

SELLING POINTS

Jerry L. Kennedy

The responsible salesperson

Behaving professionally means treating your customers and prospects with deep respect.

So far in our series about HERO selling, we've discussed the importance of two characteristics that are crucial to the success of a salesperson: being humble and ethical. So now let's move on to the next characteristic on the list of HERO traits: being responsible.

What does it mean to be responsible as a salesperson? Well, while being ethical means doing the right thing in a moral sense, being responsible means doing things the right way. It starts with following through on the commitments you make to your prospects and customers, and it's an integral part of every future interaction you have with them. In other words, being responsible means behaving professionally.

In your own experience with salespeople, you can always tell who the real pros are. They are the ones who always show up on time. They are the ones who always do what they say they are going to do. If they promise to have a proposal or quote to you by a particular date and time, you can rest assured that you'll have the proposal earlier than promised. They always speak in a professional manner, and they never, never *ever* answer their cell phone when speaking with you.

Responsible salespeople also take full ownership of any problems their customers might have with their company. They don't point fingers; they simply jump in and get the problem fixed, no matter what it is or who is to blame for it.

This is a tough one for a lot of salespeople because their natural inclination is to save face with the customer. You see, often salespeople operate under the false assumption that if they admit to a mistake, their customers won't respect them anymore. The truth is, though, that your customers will respect you more if you take responsibility not only for your own mistakes but the mistakes of your company and then do everything in your power to correct those mistakes. This is just one instance when humility comes in handy.

Being responsible and professional also includes treating your

customers and prospects with deep respect. You may remember me calling this The Aretha Principle. You know: "R-E-S-P-E-C-T, find out what it means *to me*." If I don't swear, neither do you. If I don't tell off-color jokes, neither do you. The real goal here is to find out what is considered acceptable behavior according to your customers and then behave accordingly.

Of course, this means you have to pay close attention to what your customers say, as well as what they don't say. It might also mean that you need to cultivate a greater degree of self-awareness. It's time to start really paying attention to the exchanges you have with your customers and analyzing them against the touchstones of respect and responsibility.

For example, do you follow through on your commitments or do you routinely disappoint your customers by showing up late and unprepared? Do you own up to your mistakes and take full responsibility for any transgressions on the part of your company or do you give into the temptation to point fingers and play the blame game? Do you show a deep respect for your customers' beliefs, practices and ideas or do you insist on your right to "tell it like it is?"

You should consider these questions carefully, as your answers show whether you really want to be a HERO or not.



Responsible salespeople always do what they say they are going to do.

Editor's Note: For a limited time, TLT readers can receive a free 10-minute audio gift from the author by logging on to <http://www.motivation101audio.com>.



Jerry Kennedy, CLS, is owner of Inside Out Business Solutions, a sales and customer service training organization. You can reach him at jkennedy@inside-out-solutions.com.