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WHAT'S YOUR MOTIVATION— BIG BUCKS OR SERVICE?

By Leanne Hoagland-Smith, M.S.

What motivates you to sell? Is it the size of the deal? Or maybe you are customer service driven, and money isn't the primary sales motivational driver?

Having been in sales for over 40 years, service always took precedent for me. Sure, a big deal or a big sale was exhilarating. Yet, to have someone thank me for just doing my job or to see a look of general gratitude and appreciation was always more important.

Recently I just entered the real estate profession here in Mohave County, located in northwest Arizona. I have been surprised by what my first five clients shared with me. They expressed continued thanks for what I presumed was just doing my job by being responsive to their expressed wants and needs as much as I could.

The first client was on a second visit to Mohave County. We invested an entire day viewing several properties. His wants and needs changed as he was exposed to different property opportunities. I understood those changes because this was to be he and his wife's final home.

Client number two was seeking vacant land. The actual listing price and commission were on the low side. However, we toured the various properties he was interested in and provided some detailed answers to his questions.

After the day-long tour, we decided to make an offer on one property. Due to technology challenges, I volunteered to meet with him at 7:00 pm at his hotel lobby to review the buying offer. I encouraged him to read each line of the 11-page document and told him to take his time. We were finished around 8:00 pm and I took the buying offer back to my office to scan and to send to the listing agent.

This client expressed several times his gratitude to me for making a special trip to review and submit the offer to buy. Even though it was after normal business hours, I understood the importance of submitting the offer, therefore, not to make the special

trip was just plain illogical and totally anti-customer service. There have been several phone calls and emails since the offer was submitted and accepted. Each time he thanked me for exceeding his expectations.

Client three was a first-time home buyer with a crazy busy work schedule who also juggled all those early parental duties. Texting was his main form of communication and sometimes returned responses would take longer than 24 hours. Thank heavens I believe in the “no news is good news” philosophy. We had two evening showings (due to his work schedule). He notified me in the morning he wanted to make an offer and we met that afternoon at the time of his choosing. The offer was submitted that same day.

My fourth client wanted a quick showing on a Sunday afternoon. She called mid-Sunday morning and we met that same afternoon for the showing. The property again would not be considered extremely expensive. I recently called her to let her know the property was still active and she sincerely appreciated the phone call. This client also said she would be working with me when she and her husband decided to move forward.

Client number five was a retired gentleman with a limited budget. He had been working with another local realtor without much success. When

we sat down to discuss what he was seeking, he said the first realtor never made that effort. All this realtor did was text him addresses to drive by and view. I provided him the contact information for a mortgage broker to ensure his initial financial application was complete and void of any serious mistakes.

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CARE.”**

My broker shared with me that quite a few agents would not make those extra efforts given the low commission on several of these first-client engagements. In other words, deal dollars topped service.

There is considerable research about U.S. realtors and the number of homes sold. According to the National Association of Realtors (NAR) in 2017, 6,122,000 homes were sold with over 90 percent (5,510,000) being existing homes and new home sales of 612,000 accounting for just under 10 percent at 9.9 percent.

With approximately 2 million active real estate licensees in the U.S., when one does the math, the average real estate agent sells three homes annually. Additional research suggests the Pareto Principle is in place with 20 percent of the realtors consummating 80 percent of all sales. This 20/80 statistic is not just specific to real estate but is quite common within other industries as well.

These real estate figures may support that some realtors seek the big bucks and are not interested in the smaller sales. Additionally, this data suggests 20 percent of all realtors are probably more determined to be successful in sales. Of course, there are part-time real estate agents, which may skew these figures.

What is also interesting is four of my first five clients came from the Internet. In the sales world, these would be considered cold (tire kickers) to potentially warm sales leads. People are using the Internet to find homes along with vacant land. Yet, they still want that personal connection when viewing homes. Zig Ziglar said “*sales is the transference of feelings.*” The Internet cannot transfer feelings.

Also, the Internet cannot tell you if the road, especially in rural areas, is truly accessible, the type of water available, the other costs associated with

the property or even the legal accesses to the property. This information, and so much more, is the value the realtor brings to that relationship.

As baby boomers continue to retire and seek warmer climates along with lower taxes, there will still be a demand for realtors who invest the time to work with their clients regardless of the size of the commission check. Most of these baby boomers understand service comes first.

Even if you are not in the real estate industry, there are lessons to be learned from my recent sales experiences. The first lesson is **“Be Responsive.”** The salesperson who responds first has a far greater success of securing the sale.

Several years ago, Pitney Bowes conducted some research and determined sales leads from the telephone or Internet get “cold” in 15 minutes. People are impatient. If you don’t pick up the phone, there is another salesperson ready to answer the phone by the third ring.

Lesson number two is **“Listen”** and then ask questions for clarity. By listening you can assess quite a bit and discern what needs and wants are driving the buying decision. Listening improves the quality of your questions and that quality becomes another differentiator. One of my coaches said *“If you are telling, you ain’t selling.”*

“Under Promise and Over Deliver” is lesson number three. People still notice the extra effort. When you make that special trip or put together some information in a user-friendly format, etc., your efforts will usually be appreciated and will differentiate you from those other salespeople seeking a quick, big buck sale.

Lesson number four is **“Always Be Learning.”** The more knowledge you have, the better you can demonstrate your authentic authority regarding your solution, your industry and the client’s industry. Authority builds credibility and trust. People buy from people they know and trust.

The fifth and final lesson is to **“Remember Your Clients or Sales Leads Are People Not Dollar Signs.”** Treat them with respect. President Teddy Roosevelt is quoted as saying *“No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care.”*

Regardless of the industry, those in sales who embrace the motivation to sell based on service first and big bucks second just may become one of the few in that 20 percent realm instead of one of the many in that 80 percent statistic.

P.S. For over a decade I have had the opportunity to share my thoughts with the readers of NBIZ. Please accept my appreciation for your loyalty and my

continued thanks to NBIZ for reaching out to me those many years ago. **N**

Leanne Hoagland-Smith is the Clarity Strategist, solving people and process problems. As a thought leader who challenges the status quo, she turns tomorrow’s goals into today’s results. Follow her on Twitter @CoachLee.