

Full Participation with Every Customer! *A Requirement for All Sales Professionals*

Do you have an established standard for your sales presentations? Not a fixed minimum score on a shopping evaluation, or an acceptable grade on a role play, but one you require of every sales associate every day. Read on to find out why you should.

An integral part of the marketing plan for any new home community is the effectiveness of the sales presentation. How do your sales representatives present the product? What sales tools are available to them, and how well do they react with the customers? Ensuring an effective presentation every time will help present a consistent message and image of the community.

As a prerequisite for employment, your sales representatives should agree to a minimum performance requirement. This should be a standard you're not afraid to invoke on your top sales associate or to recite at every sales meeting.

For most of us, holding firm on sales presentation standards is about as hard as getting subcontractors to agree to meet minimum OSHA standards. Talking about it is easy, but nearly impossible to follow through with on a daily basis. Why are we afraid to draw a line in the sand? We set standards on issues as varied as construction quality, model merchandising, and customer satisfaction. Yet, what our sales people say to our customers, and how they say it, is equally important to our success. Sales associates are the conduits to our customers, so their presentations should be right on the money or you lose potential sales.

Many industry members say that by setting the bar too low, we will create complacency and discourage good associates from becoming great associates. Others say if we set our standards too high, then we may terminate sales associates with good sales records. Or do we get trapped in the thought that "every agent sells differently . . . If you standardize the sales presentation you will stifle successful sales associates who use their particular systems."

Save the critical sales path/relationship selling debate for water cooler conversation and make your sales staff accountable! Adopt the following sales presentation standard as a requirement of employment for all sales agents:



The key to new home sales is allowing time for effective sales presentations and customer participation. This arms your sales representatives with the tools necessary to close the sale.

I agree to participate in the home purchase decision of every customer I meet to the best of my ability!

Still not convinced? Below are the reasons why the standard works with sales professionals.

- It sets expectations early. During a sales interview, every candidate hears the message: Full involvement with each customer should be automatic. More important, their performance as effective sales agents will be judged by that measure. Sales candidates who prefer a passive sales approach or those who enjoy waiting for hot prospects will exit early in the interview process.
- It can be applied equally to the novice or to the experienced sales agent. Few would quarrel that a well-developed sales presentation can take months or even years to refine and develop. But that's not what is being measured in the sales process. Good involvement questions take training and experience. However, a first-day sales agent with the right attitude will have no trouble achieving this standard.
- The standard is compatible with any new home sales training method being taught today. Quit battling the benefits of linear versus flexible selling paths, and get to the heart of great selling skills. In

the final analysis, any system which is embraced and well executed by the sales agent will outperform a technique which does not have the total acceptance of the sales team.

■ It requires great customer follow-through. It's hard to argue that any agent can fully participate in the customer's purchase decision through a single contact. If your agent doesn't know the customer's current status, they haven't met the standard.

■ There's no better way to learn good discovery techniques. Customer participation means listening and learning on the part of the sales agent. While many training systems offer a variety of discovery methods, participation provides the link to understand the customer's needs. This ultimately arms each agent with the tools necessary to close the sale.

■ It's so easy to understand, even the boss can buy into it. Senior managers from non-selling backgrounds often have difficulty in properly assessing shopping evaluations or the goals of good presentation skills. This standard makes it easy to get the entire management team on board with a single goal. When the whole company is backing your programs, it's easier to gain the confidence of your agents and continually focus on improving selling skills.

■ Your best sales agents will embrace this program. No system is worth the paper it's written on unless every agent participates. New sales agents quickly become disenchanted with sales training if the top selling agents aren't required to use the same techniques. Participation with the customer is something that every good sales agent achieves before writing the contract. Let your good agents embrace the program and act as mentors rather than antagonists.

Adopting a sales presentation standard does not replace traditional sales training and sales shop ratings. In fact, all these elements combine to produce an effective new home sales training program with core focuses on the importance of customer participation. ■



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