f) Customer is checking the sizes
- g) Customer enter the store and walks straight to the section you are handling

### Eye Contact, Smile, Appropriate Greeting, Addressing Customers

The index of confidence is said to be your eye contact. When you deal with customers, it is really important that you have eye contact. Eye contact does not mean staring at them but looking at them and talking. (Never look up or look down while dealing with customers). This will make the customers believe you know what are you talking and that you are in control.



A good smile costs nothing but its impact on others is immeasurable. Irrespective of how many customers you deal with, for every customer you are the first point of contact, so the customer would expect to see a smiling face. Try and be as cheerful as possible while dealing with customers. People tend to buy more when they are happy and you could create a sense of happiness by your smile.



Addressing customers is an important part of the welcoming process. Greet them with an appropriate greeting based on the time of the day. Address customers with gentiles like 'Sir' or 'Ma'am'. Avoid addressing lady customers as 'Madam'. Customers may consider this usage as inappropriate.

A good approach tells the customer that you know they are there and are ready to give assistance if needed.

- a) Social Greeting approach could be: Hello, Good Morning, Good Afternoon, **Sir/** Ma'am
- b) Merchandise approach (To a customer looking at merchandise): Good **Morning, that's** our new range of ....., or would you like to **try** out your size in this range of clothing
- c) **Bonus/special** feature approach: Sir, we are offering a 20% discount on this merchandise
- d) Customer benefit approach: However many times you wash this shirt it will not go out of shape
- e) Curiosity approach: Did you know there is a special offer on this merchandise?
- f) Compliment Approach: I think this fits you well!

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## **3.4 INITIATING SALES CONVERSATIONS**

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Many sales staff have a standard way of beginning sales conversations; occasionally it is successful. When it is not, the average staff members will think to themselves, 'Win some, lose some' or 'Well, I tried'. Therefore it is important to know how to start sales conversation based on customer request or making conversations based on spotting a sales opportunity. Once you are able to master this ability, it is easy to build a long-term relationship to help the customer become a loyal customer.

### **1) Beginning Sales Conversations**

Sales are often lost as soon as a salesperson sees a customer- before eye contact, before a smile, before "good day. How may I help you?" in no time at all. Some times it takes a whole second to lose a sale. Therefore what you say as your first line is so crucial.

One of the most powerful ways of engaging a customer in a conversation is by using the two-second hook. This is a statement or a question used by the salesperson in the first two second of a conversation to raise the customer's interest – to hook them into the conversation. For example

**Customer:** 'Do you have any apples in stock?'

**Salesperson:** 'Yes and they're really juicy'.

'Really juicy' is a hook.

This hook encourages the customer to want to have a conversation and does not take a long time. When you adopt this method, you begin by saying 'yes' and it keeps the customer's attention.

### **2) Sales conversations based on spotting sales opportunities**

A lot of times you will come across customers who are clear about what they want to buy and may approach you to buy that specific product. Then a smart sales person will **identify** need for something else and try and sell additional products. This skill is extremely **important** if you have to become world-class sellers. The conversations you use in these circumstances differ from **normal** sales conversations. For example:

Customer: 'Do you have **thermal** jackets'?

Salesperson: 'Going abroad'?

With this **kind** of start, it opens a range of opportunities of selling other things a person may need while traveling to a foreign country with low temperatures. This **kind** of hooks really make the customer believe that you care and the customer will probably end up buying more than he wanted in the first instance. Also this could lead to word of mouth publicity about your store.

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### **3.5 IDENTIFYING CUSTOMER NEEDS AND WANTS**

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The best salespeople are those who really put in effort to understand the customers' exact needs. A lot of times customers will have very vague requirements, and as an expert on the products, it is the salesperson's responsibility to guide the customer appropriately and make sure his needs are met. Good salespeople are able to identify the needs exactly based on the customer's behaviour. For example when you notice a young **lady** with a **small** baby, good salespeople are able to create empathy and suggest to the customer, specific baby care products.

#### **Means of identifying customer needs**

The best ways to identify customer needs are by asking questions and noticing customer behaviour. Some times customers are very clear as to what they want and those customers do not appreciate any kind of additional help or suggestions. Most of the time customers are 50% sure of what they want, but would require advice before making the decision. That's when good sales people step in and help customers solve their mental conflicts.

Explore **customer** needs with questions - the right questions. Never interrogate the customer. Use pleasant & helpful inquires to understand your customers. The insight guides the salesperson to help customer buy by linking product benefits to customer needs.

A few questioning techniques

(i) The **direct** question or close ended question :

Can I help you **with** your size? - Customer is looking for his size.

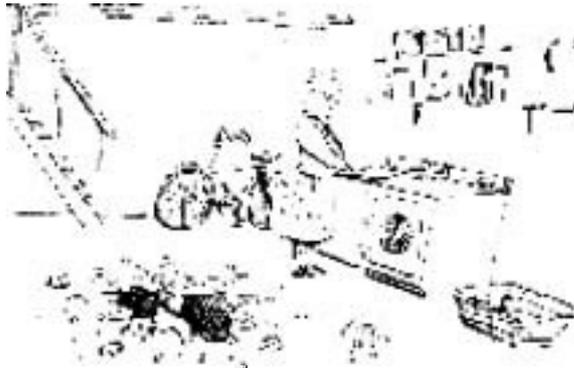
**How** old is your child? - Customer browsing in children's section

(ii) The **indirect** question or open ended :

Is there any particular doll your child likes? - customer **looking** for doll

Does your husband have any **favourite** colour? - Lady looking for a men's shirt

One needs to ensure that we don't get too nosy and interfere too much to identify customer's needs, like the cartoon below depicts



"Hi, we just wanted to make sure that our laundry detergent is doing the job"

### Stated and Unstated Needs

The needs of buyers can be categorized as stated and unstated. Stated needs are those, which customers clearly mention and want to have. Unstated needs are those, which customers probably have in their minds but are unable to express because they do not have the relevant information. As sales specialists, it is your job to observe the behavior or the confusion in the minds of customers and help them.

For example, a newly married **couple** can be identified in India by certain aspects of their attire. So you notice that you could try and sell a whole host of products newly weds are likely to need.

When sales people are able to achieve this, then the customers would like to patronize this store and this leads to store loyalty.

## 3.6 MATCHING PRODUCTS TO NEEDS AND WANTS

Once you have really identified what the customer wants through appropriate probing and empathy, you should immediately try and close the sale. The best way to achieve this is by being proactive and suggesting products and alternatives to the customer. In order to do this confidently, you should know all the products in your store and their features and benefits.

### 1) Suggest a Product

Customers more often than not like to be told what is available for them in the store, once the needs identification process is complete. A lot of times, sales persons tend to take a backseat and do not suggest products to customers **thinking** that the customers exactly know what product would fulfill their needs. The danger with this **kind** of a passive attitude is, the customers may choose the wrong product and later on would feel let down by the store. When you have a proactive attitude, the customers would feel that you are genuinely interested in them and this would really reduce the number of objections the customers will have, when you try and close the sale.

### 2) Linking Customer needs to products' features and benefits

The next step after suggesting a product would be to follow up **with** what are the features and benefits of the product and how it links to their needs. For example, if a newly married couple is **looking** for bedspreads and if you are suggesting a complete bedroom set with bedspreads, pillow covers and curtains, you could tell them that, since they are newly married, they have a lot of visitors and matching bedroom sets, could help them present their house better to the visitors. This **kind** of linking really helps the customer in

making a clear choice without feeling that he is getting cheated. If you are able to create these links, the chances of customer objections cropping up would drastically reduce.



"You need brake shoes. May I suggest an Italian leather with five-inchheels?"

## 3.7 HANDLING CUSTOMER OBJECTIONS

Any **customer** (or **potential** customer) can raise objections while moving forward through the sale. A customer raising an objection and the salesperson dealing with it should be **seen** as a natural part of any sale. Sales people should see objections as opportunities to clarify a customer's thoughts in some way, in order to advance the sale. Sales people who are **skilled** at advancing the sale usually advance their careers. Objections or more general resistance to be sold to are natural in customers. Objections are coded signals that communicate the customers' thoughts or attitudes.

Knowing why customers object and by being able to categorise those reasons it becomes easier to know how to respond. By learning of the eight main reasons for a customer raising an objection, the salesperson's response will be more appropriate, more natural and so the sale will stay on track. The customer will feel helped and so resistance will lower and a stronger relationship will develop.

### 3.7.1 Main reasons why customers object?

All kinds of customer objections can be categorized into eight main categories. These are listed below with reason as to why the sales persons feel these are objections.

- 1) The Customer has no real interest at this stage in what I was offering.
- 2) The customer gave objection in self-defence because they were not expecting to hear **what** I said.

These reasons suggest that the salespeople are ignoring the customer point of view and either going into a list of **product/service** 'benefits' or closing (**asking** the customer to make decision) too soon into the sale.

- 3) The customer didn't understand the offer I was making (or what I wanted them to do).
- 4) The customer didn't see enough value (or value for money) in what I was offering them.

These reasons suggest that salespeople are not finding out about customers' needs before presenting and closing (**asking** for a decision). Not finding out means they don't have enough information **to** match what the customer needs or wants to what they are trying to sell.

- 5) The customer felt I was lacking in empathy, interest, knowledge, skill and so on.

This reason suggests that the salesperson is just going through the motions of the sale and is not showing interest in the customer or what is being sold. Studies have shown a lot of customers who go elsewhere do so because the person they normally deal with doesn't show interest in what they are doing or in the customer's needs. This reason also shows that the salesperson lacks product or company knowledge and so can't relate needs to products. It can also indicate a lack of **basic** sales skills.

- 6) The customer saw a big obstacle to going ahead with the sale.

This reason suggests that the salesperson is able to go further in the sale but can't quite get on to the customer's wavelength. It can also suggest that the "Wrong" customers are being chosen to be sold to.

On a more positive note, it can indicate that the customer has been persuaded to go ahead but can't. They raise the reason as an objection; the sales person either has enough product knowledge and sales **skill** to succeed or the sale is lost.

- 7) The customer was testing me in some way to see if the offer was as good as it seemed.

This reason suggests that the salesperson is too pushy (according to this the customer doesn't quite believe how good the offer is. Some customer test salespeople's zeal to see if they really do believe in what they **are** selling.

- 8) The customer was testing the offer against his or her own buying needs.

This reason suggests that the customer is interested in the offer and uses objections **as** part of their thought process to compare their needs and wants with the details of the offer. There is a clear need for the salesperson to recognize this and to work with the customer to reach a successful conclusion.

To summarize we can state that objections:

- From customers are common
- Are natural part of the buying process
- Reflect the customer's opinion of what is happening.
- Are often a response to the salesperson's actions and apparent attitude as well as to what the salesperson says.
- Can indicate real interest on the part of the customer (especially categories **6,7** and **8**)
- Can indicate that the customer feels uninvolved in the sale (especially categories **1-5**)
- Are opportunities for the salesperson to stop and get on to the customer's wavelength more effectively.
- Are **opportunities** to advance the sale.
- Are opportunities to learn how to be a more responsive and successful salesperson.

### **3.7.2 Seven ways of dealing with objections**

You have learnt above some of the typical reasons customers **give** when they object. Now we shall try and learn some **skillful** ways of dealing **with these** objections.

A salesperson who handles objections in a skilful, positive and friendly way will sell more and be better respected by customers. In this section we will understand dealing with objections in such a way that the issue is dealt with effectively; the sale stays on track; and the customer/seller relationship stays positive.

Customers have reasons- real, imagined or mistaken- for raising objections. Objections can be serious or just excuses. Every time a customer objects, it is important to treat that objection seriously in order to keep the relationship with the customer on track.

One of the benefits of these techniques is that 'excuses' get flushed out without anyone losing face. Once an excuse has been handled well the customer is most unlikely to raise another less-than-serious point.

Now let us try and understand in detail the **seven ways to handle objections**.

- 1) **Bypass it:** The technique simply is a request to deal with the objection later. For example "May I make a note of that and come to it when.. .", "OK, I have got that. Can I answer it later", "May I come back to that? I'll need to check with my manager". All these statements prove to the customer that you have registered the objection. You are serious about returning to it. The customer can relax.

Always seek permission to return to the point: "Can I answer it later?" If the customer says "NO", use one of the other techniques to address it. If the customer says "yes" you know that the customer/seller relationship is ok and the sales conversation can stay on track. It is really important that you return to the topic later. This technique should be used when:

- a) You feel you have a good relationship with the customer.
  - b) The customer is open about his thoughts, concerns, and issues.
  - c) The conversation is flowing and you don't want to go off at a tangent.
- 2) **Answer it and confirm:** Most salespeople give a straightforward response to a straightforward objection. This is OK- its part of a normal two-way conversation. But, to be effective, you must always confirm that the answer you give is all the customer needs. It is essential to confirm the answer. for example:
    - a) You could give the wrong answer.
    - b) You might respond to what the customer said but that might not have been what the customer meant ( people don't always say what they mean)'
    - c) You might want to follow with a supplemental point.

It is also important to know when to confirm. There are two possible answers to this. Either straight away or as part of your summary before you ask for the order- for example, "you remember when I said (your response to that objection), is there anything else you'd like me to add or did I cover everything for you.

- 3) **Accept and balance:** This technique can be used when an objection is valid and cannot easily be dealt with. Its real value is that it stops a molehill from becoming a mountain. For example.
  - a) Customer wants a **version** of the product that is not readily available.
  - b) Customer does not particularly want the version that is available.
  - c) Delivery schedule is not convenient.
  - d) The competitive offering has a feature your product doesn't have.

Most inexperienced salesperson would, typically, either meet this type of objection head-on and argue against the customer's choice or would realize the objection could not be overcome and would assume that the sale was lost.

An **effective objection**- handler behaves differently. Listed below is five-step process to accept and balance with a benefit:

- (i) Acknowledge the objection, 'I see' or 'that's a good point' and so on.
- (ii) Check its validity, 'May I ask how important that is' or 'what **makes** you say that?'
- (iii) Accept it, 'I see'
- (iv) Provide a benefit that more than counters the missing feature in terms of what the customer wants to get from having the product or service. For example, a car might not be in a preferred colour but its overall safety rating might be better (important to a buyer with children) or its acceleration might be greater than the competitor vehicle (important to a buyer who does a lot of driving on busy roads where **overtaking** is important).
- (v) Balance the benefit. (safety, arriving on time) against the missing feature (colour), 'so while I can't give you exactly that colour I can get you home .. (Safely or on time)'.

**4) Offer Extra Information:** This technique should be used when the customer's objection is based on a misconception or only part of the truth.

To be used effectively it requires comprehensive company and **product/service** knowledge on the part of the salesperson. This is particularly important if you are preparing for a product launch or you are a new recruit.

Mentioned below are some steps, which could be used in this technique:

- a) Acknowledge the objection.
- b) Check its validity
- c) Accept that the customer sees it as a big enough problem.
- d) Seek permission to explain the true situation or signal that you are going to explain ( ' May I explain something to you' or 'A lot of customers thought that and what I always tell them is ....'; a lot of customers thought that way prevents the customers from feeling stupid).
- e) Give the customer the information they need.
- f) Confirm the objection has been dealt with.

If this technique has to be really effective, what is **required** is **good** product knowledge and an understanding of the typical objections **customers** may raise. This can be obtained through others and your own past **experience**.

**5) Reduce it to zero:** This is usually associated with price objections. With regard to price there are, broadly, two types of customers:

Those who want to buy but are put off by the price and those who know the salesperson will offer a discount than lose an order.

This technique handles both kinds of customers.

This technique works well when the customer has agreed with everything ( more or less) and indicated they would go ahead but came up with a price objection: ' I can't afford it', 'its more than I have budgeted for', 'its too expepsive', and so on.

The sequence for this objection handling technique is as follows:

- a) Determine how much is too much.
  - b) Focus on the difference between what the customer wants to pay and the asking price.
  - c) Confirm if the price difference is the only obstacle.
  - d) Help the customer to calculate ownership life ('If you were to have the product, for how long would you expect to keep it').
  - e) At this point you must **reconfirm** what the customer has agreed to so far and remind him of the benefits of ownership in specific terms. Use the customer's own words to describe the benefits if at all possible. This develops a sense of ownership.
  - f) Go back to the price difference and say something like, 'So, in order to get those benefits, we have to do something with (state the amount in question)'.
  - g) Now divide the difference by the period of ownership or the number of times the product will be used. Take a smaller unit of time or use it again. Your goal is to end up with an amount as close to zero as possible (50 paise per mile, 60 paise per hour and so on).
  - h) Compare the benefits of total product ownership with the small amount of money just calculated, 'so for X paise, you could have this'.
  - i) Compare the small amount of money with something else of about the same price that the customer buys **anyways**. A personal purchase could be compared with the price of newspapers, a business purchase with the price of wasted photocopies and so on.
  - j) Ask the customer to agree with you, since they have that money anyway, it makes more sense to spend it on the product in question. Now repeat all the benefits of ownership previously agreed to.
- 6) **Pre-empt it** : Pre-empting an objection means actually stating the objection even before the customers make the objection. The typical situations where you may use this technique are:
- a) When selling a product with a known shortcoming.
  - b) When the competition continually refers to a particular company or product weakness.
  - c) When preparing to launch a new product (untested and untried in the field)
  - d) When preparing for sales campaign (increased sales activity will generate increased objections)

It's a simple technique to use and it steals the thunder from any criticism of company, product or service.

To pre-empt an **objection** the sales person must:

✎ Consider any shortcoming to be a feature not an obstacle.

Know the advantages and benefits of the feature. For example:

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Feature:   | Small Company   |
| Advantage: | Personal attention  |
| Benefit:   | Customer gets better service for their money.                         |
| Feature:   | High Price  |
| Advantage: | Quality Product   |
| Benefit:   | Product lasts longer/ has better features and serves customer better. |

7) **Question it through:** This technique would be most useful:

- In order to keep the sales conversation natural
- When the conversation should be extended to discuss the objection in detail.
- When the customer raises a major objection.

This technique follows a four-step process as listed below:

- Listen to the objection. Let the customer finish speaking before you respond.
- Either: Check the objection's validity- for example, 'How important is that to you?' or 'When do you see that applying?' Or Check your understanding of what the customer has just said- for example, 'Let me check I have got that- (now repeat the objection)'. Sometimes the customer will give you the real objection, extend what they have just said and so give you more information to work with or they will realize their own solution and cancel the objection.
- Ask questions to help the customer become clearer about the objection and alternatives, and lead the customer to a solution to the problem. The questions keep the salesperson in control of the conversation. They also ensure that the customer and salesperson continue to communicate effectively with each other.
- Confirm with the customer that the solution is satisfactory (the salesperson will almost always get to this step in the process).

These objection-handling techniques will be really become powerful as you start using them. Once a major objection has been handled it is appropriate to ask the customer if there is anything else they want you to explain. If there is, make a note of all the points the customer lists. You know what you have to do to get the order. If there is nothing else- Close!

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## 3.8 CONFIRMING AND CLOSING THE SALE

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Effective closing skills are the hallmark of successful salespeople and those who are respected by customers. Closing is something you do with a customer not to

a customer. Closing merely confirms a decision. It should not force a decision. If closing is done to a customer to force a decision, it is "hard selling" and is improper. It is actually counter-productive. This section will give you insights to help see "closing" as an ethical skill; understand how to close effectively and be able to sell more.

Recognition of buying signals helps the salesperson to check whether the time has

come to close the sale. These signals can be non-verbal, verbal or merchandise buying signals.

### **Non Verbal Signal**

- Customer strokes & feels the product
- Picks up the product and reads instructions
- Goes back to an item already shown
- Eyes dwelling constantly on a particular item
- Moves forward to get closer to the product
- Quick eye response, wideing of the eyes
- Sideways glance at the partner with an expression **seeking** approval or trying to catch salespersons eyes
- Posing while trials & **looking** in the **mirror**

### **Merchandise buying signals**

- **Customer** flexing shoe
- Customer brushing blazer after trial in front of the mirror.
- Matching of merchandise-jewellery, tops and bottoms
- Customer asks for a shade of lipstick to be tried on wrist or a nail enamel on her nail
- Customer holding **garment** on child & nodding

### **Verbal Signal**

- Do you like this - to a partner
- Do you accept credit cards
- Do you do home delivery
- **Is** my size there
- What color do you have
- If it doesn't fit can I exchange it (buying for someone else)

Closing should merely encourage a customer to confirm that everything is OK so far. By using some techniques during a sales conversation, closing will act like the thread that holds the sale together.

### **1) Closing and confirming techniques**

Given below are certain basic closing techniques:

- **Assume the agreement:** A basic closing or **confirming** technique is to be positive. To assume the customer will make more decisions and will agree with the advice and suggestions made by the salesperson. Showing interest and assuming the customer will remain positive is supportive, not manipulative or pushy. The most important technique in selling is being positive.
- **Ask the customers to make a decision:** Another powerful yet simple closing technique is to invite the customer to make a decision. The invitation would be effective if it is done through questioning rather through making statements. Questions

are powerful because they engage the brain, involve the customer, build rapport and encourage decisions.

- **Offer an alternative:** This is also known as the 'alternative choice close'. Alternatives are effective sales techniques because they **really involve** the customer's thought processes, they encourage positive decisions and you and the customer can progress more quickly.
- **Offer two alternatives:** This technique is also called the 'triplicate close'. This is a very powerful technique. It is a meatier version of offering one alternative in that it often results in a detailed conversation before a decision is made. It can be used to great effect with customers who - don't know what they want.

## 2) Complete paperwork

A sale is not made until the **paperwork** is complete. It is the most important technique of all. The salesperson should assist the customer until all the paper work is complete. This gives the customer a sense of great customer service and builds loyalty.

## 3) Reframing your mind

The last thing the salesperson needs to do is **reframe** his or her mind for meeting the next customer. This could mean being positive because they have just had a sale or learning from the mistakes they may have committed. This step is essential because this sets the tone for the next customer.

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## 3.9 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit you have understood the seven steps in selling. The selling process must start with preparing yourself to sell. This involves having a positive frame of mind, knowing your company, its product and its procedures. The second step is to meet and greet the customers. Here eye contact, smile, appropriate greeting and properly addressing the customer are very important. The next step (third) is to initiate sales conversation and then to identify customer needs and wants (fourth step). The customer needs include stated as well as unstated needs. Once you have identified the customer's need wants. The next step (fifth) is to match products to these identified need and **wants**. This involves suggesting a product and linking customer needs to product's features and benefits. The sixth step in the selling process is handling customers objections. The unit explains you ~~the~~ eight main reasons why customers object and suggest you seven ways of dealing with ~~the~~ objection. The last step in the process is **confirming** and closing the sale.

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## 3.10 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

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- 1) What are the important steps in "preparation to sell"?
- 2) How do you start a sales conversation?
- 3) What are the means of identifying the customer needs?
- 4) Describe the different ways of handling customer objections.
- 5) What are some of the basic closing techniques. Explain.