



Owner can add value to the sales staff

Contrast these two owners, John and Joe (not their real names), and their approach to their sales departments. John is a sales guy. His company is a sales oriented firm. They don't manufacture, repair or service, just sell. He is their best salesperson and loves working with the customers, filling their needs and seeing them walk away satisfied. Because of this he tends to not give much direction to his sales team or office staff.

Joe's approach to sales is that he has a sales manager and salespeople and they should do the selling. Whenever he has customer contact it's because of a problem (usually on the operations side). Therefore, he has no relationship with the customer, it's a bumpy road he travels and the results have been less than stellar.

Obviously, both are doing things wrong. How the owner of a small business interacts with the customers is paramount to a successful, long-term relationship. You may not be, nor want to be, on the frontlines, doing sales work every day. However, when you do get involved, there are many ways to make it meaningful.

Here's how the owner can help increase sales without being an active member of the sales team.

Be a leader - It means a lot to the customer to have the owner

come along with the sales person. From your point of view, you are helping "close" a deal. From their perspective, it shows that you care. You're letting them know that you take their business seriously and you will do everything you can to make sure they are ecstatic with your service. In other words, you're showing respect and saying thanks.

Teach others – As the owner of the company, you know the little things that make things work, keep the customer happy and can transfer that knowledge to your staff. Going on a sales call not only adds prestige, it allows your staff to learn from your experience.

Technical expertise – Often the owner knows the product as good or better than anyone else. You can teach that information to your staff and also let the customer know some of the intricacies of what you offer. In large firms this job often falls to the sales support/technical staff.

Coordination – A big problem can be fluctuations in sales and how that affects production and delivery. As the boss, part of your job is to keep production flowing and deliveries timely. You can work with the sales team and the customers to make sure there is an understanding of how your system works and how customers can most benefit from it. That way your sales people won't over promise and under deliver. And, you won't have a backlog that is money sitting in storage (hoping to be sold).

The bottom line is that you don't have to be a salesperson as an owner. You do have to understand the process, the implications and make sure you add value to your sales department.

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