

10 UPSELLING TECHNIQUES FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE PROFESSIONALS



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10 Upselling Techniques for Customer Service Professionals

Learn how to read between the lines to create upselling options that fit a customer's needs. Pushing a product or service that has no relevance will have the same result time after time. Effective upselling is a customer service attitude that you can master. These techniques are used by customer service professionals who work in call centers, restaurants, retail outlets, car dealerships and all types of businesses.

1. Master the Soft Sell

Customer service representatives are as uncomfortable with high-pressure sales tactics as their customers. Soft selling techniques eliminate the botheration of high-pressure upselling strategies. To embody these principles, customer service representatives should think like a customer and should maintain a caring attitude at all times. With soft selling techniques, representatives can turn an unappealing high-pressure upselling pitch into a personalized shopping experience. Ask open-ended questions to discover how the client will be using the product. These provocative questions help customers feel like the rep cares about them while understanding their individual needs.

2. Listen to Each Customer's Needs

The customer you're working with is your most important customer. Before upselling any products or services, listen to your customer's problems, understand his or her needs, and make an educated recommendation that directly benefits the situation. Let each customer tell you what they want so that you can make effective upselling suggestions to successfully close the sale. Use open-ended questions to get this information. Once customers have explained their needs, you can take control of the call by upselling products that address their problems and by using command words, such as “must have,” “need” or “have to have.”

3. Think of Products to Upsell Early In Your Conversation

When done right, upselling is an effective way to improve the customer experience and to make personalized recommendations. Upselling works best when representatives can suggest alternate products that better serve the customer's needs. These techniques can be used in person, over the phone or however your job demands. Open-ended questions and active listening allow representatives to make meaningful suggestions. To make an appropriate upselling recommendation, representatives need to determine what the customer wants or needs. Have they overlooked an item that could perform better? Is there a new product or more convenient option? For example, “Have you seen our new lawn seeder/fertilizer combo?” Active listening allows representatives to make the most effective recommendations.

4. Affirmative Suggestions

Star salespeople are familiar with ways to phrase questions so that customers are more likely to say yes. Affirmative suggestions are frequently applied when customers have a choice between multiple options and higher priced packages. If you've been to a fast food restaurant, you've undoubtedly encountered salespeople who use the smile and nod technique as they upsell you a large order of fries when you were prepared to purchase a small or medium order.

These affirmative suggestions are ideal for upselling branded beverages, snack items, appetizers or upgraded services at a hotel or even at a car wash. If you receive a reluctant response, ask an open-ended question to see what's preventing them from making the purchase. When a customer declines, it could mean they are ready to buy, but you haven't offered the right product for their needs.

5. Turn Indecision into an Upselling Opportunity

Uncertain customers are prime upselling candidates. This is a unique opportunity to upsell without seeming pushy. As long as you make a convincing case, they'll probably bite at the product you're offering. In this situation, you can offer the customer a product that has a higher profit margin, you can recommend a more expensive product, or you can suggest a luxury or high-value product that the customer isn't aware of. In most cases, customer service representatives can successfully upsell a product if it truly fits the customer's needs.

6. Upselling Accessories and Extras

Always be specific, and make detailed recommendations. In a restaurant, a server may suggest a chef's special or a scrumptious dessert item that the diner won't be able to resist. Automotive salespeople receive significant training to upsell luxury packages and value-added extras, such as heated seats, leather upholstery and premium upgrades. If a customer is buying a bathing suit, you might say, "Did you see that cute sarong? It would really go great with the item you're buying." Upselling is a great way to introduce customers to new products, complementary items, accessories and add-ons that fit their needs.

7. Upselling Promotional Items

What's in it for me? This is the cardinal rule of selling or upselling any product. To appeal to a customer's sensibilities, you need to know what benefits are important. Promotional items have obvious price benefits that make them appealing to customers if the products are presented in the right way. Let the customer know what promotions are available. Instead of asking a customer if they would like to hear about current specials, you could say, "We have a great deal on closeouts this week." Here's another example. "Did you know we have a special seasonal

offer on all outdoor items?” If free shipping or buy-one, get-one specials are available, let the customer know that they can qualify by adding another item to their order.

8. Sell Benefits Not Features

From a customer's perspective, buyers want and need to know how they'll benefit from the product or products being offered. Upselling is about appealing to the customer's feelings and emotions. You don't want a customer to think too much about the purchase and question its value. The success of upselling strategies depends on the representative's ability to create the “have to have it” attitude. If the customer feels pressured, the upselling opportunity will end. Customers don't really care about features, specifications and meaningless numbers. They want to know if the product will work for them, if it will improve their experience, how it fits their needs and whether it benefits their situation. If a product performs better, lasts longer or looks better than other products, these are clear benefits that will appeal to most buyers.

9. Turn a Problem into a Sale

Transform problems and ordinary sales into upselling opportunities. When a customer is frustrated, it's a great time to upsell products by being an authoritative problem solver and an active listener. Don't just listen to a customer's problem. Relate to it. If something isn't working, maybe you can suggest a better product. This represents upselling at its best. To achieve results, upselling should be filling a genuine customer need. Here's how to do it. First, address the customer's issue. Relate to their frustrations, and be empathetic. Customers who are upset want to be satisfied. They don't want to be showered with apologies. Let them know that you understand. After they've explained the problem, you can make an appropriate upselling or cross-selling recommendation that will improve their experience.

10. Stories and Personal Endorsements

Relating to customers and being more than a customer service representative who is following a script is the best way to effectively upsell products and to improve the customer experience. First-hand stories and product endorsements create credibility, trust and authority. You can even recommend products that you have tried yourself, but don't invent information. You need to remain genuine and honest to ensure the customer trusts your opinion and takes your advice. Customer stories and personal endorsements are ideal for solving problems and helping frustrated customers accept an upselling solution.

If a customer has a problem that you've experienced yourself or encountered with another customer, let them know. Here's an example. A customer calls the local pool store and tells the representative that their pool turned reddish brown immediately after they added chlorine, and they have an important barbeque in a few days. In a relatable tone, the representative says,

“I had the same thing happen to another customer due to iron in the water. We used a sequestering agent followed by a clarifier, and the water looks great now. We can send someone out right away to take care of your problem.” This shows the representative has the expertise to address the problem. It's also an opportunity for the customer service representative to schedule a service call and to upsell additional items.

Becoming an Effective Upseller

When done effectively, upselling techniques improve customer loyalty, generate revenue, boost your ranking and improve your earnings. Always be helpful first, and look for upselling opportunities second. To become a star customer service representative, you need to embody the following characteristics:

- Be honest.
- Be genuine.
- Be enthusiastic.
- Be caring.

For best results, customer service professionals need to learn how to recognize upselling opportunities and how to respond appropriately. If necessary, practice with a friend or co-worker until you feel comfortable. By following these techniques, you'll be on your way to wowing clients and increasing customer loyalty.

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