



BY RICK MCCORMICK

The Path of People: The Power of Empathy

If we provide the path through the process that our customers enjoy, expect, and hope for, they will trust us and listen to the insight we offer.

“When you show deep empathy toward others, their defensive energy goes down, and positive energy replaces it. That’s when you can get more creative in solving problems.” – Stephen Covey

This is the fourth and final journey on the “Path of People.” If we provide the path through the process that our customers enjoy, expect, and hope for, they will trust us and listen to the insight we offer.

As good of a guide as we have been, many times objections will be given by our customer. And the main reason objections will show up is they feel we do not understand them and their situation. The best objection is the one you avoid. The worst objection is the one you create. Your ability to overcome objections will be determined by whether your customer sees you as someone who views them as a potential sale or a human being with a need. One word will make the difference — empathy. It’s the ability to know and communicate that you understand how they feel. All the closes, responses to objections, and product information you have learned will be trumped by an effective use of empathy.

QUESTIONS SHOW YOU CARE

Genuine questions that show your desire to understand your customer exemplify that you care about them and their situation. Questions that tell you how they feel lead you to more in-depth discussions about what matters to them: “What electronic feature are you the most excited about on your new vehicle?” or “If you could describe this economy in one word, what would that word be?” These questions would tell you how they feel. It also will tell them that you are interested in more than just how long they will keep the vehicle or



how many miles they drive every year. Different questions show different intent. If your intent is to help you customers by understanding their situation, your questions will tell them you intend to understand and help them, not sell them.

Develop a list of “caring questions” you will ask as opposed to “closing questions,” and your customers will open up and share information they would never tell you otherwise. Now we can walk in their shoes since we know how and where they walk.

RESPONSES SHOW THEM YOU UNDERSTAND

Your response tells your customer immediately if you heard what they said in response to your question, or if it mattered to you. It must matter. Three simple efforts will make it easier for the customer to say yes and harder to say no when you ask them to decide about a product and increase in their payment. First, when a customer shares significant information, always pause before responding. Then use their name, always. And then finally ask them “why,” it might sound something like this.

“I have never bought a service contract before and I’m 63 years old!” Pause. It might be just 10-15 seconds. However, an immediate response tells them their response really didn’t matter. You already knew what you were going to say next anyway.

“Betty, could you please tell me why that has been the path you have taken?” Using their name gets their attention and when you ask them to clarify their response, they know you heard them, and you want to understand them. That is much different than the last time they bought a vehicle. That experience was all push and pressure, and the F&I manager didn’t hear a word the customer said, or their responses said they didn’t.

This conversation will lead customers to buy more than you could ever sell them. The path is a comfortable one and one they prefer and enjoy. If we can provide what the customer wants over what we want, everyone wins. The path of people is the path to success. Let’s walk this way. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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