

Q&A with Lenann

Lenann McGookey Gardner, a Harvard MBA and a #1 worldwide sales rep at Xerox, offers keynote speeches on state-of-the-art selling and closing skills, executive and sales coaching for business success, and workshops. Her book *Got Sales? The Complete Guide to Today's Proven Methods for Selling Services* is the one guidebook highlighting all the latest research and data on what's working now in contemporary selling.

Q: Lots of people are involved in selling. Why do you think being in sales has such a bad reputation?

Answer: Most professionals wouldn't consider themselves to be sales people, but doctors, attorneys, accountants, consultants, and other businesspeople need to sell their services and get referrals in order to be successful in business. Most people are untrusting of, maybe even afraid of, salespeople. On some level, they think salespeople will say and do anything just to get their wallet. So imagine how excited those same people are when they have to sell their own services. They hate salespeople — now they have to be one!

Q: What can business people do to overcome this attitude?

Answer: Successful sellers today understand that the foundation of professional selling efforts, as opposed to “Do you want fries with that?”-type selling, is TRUST. And they know how to create an atmosphere in which trust can grow. Such an atmosphere has nothing to do with the “pushy salesman” stereotype! Understand where your bias against selling comes from, accept the need for selling, change your attitude and learn how to sell without manipulating. Put others first and have a true desire to be of service.

Q: Can today's technologies be used to help sales?

Answer: Technology can work wonders for your business, but it can also sabotage your sales efforts if used incorrectly. So many organizations spend a fortune on CRM (Customer Relationship Management) systems — technology that, somehow, they expect will improve their sales results. But sales results are only as good as the people making the connections. Technology is not a substitute for human contact in most of the businesses I serve. Get up-to-date sales training and also think about how your voice mail messages sound, how often you leave them, and what your emails look like and say; all these can make a difference in your sales results.

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Q: Are cold calls really an effective way to expand one's client base?

Answer: While many professionals avoid cold calling, it can be highly successful — if you approach it with the proper attitude. In cold calling, your goal is to get appointments; to arrange to be face-to-face with someone who might spend money with you. Sales research tells us that more face time and phone time with people who can buy what we're selling equals more sales.

Q: What if I don't want to be seen as a telemarketer?

Answer: The first step is to escape your fear of rejection — don't allow yourself to take it personally. Start with a Clean Heart Position: A sincere desire to see your prospect get what he wants, whether or not he gets it from you. Selling is not giving a speech about your services; it's about inquiring about your prospect and his Pain, and honestly expressing an interest in him. Remember that you are there to be of service, and if you can't be of service, get out of the way so his day can move forward.

Q: How would you recommend keeping clients' loyalty and business?

Answer: America — and much of the rest of the world — has evolved into a culture that shops around. In a world where loyalty isn't the norm, there are five simple ways to increase your customers' loyalty and encourage repeat purchases:

- Have a plan for sustaining relationships.
- Stay aware of your value, and make sure your clients do, too.
- Share your stories with case studies that tell about your role in clients' successes.
- Bring your prospects clients.
- Earn the business by going out of your way to help your customer.

Q: Can an ethical, moral person be successful in selling without selling themselves out?

Answer: It is very easy for a principled or religious person to take a sales job and feel good about it. A clean heart, an attitude of service, and the Golden Rule are key. Simply walking away from a "bad fit" sale may pinch my company's income in the short run; in the long run, though, a moral approach to selling lets me sleep better at night, and leads to the long-term relationships that, now 16 years after forming my company, are the source of many friendships and a lot of business referrals!