

Article in the Sales Manager series



Encouraging Your Reps to Add Value A Sales Manager's View

The greatest way to build sales is to get existing sales reps who are calling on existing customers to add value, and help customers make more informed decisions, from their extensive product and service knowledge.

A simple strategy to implement with your sales force is called 'One Idea Per Day, Per Customer'.

In every sales team you build your business one customer at a time, one transaction at a time, so therefore following through on this philosophy, show your sales reps how they can add one idea as a suggestion, not an opinion, to the customer at each visit, and then gradually over time they will have a reasonable success rate and become confident to keep on adding ideas which will increase the range of products purchased.

The most important thing is to encourage them to make the idea a *suggestion*, which means you don't use the words 'I' or 'we', you use the words 'some of our other customers have' to introduce the suggestion or the product idea.

A sales representative is better known for being an ideas suggestion person than a hard, pushy salesperson.

An idea can often go a long way towards helping the customer feel confident and realise that maybe it doesn't suit them this time, but the next idea does.

One way to encourage the ideas is to take some of your products or services and encourage the reps to select a particular product or service for that week or the interval between your sales meetings, and get them to brainstorm and write down as many possible methods of communicating an idea or a benefit about that product or service. Then all they have to do is to take one of those ideas and mention it every time they call.

The advantage of having different products or services scattered around your sales team is that you will find that at the next sales meeting each one of them will have had some successes and they will be able to pass on those ideas which worked, and encourage the rest of the team to try them.

Sales promotions, where products are featured with special bonus offers, discount offers or special incentives, will always work well as encouragement incentives, but make sure that your sales team has sufficient supplies of leaflets, handouts, or flyers to leave with the customer about the special promotion.

Remember when communicating your ideas development to your sales reps that human beings are visual people and like to see pictures, graphics, or visualisation of new products or services, so an idea that has a graphic showing how it can be used, or a physical product to actually look at, or an enthusiastic story to show how other customers have used it, is more likely to be listened to.

Just consider that if you called on 10 customers and suggested 1 idea to each one of them, and had a 50% success rate, at the end of the week you would have added 25 new lines to your group of customers. At the end of the month 100 new lines, at the end of the quarter 300 new lines, and satisfied customers.

Where did it all start? Just suggesting one idea, per day, per customer.

An idea a day works – how many ideas can you come up with?