

# Seven Common Myths That Prevent Successful Selling



Many organizations believe that the “correct” sales approach is any method that generates new business. However, research has shown that merely closing the initial sale is not enough for a company to achieve success. The best selling systems focus on sustainability, repeat business and building brand equity. Companies developing selling systems often create strategies based on seven common sales myths. These myths prevent businesses from creating a truly successful selling model. We will refer to these false beliefs as the *Seven Myths of Successful Selling*.

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**Myth #1: A person’s ability to sell is based primarily on Raw Talent.**

This belief assumes that salesmanship in its simplest form is an innate ability, a gift that can be neither taught nor learned. There is very little truth to this statement. Here is why. Selling is comprised of several skill sets and not just one as this myth assumes. These skills include verbal and nonverbal communication, time management, process control and the ability to conduct good follow-up. All these skills can be taught. The challenge for most companies is teaching these valuable skills in a way that allows the salesperson to retain and implement the learned behavior.

**Myth #2: Good salespeople have the “Gift of Gab.”**

Good salespeople have often been credited for having an uncanny ability to converse. The “Gift of Gab” claim is almost as old as the practice of selling itself. In fact, the “chatty” salesperson will often drive business opportunities away. The most productive sales professionals will usually end up talking far less than their clients during the selling process. In her book *Stop Telling, Start Selling*, Linda Richardson points out that the best sales reps are often great interviewers. The best-trained salespeople are good at asking client focused questions aimed at uncovering the needs, wants and desires of their target audience. These salespeople actually have the gift of listening not of gabbing.

**Myth #3: Any sales approach that hits sales volume goals is a good approach.**

In the past, many organizational sales strategies were quite simple by design. Terms such as consumer purchase behavior and post purchase dissidence were only found in college textbooks and scholarly journals. However, today’s businesses are entering into a new competitive landscape. Free trade, eCommerce, increased competition and elevated consumer expectations, are creating a hypercompetitive marketplace. Now, consumers have more choices and in-turn businesses have fewer prospects. Companies are now faced with developing selling systems that not only achieve the initial desired result, but also ensure that consumer satisfaction and brand equity goals are maintained. Selling

systems that promote “one-call closes” and “quick hit” strategies are destined for short-lived success. A hand full of desperate salespeople can hit short-term sales goals while destroying a company’s credibility. Increased competition mandates that organizations focus on sustainable sales systems that achieve sales goals while promoting long-term growth.

**Myth #4: Good salespeople do not need scripts.**

The use of scripts in the selling process dates back to the early years of door-to-door sales. Scripts were particularly helpful for repetitive selling situations where the product offering remained static and the end user was generally a captive audience. It is for this reason that scripts have a bad reputation. Script selling uses a “canned approach” process. The use of scripts in sales has become much more sophisticated since those early days of selling. When used properly, scripts can play many different roles and be the corner stone of a strong selling system. The use of scripts is not a sign of a weak salesperson. Rather, many top performers will develop a wide array of scripts for any number of selling situations. Scripts aid in learning and sales development by utilizing memorization and repetition. They are excellent tools that create a familiarity with detailed selling concepts. Scripts can be used in any number of ways with outstanding results. The secret to scripting is to understand the developmental needs of those using the script.

**Myth #5: Dropping prices is the best way to keep competitive.**

Time and time again, salespeople will complain that they would be able to make more sales if their prices were lower. Often, many organizations fall victim to a “competitive” pricing strategy. Price alone has never sold anything! This is a bold statement. Yet, it is a true statement. If price alone were the key consideration of consumers, the Chevy Chevette, Yugo and GEO Metro would be the number one selling cars in America. They are not. Why is this? Simply put, price alone does not sell products or services. Price competitiveness relative to the accompanying features and benefits is what sells a product or service. The Reality: commodity-based pricing systems rarely succeed. Selling by price is a short-term sales fix that is unsustainable and generally counter-productive. Customers buy based on perceived value as it relates to their particular need. In a commissioned based sales role, talented salespeople understand that lowering prices is in fact, lowering their salary. Therefore, a strong selling system will provide the sales force with ways to highlight competitive advantages and unique selling propositions.

**Myth #6: Getting salespeople to make more sales calls is the key to effective selling.**

Seasoned sales managers know that there is a big difference between activity and productivity when it comes to cold calling and prospecting in the sales world. The line that separates activity from productivity can get blurry if managers focus their attention purely on the number of sales calls that are made in a day. There is more to an effective sales strategy than just making an enormous number of sales calls in the hopes that something will “stick.” A good sales call strategy looks at several aspects.

- The number of qualified prospects that a sales professional sees

- The ability to reach prospects when they are ready to purchase
- The salesperson's effectiveness once they have face-to-face or voice to voice contact

Training a sales force to indentify qualified candidates and get in front of those candidates will do far more to improve sales effectiveness than simply pushing for increased activity.

### **Myth #7: Selling all comes down to closing.**

A wise sales professional once said that the “closing of a sale” is just the inevitable result of a well-positioned product or service. Simply put, the purchase decision is the natural response to a product or service that meets the needs, wants or desires in the mind of a customer. Many salespeople incorrectly believe that closing the sale comes down to knowing several slick one-liners that will create the desired “yes response.” However, these salespeople have fallen victim to one of the oldest myths in sales. The myth: “Sales is all about closing.” True sales professionals understand that the closing process starts very early on in the sales presentation. Tools like probing questions, tie downs, trail closes and temperature checks should be used to make sure that the prospect is properly prepared to follow through on a purchase. A well-trained sales professional has the ability to start closing for business very early on in the selling process. The close is not a portion of the sales process that is left for the end of the sales presentation. Good closers start the closing process early on.

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So what does a strong selling system look like? Selling has come a long way since the early days of door-to-door salespeople. Selling is a sophisticated process that blends consumer psychology, communication, project management as well as other areas. The best-prepared sales teams understand their role in the selling process and can easily maneuver their way through the various stages of the selling cycle. Here are seven factors to consider when developing a strong selling system.

**Factor #1:** A good sales system forces the salesperson to focus on the customer's needs, wants and desires.

**Factor #2:** The best selling systems help salespeople start selling before they ever get face-to-face or on the phone with a prospect.

**Factor #3:** The best selling systems are based on proven principles that provide salespeople with the “tools” that they need to approach each selling opportunity confidently.

**Factor #4:** A sales system should include a series of linked sequential steps that provide a salesperson with a definitive road map for closing business.

**Factor #5:** Effective selling strategies drive profitability by allowing a company to separate themselves from their competition. They teach salespeople how to use unique selling propositions and capitalize on competitive advantages.

**Factor #6:** A sales system should provide a “play-book” or reference guide that helps train new salespeople and coach existing ones.

**Factor #7:** A strong selling system ties directly into a company’s overall marketing strategy. The overall marketing message should have one clear voice with one common vision.