

PRACTICE ORGANISATION

REPELLED BY THE

IDEA OF SELLING

YOUR SERVICES TO

YOUR PATIENTS?

ASHLEY LATTER

EXPLAINS WHY IT IS

CRUCIAL TO DEVELOP

THE SALESPERSON

WITHIN YOU FOR

YOUR OWN SUCCESS



Change your mindset to create a win-win



Ashley Latter is a business coach and has delivered the Ethical Sales and Communication Programme to over 1,000 dentists, nurses, hygienists, and practice managers. He is delivering the programme all over the UK in 2005. For more information visit www.thesellingcoach.com or alternatively email ashley@thesellingcoach.com

I posed this question at a recent presentation to over 300 people from the dental profession: 'How many people here are in sales?' Only a few hands went up, maybe less than 10%. So why is it only a few hands went up? How do

you feel about selling?

You may not see yourself as a salesperson; after all, you spent over seven years learning about dentistry, not communication or business skills. However, everyday you have to sell your ideas,

whether it is to the patients/clients, or to other staff members. If you fail to convince and you don't speak the language of the person you are selling to, they probably won't buy into your ideas. This article is not going to

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give you a 180% change in your way of thinking; however, only a small change could make you more successful in generating more business and giving the patients what they want. After all, if you are a private dentist it could be that 100% of your income will derive from your ability to influence patients. Without these skills, chances are you won't make a living and you could go out of business.

WHAT MAKES A DENTIST A SUCCESS?

Many studies have focused on the qualities that make a person successful. In fact, here is a simple exercise to do. Think about a person who you know is a success in dentistry and develop a list of all the skills, attitudes and attributes that person has. Once you have done this, divide them into skills, attitudes and product knowledge. I bet the skills list includes good communication and listening, and the ability to build empathy with the patient. On the attitudes side - does the list include positivity and enthusiasm? Have you also got product knowledge? Often when I have a discussion with a dentist, the technical skills are left out. Although important and vital, the technical skills of doing the job usually account for about 10-15% of a person's success. Without good communication skills and the ability to build empathy and gain patient commitment, you may never get the opportunity to put your technical ability into practice.

A BAD IMAGE FOR SALES

So why is the word 'sales' sometimes thought of

negatively? Well, maybe our national media doesn't help. It seems that whenever we see something in the news about selling, the salespeople involved are supposedly conning their vulnerable customers using unscrupulous tactics. I think it's unfair, as only a small percentage are giving millions of good salespeople out there a bad name. If you think about it, without the ability to sell, the whole country would come to a halt and nothing would ever get made.

It may also be associated with the assumption that sales are about pushing something on a customer when they don't really want it. It is hardly surprising that when I ask the question, 90% of the room never consider themselves in sales.

WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF SALES?

A dictionary definition will tell you that it is to exchange goods and services for money or kind to convince of value. There is nothing within this definition that suggests it is about pushing people or forcing people into decisions. Let us look at another key word here: value. I think value is subjective and you must find out what it means to the other person in their context or situation. So what about changing your mind set from one of selling or pushing to:

- Finding out what the patient perceives as valuable (wants and needs)
- Showing them how you can satisfy them
- When he believes you can, that person will probably buy.

It's not about selling, but

being the provider of significant value. To do this effectively and to be successful in dentistry, you have to be able to talk to people and find out what they want and need. Listen well, make sure that you understand and then provide them with a solution that they appreciate. Once you can do this, then people will buy.

THINK DIFFERENTLY AND BE PROUD

So think about how you can change your mindset. Look inside yourself and ask what is stopping you. If you think you provide significant value to patients, then why not give more

patients the opportunity to have more of the same services? You are doing yourself and your patients an injustice if you don't. Pay attention to what you are saying to yourself such as can't, or won't - change this to can and will. Change your mindset to the fact that, 'I provide significant value everyday to patients' and read some of the letters that you receive from happy customers.

Sales are something to be proud of. Without your ability to communicate well and listen emphatically, patients will not get what they need (and in most case want), from which no one benefits. But everyone will benefit if it's done right. ■



CREATING DIRECT ANTERIOR MASTERPIECES

Date: Friday 14 and Saturday 15 October 2005 (optional half day hands-on)

Venue: Royal College of Physicians, Regents Park, London

Speaker: Dr Newton Fahl

Cost: Dentist - Lecture only: £305+vat
Dentist - Lecture and hands-on: £950+vat
Team member: £187+vat

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