

The power of a simple demonstration

All you need is one tire and three minutes

Sales is a fascinating profession, and tires are a fascinating product. Most consumers don't understand the complexity of tires, and as a result, find a simple explanation and simple demonstration both interesting and helpful.

Like I've said in previous articles, I am a reader. I have literally read hundreds of leadership, motivational, public speaking, business and sales-type hardback books, and I've listened to hundreds of tapes and CDs.

One of my favorite stories was about a territory salesman who sold glass; tempered glass was his specialty. As a new salesman, he decided to perfect a demonstration technique that would make him and his product more interesting and memorable. Having recorded record sales in his territory, others began to notice and ask how he was achieving such success. His simple demonstration was to take a piece of sample glass and a small hammer and hit the glass to demonstrate the strength of his product. Because he captured the attention and imagination of his clients, he also captured a greater percentage of their sales.

The following year his sales continued to soar and, again, others noticed. When asked if he was still hitting glass with a hammer, he said, "No, this year I've given the hammer to my clients. I'm allowing them to hit the glass until it breaks." First he performed the demo, and then he engaged his clients in the demo.

I was a territory salesman at the time selling tires, wheels and shock absorbers (before struts came along). I immediately began putting a sample tire or wheel in my company truck on a weekly basis. I would say to my customers, "Can I show you a potential opportunity?" or, "I have something to show you that may be of interest." It's interesting how a simple statement can generate such interest and additional sales.

I've learned a few things along the way that I would like to outline here.

- Don't waste a customer's time on a demonstration until you have established the potential need. As a territory salesman, I realized that if I were to continually show a customer products they were not interested in, then it would become easier and easier for the customer to



By Wayne Williams

say, "No." Don't waste time on a demo if you're unsure of a potential positive outcome.

- Demonstrations should be a little special. Your reason for giving a demonstration must be clear; don't make the customer think too hard to figure out the benefit. For example, I would say to a customer, "I notice you sell a lot of tire blah, blah, blah. If you were to substitute these in place of blah, blah, blah, you would make an extra \$30 per set." (I never met a tire dealer who

wasn't interested in a simple shift that generated extra gross profit.)

- Don't try to use a sales presentation or demonstration to simply create interest. Save the best for last using the demo as a closer. Don't try to make too many points with the demo; use it to drive home one or two points that close the sale.

I visit tire stores all the time, and I'm always looking for success to share with others. Several weeks ago I was undercover. I had 30 minutes to kill before an appointment so I stopped into a nearby, company-owned outlet. I'm not going to mention names, but the company has a blimp for a mascot and supposedly sells "just tires." I was hanging out in the background watching a sales person who is new to our industry. I couldn't help but overhear the exchange.

Finally, I couldn't take it anymore and jumped in. I pulled a tire out of the display rack and demonstrated two simple features that seemed important to the potential customer.

- I showed him the country of origin; the sidewall read **"MADE IN THE USA." BAM!**
- Then I demonstrated the varied shoulder pitch designed to reduce road harmonics to ensure a quieter ride. **BAM! BAM!**
- Lastly, I explained the tire comes with a nationwide warranty. **BAM! BAM! BAM!**

I had overheard the customer's comment indicating he was leery of the "inexpensive, imported tires" he had "seen online," and he didn't want a "noisy tire."

What else do you need to know to deliver a demo? One tire and three minutes later, it's over. **BAM!!**

The power of a simple demo — fascinating! ■

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