

Master the Art of Small Talk

It is a well-known fact that humans are social creatures. The need for social connection is embedded in our genes. In fact, it is a universal need that all creatures and cultures share. We crave contact and conversation with other people around us.

Why am I telling you this? Because you can use this to your advantage in sales!

You see, **people buy from people that they know, like and trust**. The best sales pros aren't necessarily the ones who have the gift of gab (contrary to popular belief) but rather the ones who are highly skilled in engaging their customers in conversation. *Superstar sales pros have a way of showing their customers that they care about what's important to them.* They tap into the universal need for connection.

To be remembered, you need to leave a positive impression. And when you are meeting a potential customer, you may not have much time. So this needs to happen quickly and effectively.

How do you leave this positive impression? *You've got to master the art of small talk.*

*Small talk helps you make the most of your time with a potential customer.
Small talk also earns you more time with them.*

The Big Value of Small Talk

The Average Performer Has Issues With Access

Why Average Reps Can't Get Quality Time

Have you ever felt like you failed miserably at starting a conversation with someone? If you have felt that way, then it probably happened. And while you may not be able to redo *that* conversation, if you learn to master the art of small talk, you don't have to go down that awkward road again. First, let's look at why your attempts might fail.

#1: You don't mirror the customer's energy and it turns them off.

Superstar Sales Pros are masters at reading and projecting non-verbal communication. This is a very subtle technique in which *you literally mirror the other person's body movements and postures*. It is a proven that mirroring builds business rapport and makes the other person feel more comfortable around you. Superstar sales pros know how to effectively use it.

#2: You don't take time to find out what's important to the customer.

If you get too focused on making the sale and forget to listen to the customer's needs, then you'll come across as pushy and too salesy. And if the customer thinks that all you want is to make a sale, then you won't gain their trust.

#3: You talk too much and annoy the customer.

There is small talk, and then there's just talking. Maybe you are nervous, excited about your product, or just don't know how to zip your lip, but whatever the reason understand this:

If you do all the talking, you become annoying. Period.

That is why mastering the art of small talk is so important. You see, on the surface, it may seem superficial and pointless, however, small talk is really a ritual that every culture uses as a means of bonding. The more you connect with your customer, the more they will trust you. And the more they trust you, the more revealing or vulnerable they're likely to be.

Customers are looking for a long-term relationship – and they want to know if you'll be that person. You may have the knowledge to help them, but you need to make a personal connection because knowledge alone won't close the deal.

You cannot be boring! **If the customer finds their iPhone more interesting than you, then you're not likely to make the sale.**

Now, on the flip side, you shouldn't be controversial. It doesn't serve you to start a conversation about things like religion or politics unless your customer brings it up first. *Use common sense when choosing your topics.*

Action Steps to Improve Your Small Talk

So now that you know a little more about the importance of small talk, how do you apply it to your sales job? What action steps can you take to improve your small talk game and propel you to a higher level of achievement? Let's take a look:

#1: Stay Informed

Stay informed about things that are happening around you – in your community, current events, how the local sports teams are doing – anything that you can pull later and weave into a conversation with a potential customer. Learn your customer's interests and try to watch or read up on the news each day. *Before you can engage in small talk, you need to have something to talk about!*

#2: Work on Your Listening Skills

In sales, you may think that being able to talk is most important but *being able to listen is actually more important!* You must learn how to be a good listener if you want to elevate your own level of speech, including small talk. And *really* listen. Don't start thinking about what you are going to say next. Pay attention to facial expressions, hand gestures, and open body language. This may give you further insight into their interest or buying signs.

#3: Learn to Acquiesce

Many sales professionals are comfortable with initiating conversation, but less comfortable if they cannot control where the conversation goes. However, *giving up this control is good!* It can be tough to do, but it is a worthwhile skill to learn. And you won't get better at it unless you practice. You can start by initiating a conversation with friends or family members. Get everyone involved. Ask about their thoughts and feelings and then just let it roll. With practice, you *will* get better at giving up control of the conversation.

#4: Never Deal in Absolutes

A true sales pro tends to be passionate about what is important to them. Yet, they also know how to train their minds to understand that they don't have to always be right. For some, the

idea of being wrong is a challenge, especially on a subject they are knowledgeable on. But this doesn't matter in small talk. *Nobody wants to talk to the proverbial "know it all" person – especially not your customer.* So, train yourself to be open to other perspectives. And regardless of where your information came from, try to be objective. Give others their turn to speak, no matter how passionate you feel.

When to Use Small Talk

There are three main situations when you should use small talk:

#1: Starting Conversations

Show interest in your potential client right from the start. Use small talk to signal friendly intentions, and get a feel for the kind of mood the other person is in. This will set the tone and energy for the rest of the conversation.

#2: Ending Conversations

You never want to end a conversation abruptly. It can be perceived as rude and leave the other party feeling rejected – not a good thing when you are trying to make a sale. Use small talk to reduce the risk of these feelings and confirm that a connection was made and will be maintained. It is a much better way to wrap things up.

#3: Breaking Awkward Silence

Have you ever felt the awkwardness of silence during a conversation? Maybe you just ran out of things to say about the current topic, or you are looking for paperwork to close the client, or for any other myriad of reasons, the conversation stops. If it feels awkward, introduce small talk to bridge the silence and keep the energy flowing. It will put you and the other person back at ease.

Mastering the art of small talk may take some time, but it is worth learning. It is one-part confidence, one-part information, and one-part conversation. And it takes all three to be good at it. Two out of three may be good in baseball, but it won't cut it when it comes to small talk. The good news is that you can learn it!