

## RETAILER: Developing your retail business

# TILL SIDE TRAINING

## Selling

The RETAILER programme aims to provide practical resources for independent retailers in the Eastern region, backed by the support of intermediate mentors and the RETAILER website [www.independent-retailer.com](http://www.independent-retailer.com)

The RETAILER programme is supported financially by the European Social fund (ESF). Elements of the RETAILER programme build upon the APU SESAME programme. If you are interested in joining the RETAILER programme, please complete and return the form at the back of this document.

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## Introduction

Selling in a shop places particular demands on the seller.

Someone that you have never met before walks into your shop. Some people are insecure, others are nervous; some know exactly what they want, others have no idea. Some even know more about the products than you do and will be offended by a salesperson that adopts a patronizing tone. You have to, instinctively, gather all this information together and figure out the dynamics of, say, a husband and wife or father and daughter: and process this information and adjust your behaviour accordingly.



Stop selling.  
Start helping.  
**Zig Ziglar**

This sounds difficult, but we do it automatically all the time. For example, when you experience an emotion, the muscles in your face automatically express that emotion so that when someone says something that you think is funny, you laugh. And they know that you think they are funny because they can see you laughing. So, we can all mind read because there is enough accessible information right there in the face in front of us. And we do this instinctively, in a fraction of a second, by picking up fleeting clues in order to read someone's mind. And there is no other impulse so basic and at which, most of the time, we so effortlessly excel.

## Topic 1 Making a good impression

In most cases people will make up their minds about you instantaneously. And having done so, it is remarkably difficult to change that perception. However, while salespeople will be doing the same when they see people walk through the door, it would be a mistake for that first impression to drown out every other piece of information that is being gathered. Good salespeople try to be more selective. By editing out impressions based purely on physical appearance, they can pick up on whether someone really is insecure or confident, knowledgeable or naïve, trusting or suspicious.

Treat every customer as if they sign your paycheck... because they do.  
**Unknown**

And if the salesperson is making snap judgements, remember that the customer is doing the same. What kind of impression do you look for in a salesperson when you enter a shop? Why not list the five most important in order of priority?

### What positive characteristics do you look for in a salesperson?

1	<input type="text"/>
2	<input type="text"/>
3	<input type="text"/>
4	<input type="text"/>
5	<input type="text"/>

Fundamentally, we buy from organisations and people that we trust and to which we can relate. If you wanted to go out for a drink and let your hair down with an old friend, what kind of place would you choose? And would you choose the same place if you wanted to make a really good impression on someone that you had just met? My mother-in-law probably would not buy her clothes in the same shop as my daughter. So, in all this there are an infinite number of variables that eventually bring a customer through the door of your shop. And when they come through that door, you need to understand them and find out what they want so that they can buy it.

In the following situations, what signs would indicate that the customer might be:

Expression	Signs I would look for
Angry	<input type="text"/>
Confused	<input type="text"/>
Impatient	<input type="text"/>

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## Topic 2 Making people respond to you positively

Biggest question: Isn't it really 'customer helping' rather than customer service? And wouldn't you deliver better service if you thought of it that way?

**Jeffrey Gitomer**

Sales people are rather like chameleons. A chameleon is a kind of lizard that adopts the colour of its surroundings. When you want to make a good impression, we adapt to the person that we wish to impress. We smile and want to please them. We try and create a rapport between them and us. We can do this by sharing their views, through smiling, agreeing and avoiding any confrontational behaviour.

But before we can find out what a customer wants, we have to open the conversation. How many times have you heard people ask – can I help you? And how many times have you said yes? Most of us instinctively and politely say - no thank you. This is because this is a 'closed' question. An 'open' question is one to which you have to respond to without saying yes or no. These questions are prefaced by How, Why, Where, Which and What that was covered in Till side Training – Customer Service.

For example, a customer has been rummaging around a clothes rack for some minutes. How would you phrase a question that does not get a yes or a no?

**Starts How, Why, Where, When, Which or What?**

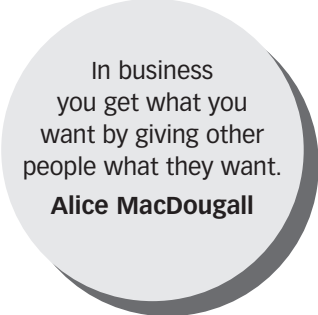
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## Topic 3 Help people to buy

Let us say that having asked your opening question, you have established what they are looking for. Do you just leave it there? No, you now want to ensure that they buy something before they leave. You can do this in a number of ways. If they know exactly what they want, you can find it for them and help them try it on or take it to the till. But what if they do not know exactly what they want? Be careful not to jump to a quick conclusion. Even though you may have an instinctive idea of what they want, confirm your understanding by asking some more questions. This will help you to establish what it is that they really want. Here you can again use your five serving men to ask 'open' questions that will make it clear to you what they are after.

Imagine that you are working in a lingerie shop and a man walks in dressed in a raincoat. He looks a little shifty and self-conscious. You could be rather suspicious of his behaviour as he nervously looks through the racks of ladies underwear and this might be expressed in your face and attitude. But what if he was a husband, late home from work on his wedding anniversary and looking for something to give his wife after an evening out? He is just rather shy and a little embarrassed.

So, think about what manner you would adopt in helping him find what he wants and what questions would you ask to find out exactly what he requires?



In business  
you get what you  
want by giving other  
people what they want.  
**Alice MacDougall**

When you have understood what exactly the customer wants, confirm this back in a short summary to show that you understand. Remember that the way that you talk to a customer and your attitude and behaviour towards that customer will help you to build loyalty from that customer. The best customer is one that keeps on coming back.

## Topic 4 Features and benefits

Now it is time to demonstrate your product knowledge. You need to know what is available, either on display or in stock. And you need to understand the features of each product. At its simplest, this will be sizes and colours. And with really complex products, such as computers and electronics, you will need to be trained by the manufacturer. What is certain is that, if you are not aware of the features of the product, you will look inadequate in the eyes of the customer. If you do not understand a product, admit it and go and find someone who can help you.

Complementary to each feature will be a benefit. Customers often express their requirements by explaining what they want to use it for. A washing machine that is very economical for example. If a particular model has, as a feature, a special ultra economy mode, this could be a feature. The benefit of this feature is that it will use less power. The implication of this benefit for the customer is that they will save money. Ask yourself what will have the most impact on your customer? Will it be that it has an economy mode? Will it be that it uses less power? Or, will it be that it will save them money?

Try this out for yourself. Find a product and identify five features. List the features in descending order of priority. Now match benefits and then implications for the customer to each feature.

	Feature	Benefit	Implication
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

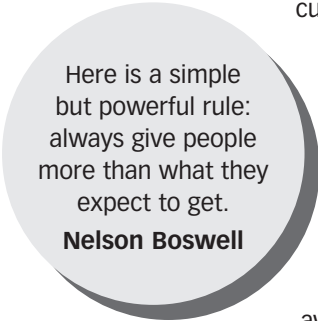
Did you get your priorities right?

The danger for many sales people is that, having learned all the features, they are so hooked on demonstrating their mastery of the product that they forget to qualify what is of interest to the customer. For example, it would be useless to try and interest them in an economy model of a washing machine if what really interested them was a stainless steel finish to match an existing dishwasher that is already installed in their kitchen. So, you can see how important it is to establish exactly what the customer wants.

In all of this, you need to be aware that you need to balance the time that you spend on a customer with the number of customers in the shop. During busy periods, you will not be able to spend as much time with each customer as you may like. Have you ever found yourself in a shop when you need a shop assistant to answer a question and they are all busy with other customers? The danger is a customer that has very intention of purchasing, leaves and goes to another shop.

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## Topic 5 Selling up



Here is a simple but powerful rule: always give people more than what they expect to get.

**Nelson Boswell**

You can now consider selling up. This is where, having established what the customer wants, with your superior knowledge of what is available, you can recommend additional features (benefits and implications) that match your perception of their needs: because what a customer tells you that they want may not exactly match what they need. For an expensive purchase, customers may already have done some comparison shopping on the Internet, but without buying. Starting from what they can afford, they have established what they can afford to buy with the money that they have available. As a result, they come in with a very clear statement of what they are looking for. However, they may not be aware that you are running a special offer on a more expensive product and that, for a few pounds more, they can get a much more superior product.

Another problem for a customer is the volume of choice that is available. In a computer show room you may have thirty printers. They all have similar features: so which one should you buy? Inevitably, the choice now lies with the sales person who, if they are on the ball, can make an astute recommendation. Maybe the ink cartridges on the Canon printer are less expensive than on the Epson. This could be just enough to swing the sale to the Canon printer.

The other trick is the add-on sale. Amazon do this very well when they alert you, on their web site, to additional products that other people have bought when they bought the product that you are proposing to buy. You can do the same. For example, a lady wants to try on a pair of trousers in the changing room. Why not grab a shirt that goes with the trousers on the way by and suggest that she would look nice in that and why not try it on too? There are many ways that you can create an opportunity for selling additional products by linking the principle product to related products or services. The sale of a digital camera can be nearly always extended to include rechargeable batteries and added memory.

The last issue is when what the customer wants is unavailable. We all know that customers, generally, will not wait. So, try and think of an alternative rather than let them leave empty handed.

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## Topic 6 Closing the sale

Now we come to the key bit. How do you close the sale? What signals indicate to you that the customer is ready to make a purchase?

Body language is one key indication. What kind of body language would you expect to see?

**Buying signals – list four examples of body language that might signal a willingness to buy**

1

2

3

4

The most indicative signals will be vocal. For example, having demonstrated the product and emphasised the features (benefits and implications), you get them to agree that this is what they are looking for. This is where you can aim to obtain a yes: and a series of yes's is a strong buying signal. And, when a customer starts to ask additional questions, this is also a strong buying signal. They are telling you that, if you can satisfy them on these additional issues, they will buy. A simple example of this would be a pencil. They have seen a blue pencil and have asked how much it costs. You tell them the answer and they ask if you can do it in red. You know that you have some red pencils in the stock room. So, you ask them that, if you can find them one in red, do they want it now? This is called a trial close. If they say yes, you can get the pencil and conclude the sale.



**Buying signals – list four examples of what customers say that signal their willingness to buy**

1	<input type="text"/>
2	<input type="text"/>
3	<input type="text"/>
4	<input type="text"/>

So to summarise: create an imaginary customer scenario that relates to the place where you work. There are four stages to be completed. How would you handle each stage?

Stage	What I would say:
<input type="text" value="Make contact"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text" value="Find out what they want"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text" value="Demonstrate the product"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text" value="Close the sale"/>	<input type="text"/>

Now that you've seen some of the RETAILER materials, would you like to benefit from the RETAILER programme?

Through the RETAILER programme, Anglia Polytechnic University offers Till Side Training for independent retailers in Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex employing less than 250 people.

The training is backed by practical materials, relevant resources, the support of experienced mentors and the RETAILER website.

Retailing is a 'people' business. Supermarkets, department stores and chains spend a significant amount of time and resources training their staff. Product knowledge, customer service, merchandising and selling are prerequisites for working in these companies, but training also:

- demonstrates commitment to their employees and their professional development (for many employees, the offer of training is the reason for deciding which company to work for)
- forms the principal rationale that supports all quality initiatives from simple Quality Control right up to Total Quality Management.

The RETAILER programme is supported financially by the European Social Fund, and is free to beneficiaries. The RETAILER programme is intended to train you, train your employees, and help you train future employees.

To find out more about the RETAILER programme please fill in your details below and send a copy of this page to:

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