

Are You Believable?

By Bette Price, CMC

The degree to which your customer believes you will dramatically impact your success in sales. Research at the University of Houston identified why some people are more believable than others. Five factors contribute to your believability. What's important to understand about these factors, however, is that all five must be harmonious within an individual in order for them to be seen as highly believable. When one or more of these factors fail, believability will be diminished, thus one's sales persuasion becomes less effective. Examine the following five factors to see how you rate:

1. **Competence.** How knowledgeable are you about the products and services you sell? Is your knowledge deep or merely surface? Are you able to respond quickly to customer questions or do you frequently have to do additional research and get back with answers? The deeper your knowledge, the more readily you can respond with confidence, and the more ease with which you can communicate the value of your products or service, the more competent you will appear to your buyer.
2. **Composure.** How well do you hold up under pressure? Do you get flustered during those tough or uncomfortable situations or are you cool, calm and at ease? Your ability to effectively and calmly handle customer concerns and difficult questions will reflect a strong composure and enhance your believability.
3. **Extro-version.** Extro-version denotes your genuine warmth and affection for people. If you are sincere in your interactions and genuinely connect with others, you will go a long way toward establishing rapport with your

customer. Genuine is the key word here. You can't fake caring; customers see right through a false effort to be warm and sincere. If you're truly engaged with the customer for the customer's sake, your sincerity will shine through. If you're merely faking it, expect that to show too.

4. **Character.** This denotes your ability to build trust with people. While character has always been important, it is even greater today, given the recent corporate scandals that have severely eroded trust. Your character will be reflected in the judgments you make, the ethical decisions you convey and the follow-through you demonstrate. Trust is the cornerstone of all long-term relationships and is critical for those valued referrals.
5. **Sociability.** This factor can be a silent killer. Sociability reflects your social skills, your etiquette, and appropriateness. It's amazing how little concern many salespeople give to this factor. Clients won't tell you when your behavior is inappropriate—they just won't do business with you. While etiquette training has become somewhat of a dinosaur in most sales courses, don't discount its importance. Lack of manners or appropriate behavior is often the number one reason a customer decides to do business with someone else. So mind your manners.

Recently a bright, young sales rep lost the sale to his competitor—another young man who, in all candor, marketed a less viable product. Why? During the sales call the young sales rep talked incessantly and, without asking permission, presumed it was fine to lay his materials on the manager's desk. While moving papers around, he accidentally nudged the manager's coffee mug, splashing coffee on a pile of papers set to the side of the desk. Although the young man apologized, the damage had been done. It wasn't so much the

coffee incident as it was the whole lack of appropriateness. By assuming that it was o.k. to lay all his materials on the client's desk without asking permission was the first sociable mistake. From thereon, the etiquette breach compounded everything else. His lack of appropriate behavior influenced all the remaining believability factors and turned the sales call into a total fiasco. While on the surface this may seem somewhat trite, to the mature customer the young man demonstrated lack of composure and sociability. Beyond that, it demonstrated poor judgment, which negatively impacted his character. With three out of five believability factors impeded, the sale was doomed.

The next time you make sales calls, keep in mind these five believability factors. Some factors, like sociability, stand out more visibly than others, yet all are important in building rapport and believability with the customer. When you can honestly say that all five were in sync, chances are you had an effective sales call.

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