

## **For Sales Success, Be Different AND Likeable** **By Bonnie Budzowski** **President, inCredible Messages, LP**

In sales, differentiation is critical. If you can convince prospects that you bring something unique to the marketplace, you increase your chances of beating out competitors. Differentiation—being the only vendor in your area that makes sales calls or offers a guarantee, for example—appeals to the logical side of the sales equation. But there are emotional aspects to sales as well.

Behavioral researchers consistently find that we are inclined to respond positively to people whom we like. That means we buy from those we like, we accept their proposals, and we refer business to them.

This principle is simple, and it's good news to people who are naturally charismatic. But what about the rest of us? How can we use the principle of likeability to achieve positive results?

**Look for Similarities.** Although most of us intend to be open-minded about the differences in others, we instinctively find people who are similar to us more likeable than those who are not. This is an automatic, visceral response. One study showed that we literally move closer to people whom we perceive to be similar to us.

To increase your sales success, make it a habit to look for similarities when you first encounter a potential customer. You might look for similarities in business philosophy, commitment to community service, or vacation preferences.

Name the similarities you find, and both you and the person you've just met will relax and be inclined to connect in positive ways. According to Robert Cialdini, an expert in persuasion and influence, it's important to use similarities to connect early in a relationship. This "creates a presumption of goodwill and trustworthiness in every subsequent encounter." In other words, if you connect over similarities early on, you'll *always* find it easier to persuade this person.

**Be liberal with praise.** According to Cialdini, praise is another route to likeability. When we go out of our way to praise the characteristics, actions, or work habits of another, that person is instantly inclined to like us. To put it another way, people who complement others have a higher likeability quotient than those who don't.

Remember, you don't have to like everything about a person to find something praiseworthy. You might utterly dislike a person and still sincerely praise that person's commitment to volunteer activity in the community. That praise can open a door in a relationship that might otherwise be strained. It's worth the effort.

**Be thoughtful in follow-up.** You increase your likeability when you demonstrate that you'll go out of your way to get to know someone, appreciate that person or serve her. A

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handwritten note may seem old fashioned, but it is as effective as ever. A simple note can differentiate you from competitors who dash off an e-mail.

Here are some other simple ideas. When you see an article on a customer's company or community, cut it and send it with a note. Comment on a book this person recommends—or send a book or CD with your recommendation. Forward a web link to a timely business article or a creative vacation destination. Finally, pick up the phone for the sole purpose of saying “hello.” None of these ideas involve a great deal of effort or expense, but they do make a difference. Use your creativity, and you'll be both likeable AND on their minds when they are ready to purchase.

In sales, differentiation in your product or service is critical. Even so, it's not enough. People will always prefer to buy from a person whom they know, like, and trust. Fortunately, you can be that person!

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