

A Strong Ego: Useful or Fatal to Sales Success?

Which type of ego is more destructive for your business? One that is aimed toward conquest of accounts, assertive behavior to find, sell and deliver business or one that focuses on internal destruction, empire building and self or departmental protection?

That is an interesting question, isn't it? Research clearly shows that a strong ego is essential for sales success. It is also essential in strong leaders and effective executives and managers.

Here's the rub. An out-of-bounds ego can get in the way of a lot of things. Friendships, business relationships, business strategies, alliances, careers and even entire companies have been destroyed by ego clashes. Let alone what happens when egos tend to alienate prospects and lose customers!

Egos, while necessary, need to be tempered with a strong dose of intuitive insight, empathy and diplomacy. Stir in a dose of unbridled arrogance with a lack of any of these four components and you are looking for trouble.

It takes a strong ego for a salesperson to face rejection, refusal and the rigors of constantly having to persuade someone to your point of view. It takes a strong ego for sales executives to deal with customer problems, pricing, delivery or quality issues and to serve as an advocate for salespeople. By the same token, becoming combative, obnoxious, pushy, offensive or abusive is counterproductive in any of these situations.

There is a significant difference between being assertive and abrasive. There is also a significant difference between being persistent and being a pest. Your value is in knowing the difference between each of these qualities. In the final analysis, perhaps the strongest performers are the ones who understand those subtle differences.

How about you? Do you know when a prospect is telling you "I'm not interested?" How about a co-worker saying, "I get your point, lighten up?"

Let's take a look at six essential principles to keep in mind as it relates to this essential issue:

- Understand that success depends, a great deal of the time, on finesse rather than power.
- You need to know when to back up and let a situation, co-worker, subordinate or prospect have a rest from your assault.
- Understand that there is a difference between interrupting someone and pounding on them to sell them your product or service and allowing them to step up when they are ready to discuss your idea.
- The tone of your voice, body language and written communication can all help or hinder your positioning.
- People want to do business with people who are competent, punctual, professional and sensitive to their needs.
- Your time schedule may not necessarily match that of the other person. In fact, it probably won't!

As I reflect over my years of business and sales experience I can't help but be reminded of the situations I have been in where I, or others, attempted to violate any of these six simple principles. Surprise! Sometimes I was actually successful when I did ignore them. But, over the long haul, these principles have held up time and time again.

Yes, your agenda is important. Just as the other person's, is just as important to them. You need to meet somewhere in the middle. The problem with sales is that you have to meet your prospect far beyond the middle. After all, they are in control. At least, the last time I checked, they were. At least in my sales career they are. Probably, for yours too. If you're not sure that is the case, you are either selling something that sells itself or you haven't been around long enough to figure that out yet.