

Let's Discuss Sales

Come back...don't run away. We will make it a bit more palatable. Sales doesn't have to be difficult, even though it seems sort of difficult.

Have you ever heard someone say they love to make photographs but hate to sell photographs? Have you ever thought to yourself that photography would be a very cool career if it didn't have any selling attached to it?

Yeah. Me too.

Examples of the "I hate sales mindset":

"I love shooting and all that it entails but, man, I am so awful at selling that it kills my momentum."

"I can get in the door to show my book, but I can't seem to close any deal. Ever. Not sure what is up with that. I guess I'm not that good at sales."

"Why can't my work be enough? Just look at the photographs and hire me."

"I just don't get why I am not busier. So many people look at my work and love it, then not a single assignment."

But there is more to selling than what we normally think about it.

While it is easier for most of us to build a good book than become a great salesman or saleswoman, it is also a necessary evil which must be overcome. **Sales is business.** Even more importantly, it is all about our business. Without a good knowledge of sales, we will flounder in the midst of uncertainty, not sure why no one is hiring us, not sure how to get anyone interested in hiring us, and not sure if we will ever get a gig.

Scary.

We can become good photographers and we can become good salespeople. I promise we can. Here's what we are going to do to become better salespeople for our own business:

1. Learn about selling concepts and how the process of a sale happens. We want to know everything about how it happens, why it happens, and how to create situations that let it happen.
2. Learn what motivates people to buy, especially what motivates them to buy photography, and especially what motivates them to buy our photography.
3. What personality traits and business modalities trigger sales in our industry? How can we learn to control and understand those triggers?
4. Learn how we can fit into the sales methodology. How are we "wired" to deal with competition, the sales process, rejection, and fear? What methods can we use to overcome those challenges?

5. Find and create our own methodology for sales. Once they are in place, how do we constantly update and correct them for maximum power?

6. Do it. Over and over again we do it. Sell at every opportunity. It doesn't have to be difficult, and it isn't if you truly believe in your product and service.

Let's do a worksheet on sales to get you started planning your own methods:
Why do people buy?

You may be surprised that price and needs are only one small component of why people buy. Sure they need something, and you are offering it to them, but there are lots of photographers who can offer them the same thing. Theirs may be a little different, but if you think you are the only one able to do something, you may need to take a reality check.

Most people buy from an emotional center. If something moves them to an emotion that they enjoy, they are more predisposed to purchase. If you can help them with that emotion, then you have a leg up on the sales.

How can you do that?

Presentation

Content

Delivery

Story

Context

Are there others? List them here:

Explain "sales" to yourself.

Consider this:

"Sales is converting the energy and excitement around my product into a fulfillment need in the client."

We want to create such a buzz, such a desire for our photography, that the client must buy it. They would feel left out if they didn't assign us the next great gig.

No, I am certainly not saying that it is easy to do; I am saying it is our stated goal. Factors that lead one to buy include:

Price

Convenience

Reputation

How the client works

Past Experiences

Word-of-Mouth

Fame

Quality

Service

Presentation

Credibility

Loyalty

Recommendations

Fear

Ease

Timing

How the Boss Works

Friendship Personality

Social Media Connections

Popularity

That is a fairly formidable list of reasons clients buy something... photography to be precise. Can you think of a few more?

Now for the really interesting question: How can you motivate the buyers into purchasing your work or assigning you to the next big gig?

You have to have some basics down pretty well:

Your work is impeccable.

The quality of your work is matched by how well you deliver and maintain a relationship with the client. We call that service.

Can you communicate in a manner that makes them not worry about the assignment and whether you can do the gig and get it to them? If not, work on that as hard as possible.

Can your experience be a motivational factor in the awarding of the gig? How can you communicate that experience?

Impeccable work:

Work that is tuned into the needs of the buyer. Work that is technically correct and emotionally, artistically, and aesthetically what the client is looking for.

If the work is not good enough, your credibility is on the line. If you are showing the client work that is not what they are interested in, your credibility is on the line. You are the visual expert here, and you need to let them know it at every opportunity.

Service:

Having the right forms and requests for proposals (RFPs) and contact information that is needed for the job helps show that you place service quite high. Delivering the files on time with the correct items included is another way to let them know that service is important to you. Look at how you do what you do and ask yourself if the service aspect of your business is up to the highest level possible. If not, change it.

Good Communicator:

Having no misspellings is a simple way of making sure they know you can communicate well. Being interested in the gig, asking questions, providing solutions that make sense, and helping the client get to the best image is a level of communication for which we want to strive.

We also want to make sure that questions that need to be answered are answered. We stay in touch with the client to keep them aware of all the possible challenges that may be facing the gig.

Experience:

Showing a good, relevant book is one way of gaining the "experience trust" that is so important. But so are testimonials, client lists, tearsheets, and great references.

Another way of showing the client you have experience is to ask the questions that show you understand the assignment. Be proactive with the planning. Clarification of the exact parameters of the gig is also important and lets the client know you understand what is needed. That understanding only comes from experience.

List the ways you may be able to create more incentive for buyers to purchase your work.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

What assets do you currently have that will help you toward motivating your clients to assign the work to you?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Now think of some prospective buyers that you know. Can you imagine what it would be like to work with them in a sales situation?

Write out the scenario as you think it should play out: