

The Emotional Intelligence of Sales...

Closing the sale & traditional selling techniques are a thing of the past. The way to success in the future is through understanding how to connect and 'open relationships' for life through using your emotional intelligence

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Starting out in sales some 17 years ago, I realize now that the content on which we were training our sales forces back then has changed very little.

Most sessions still revolve around typical traditional selling techniques such as:

- How to qualify the buyer
- Have an agenda
- Scripts & Dialogues
- Handling Objections
- 25 No's gets you a yes
- and of course How to close the sale

Now none of this has much to do with genuine human connection and relationship building.

It astounds me that research on Emotional Intelligence has been around for over a decade and yet in my 17 years in sales I never once attended a session on this.

In Daniel Goleman's book "*Emotional Intelligence*" he quotes statistics that show us the IQ is responsible for determining about 20% of our chances for success. The other 80% is determined by our social and interpersonal skills & our emotional intelligence. This is things like our

ability to problem solve, get along with people, to understand others and build empathy & rapport.

There is no greater skill in life than to be able to build great relationships for life and business.

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and it is so valuable in sales. So where do we learn how to build relationship? There was no course on my high school curriculum for relationship building.

I was lucky enough to have parents who were great role models in this regards. My father was also in real estate and when I was about 16, I remember going out with him for a days 'work experience'. I thought this was going to be a drag, admin, paperwork, computers... but I was in shock. We spent the whole day having coffees, we went from house , to house throughout my whole neighborhood. It seems he knew everybody.

However when I started in sales it's like it's almost trained out of you and everything that came naturally to me seemed to be the opposite to the training. I was forcing myself to try and remember every word of a script. I would write down religiously WORD FOR WORD every close and script I could. I couldn't seem to remember them and nothing felt right. I just couldn't say them.

I remember being in a training session where we were told to stop wasting so much time on what he called 'nescafe appointments' where people weren't qualified to buy now so why were we wasting our time on coffee's, however when I looked at my current client list I noticed something. Out of the 10 clients I had at that moment, 8 of them I had met at a 'nescafe appointment' 9-18 months prior and that was the first time I thought 'maybe this guy has got it wrong and I'm onto something'. It seemed my way was working.

At times I began to wonder was I just getting lucky? But when I made it into the top one percent of individuals in RE/MAX's global network of 121,000 sales people worldwide I realized I didn't just get lucky and I was able to breakdown the process of how I did what I did and replicated the success again.

I believe the key was 'opening relationships'.

I'm often asked whether one way is easier than the other. In the short-term it may appear that just closing a sale with someone who has an immediate need is more effective than investing extra time and energy in building rapport and opening a relationship. You may even feel that you would be better off financially just prospecting for those clients ready to use or buy your service or product today compared with nurturing relationships and dealing with those people who don't have an immediate need. However, did you realize that you could be missing out on 90% of your potential market?

This is because you would be limiting yourself to dealing only with the very small percentage of the market ready and willing to work with you today. Yet industry research strongly suggests that depending on your particular sales industry there is usually a 9-18 month incubation period from the first point of contact until the time when a new client actually purchases your product or service. 9-18 months.

That means you would be missing out on a lot of business by only working with the 'right here, right now' prospects. Not only would you be making things a lot harder for yourself in the long run, but you would also be doing yourself out of all the extra repeat and referral business that would otherwise come your way

effortlessly through clients feeling so well taken care of and appreciated.

If you choose to focus on closing sales you'll be forever on the 'one-off treadmill': even years down the track you won't be able to slow down or relax because you will have to be out there day after day working really hard to chase down the next piece of business.

Whereas, if you open relationships and invest the extra time building meaningful foundations from the outset you will find your business grows and takes on a life of its own in no time. Just like seeds scattered in the wind taking root and blossoming, referrals and repeat business will just start flowing in.

In the tough times this way of being in business takes on particular significance because you have a whole army of business ambassadors out there for you, advocating your service above any other because you go out of your way to look after them so well, even when there is no deal being made at the time.

Contrast this to if your business is run on the hand-to-mouth principle of closing a sale. This approach makes you totally dependent on new clients and extremely vulnerable to market forces outside of your control. If economic conditions change or a new competitor enters the market you may well suddenly see your customer pool shrink or even disappear.

The only sure way to ride out economic ups and downs is to have planned ahead and built a stable database of loyal, repeat and referral clients because at the end of the day even if there are fewer customers out there, there are always some customers. It's your job to make sure that you are the person of choice in such times of increased pressure and competition.

It is so important to prioritize meeting people as an activity. A prospecting activity. I think many of us undervalue this, I know I did. Society teaches us it has to be hard to make money and we should expect to work our fingers to the bone – not true.

I remember feeling guilty at one point that I was so successful with such minimal effort. I used to believe that success had to be hard.

I have learned to consider my coffee meetings and networking events as me being 'hard at work' and include this in my weekly schedule as prospecting time.

You don't have to be an extrovert to network, you just need to find the people you like being with and attract more of them into your personal and professional life.

Now I realize that you can make the journey to success as difficult or as much fun as you choose it to be. Because of this I love my work and my days are filled with catch-ups, networking events, coffee meetings, taking a genuine interest in peoples lives and chatting away having a wonderful time and they call this work?

I have learned that it really pays to ask yourself this:

What kind of business do you want?

CLOSED = trapped in a cycle of forever chasing new business without being able to take any time off to actually enjoy your successful

or

OPEN = repeat and referral-based business spreading like wildfire by word of mouth and business actually coming to find you – in good times and bad

Now to build relationships we must meet people. I dislike the word 'network', it sound so strategic but I believe it is nothing more than focused socializing – and I love to socialize.

Networking isn't something we do once a week it is something we create. A 'network' by definition is 'an interconnected system' it's about more than just dollars... yes, we need sales but we also need a community to draw on for advice, wisdom & emotional support, to teach us, to share experience with, to collaborate and leverage from. Creating a pseudo

family around yourself. I call this my family tree. Unlike our real family that we don't get to choose this one you get to create.

So who is on your tree? Who are your roots? Your support networks, the people you go out on a limb for and vice versa? Are you watering your tree by giving and nourishing it by taking time to nurture your relationships and understand their world? Is your tree more of a shrub or possibly dying rather than flourishing? What can you do to water and fertilize it this week?

A good network should fill in the gaps where you yourself are perhaps not quite as strong and enhance and support your business.

Financial benefits aside, there were many valuable reasons for me being part of a networking group. I was educated by the various different businesses on things such as: tax accounting; financial planning; marketing and so on – areas which were not my natural strengths so this learning proved invaluable to me.

I made lifelong friends with people I met through networking events and we all became in effect a sales team for one another's businesses, like 'raving fans' spreading word-of-mouth referrals for each other.

Remember to dip your toe in enough different organizations to find groups that work best for you. The idea is to find people you are comfortable with and enjoy being around. You should also feel confident enough to recommend them and you want to build close reciprocal relationships with them.

Just like personal relationship; we need to spend time together and get to know each other. If we didn't spend any time with our friends or we only spoke to them by email or the phone we wouldn't get to know them very well. Clients are no different. We need to invite them into our world and spend time together outside of business to truly connect.

Through using our EQ 'empathy, understanding & rapport' we slowly get to know each other and you will slowly be rewarded with trust, loyalty and lifetime relationships.



Kirsty Spraggon - speaker, coach and author, is known for her expertise in building relationships that assists you to increase your sales, networks and connections for life & business success. With 17 years experience in every facet of the sales industry, her career saw her

ranked in the top 1% of individuals in RE/MAX's global network of 121,000 sales agents worldwide.