

# Lesson 3: Discover the essential soft sales skills



## Essential Soft Skills To Up Your Sales Game Lesson 3



Course Created By: Melany Muraour ©

*In this lesson, you'll discover the essential soft sales skills*

## Let's Get Started!

## Discover the essential soft sales skills



## The 4 essential soft skills for sales professionals

### The 4 essential soft skills for sales professionals



1

Connect with your customer

<https://www.webfx.com/blog/social-media/social-media-101/>



2

Become a great listener in sales

3

Develop your emotional intelligence for sales

4

Collaborate and communicate in sales

## 1. How to connect with your customer

### 5 Tips for a Successful Sales Conversation

- Build rapport
- Ask interesting questions
- Set the agenda
- Sell the vision of the future

- Deliver on your promise

## **Build rapport**

You may have read advice that says don't jump right into shop talk and take a few minutes to get to the known prospect so as to put them at ease. Prospects don't have time to sit around and talk about their love for sailing. By getting right to the point, you show the prospect that you respect their time.

For example: "Tom, I know when we spoke on the phone you said you had 30 minutes today. I want to confirm that this is the case. ...Great, during this time we're going to share with you some research we've done on the topic of customer satisfaction and what your competitors are doing to increase their customer loyalty..."

This shows your prospect that you're respectful and serious. And it goes a long way toward building rapport with them.

## **Ask interesting questions**

This is not the time when you pull out your list of 20 stock questions and start firing away. Ask questions that show you did your research on the company. Ask questions that position you as an expert and help build your credibility.

For example: "I see X, Y, and Z going on in your industry. How is that affecting you?"

"In your annual report, you mention that the key priorities are 1, 2, and 3. How are you tracking towards achieving those? What challenges are you facing in these areas?"

"How is the merger affecting your sales force? Are all of your reps able to sell the new products?"

"How are you dealing with the new regulations in your industry around X, Y, and Z? I know several of our clients are struggling with A and B. How are you handling them?"

Those types of questions must be customised for each prospect, so spend time before the meeting crafting them. These will show that you took time to research the company and understand what's going on in their industry. Prospects want to know you have experience working with companies like theirs and that you're an "industry insider." The best way to show this is through the questions you ask. It also helps set you apart from your competitors who are still asking, "What keeps you up at night?"

## **Set the agenda**

Buyers don't want to have to tell their providers what to do. They want trusted advisors who will recommend, not react. Be proactive in your recommendations and show your buyers the path they need to take to ease their pain and reach their goals. Tell them how you are the one best suited to help them do this.

Advise your prospects during the sales process, and give them a taste of what it's like to actually work with you. Don't be afraid to push and ask tough questions. Your prospects will respect you for this, and you'll set up a peer-to-peer and trusted advisor relationship from the start.

## **Sell the vision of the future**

At the first meeting, you want your prospect to leave excited – excited about possibilities and excited about working with you. To build this excitement, paint a picture of the new reality you will help the buyer reach. Share case studies and share your stories. These can be very powerful because your prospect will be able to relate to the client in your story and “walk in their shoes.” When you do this, your prospect will see all the possibilities in a whole new way and see you as the hero to guide them.

### **Deliver on your promise**

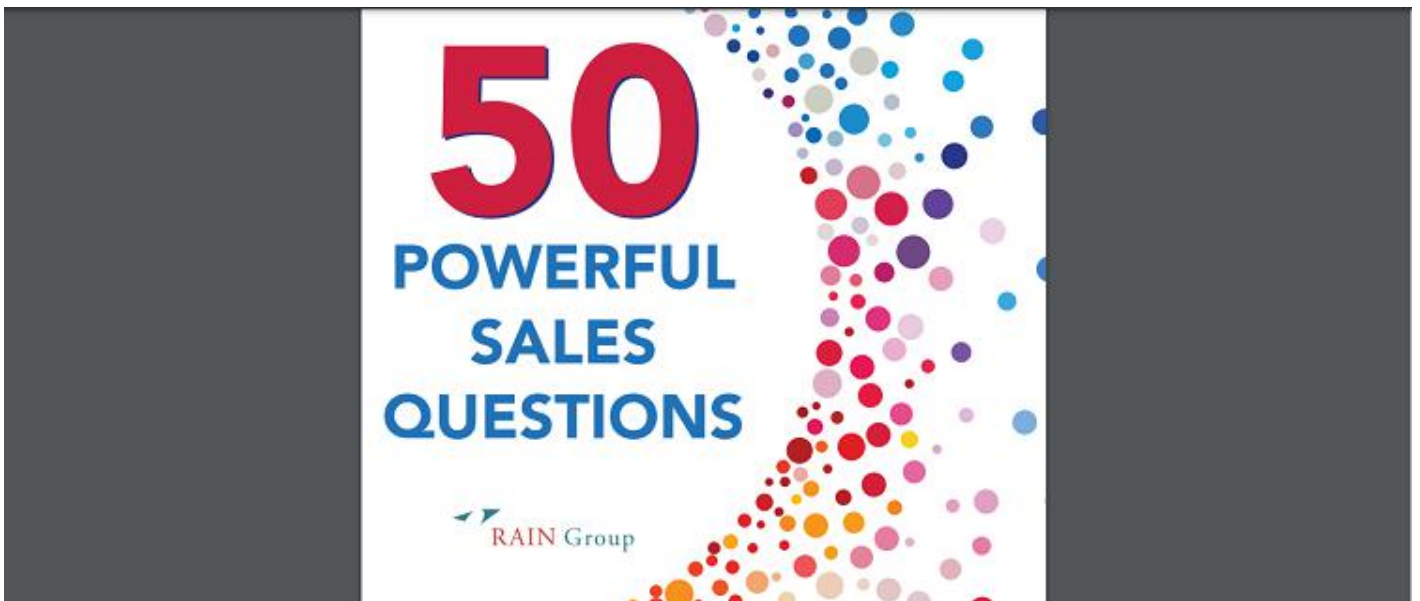
Whatever the background the meeting was set up under, be sure to deliver on that promise. Often, sellers get their foot in the door by sharing something of value in the first conversation such as best practices, industry research, or what competitors are doing to overcome a specific challenge. If you set the meeting in this context, be sure to deliver on your promise. Nothing kills trust, credibility, and a sale quicker than the bait and switch.

The goal of your first conversation is to engage the prospect enough so that they agree to a second conversation with you. If you do these five things in your meeting, you’ll have a good chance of continuing the conversation and getting “a second date” 😊

## **Download Extra Notes**

### **“50 Powerful Sales Questions”**

For extra reading, [click here](#) or on the image below to read this amazing pdf covering “**50 Powerful Sales Questions**” by rainsalestraining.com



## **2. How to become a great listener in sales**

### **4 Ways to be a better listener in sales conversations**

- Encourage the speaker
- Engage in mirroring
- Confirm key points
- Slow down

### **Encourage the speaker**

Listeners can achieve the right balance by speaking only when the other person has left details unexplored. The right kinds of questions carry names like "reflection questions," "calibrated questions," and "open-ended questions." Though these names are different, they all describe the same thing: non-leading questions that ask the speaker to provide more detail.

The benefit here is that these questions cannot be answered with a simple yes or no response. Listeners should use "how" and "what" questions that invite the speaker to reveal the kind of information that articulates needs.

### **Encourage mirroring**

Mirroring is the tendency for a listener to mimic the speech, cadence, gestures, and even attitude of the person speaking. Mirroring works because it signals to the speaker that the listener is empathetic. Mirroring even has implications in negotiations: another study determined that mirroring led to an agreement more than 2/3 of the time, whereas those who ignored the practice of mirroring only reached an agreement 12.5% of the time.

Good listeners, however, shift this behavior from the unconscious to the conscious so that they can more fully connect with the speaker. Some term this the "chameleon effect."

Mirroring puts the speaker at ease. As a result, they are more likely to volunteer information and become comfortable offering important details. Mirroring works because it signals to the speaker that the listener is empathetic

### **Confirm key points**

A listener can use questions to do more than encourage the speaker. A listener can also use questions to confirm the speaker's key points. Seeking confirmation is important because even an attentive listener can misunderstand the message. Additionally, the listener might become confused when the speaker articulates the contrasting perspective of another stakeholder.

To confirm the speaker's message, a listener must summarize their understanding of what they have heard and ask the speaker if this interpretation is correct. Even if the speaker answers yes to the confirmation question, they often take the opportunity to expand and elaborate. This dynamic is even helpful to the speaker because it helps them crystallise their thoughts.

A listener can ask confirmation questions at any time; however, questions are most effective at the end of the conversation when the speaker has shared everything they have to offer. Effective confirmation questions often require some amount of note-taking. A listener should record the key points in writing so that nothing is lost. These notes become the basis of confirmation questions. A listener must be careful to find balance here. Excessive note-taking risks losing the nuance of the speaker's words. Too few notes can leave important points forgotten.

### **Slow down**

French writer Marcel Proust is often remembered for writing "n'allez pas trop vite," or "don't go too fast." He was remarking that people appreciate more of what is around them when they take their time. The urge to move fast is ever-present, and the most valuable information is only learned when the customer feels they have the time to fully articulate their thoughts.

A listener stays mindful of how fast they talk. If they speed up, the speaker might feel obligated to do the same. When a listener asks a question, they must become comfortable waiting while the speaker pauses to think of their response. Taking a slow pace communicates that the speaker has a listener's undivided attention.

A slow pace creates a more relaxed setting. Becoming a truly great listener means creating an environment that encourages the speaker to say more. A listener must demonstrate constant attention by reflecting the tone and attitude of the speaker. As the speaker offers information, the listener must check that they have understood what has been said.

Finally, it is the listener's job to maintain a comfortable pace that allows room for an in-depth conversation.

## 3. How to develop your emotional intelligence (EQ) for sales

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is your ability, as a sales professional, to "sense, understand and effectively apply the power of your own emotions during interactions with your buyers." In other words, EQ is your ability to connect well with your buyers on a more personal level.

Research shows that EQ impacts sales significantly. According to research conducted on a pharmaceutical company, sales reps who increased their EQ by a mean of 18% improved their total sales revenue by an average of 12%. Can you imagine what a 12% increase in sales could do for you now AND in the future?!

### **EQ can be broken down into five components:**

- Motivation
- Self-Awareness
- Self-Regulation
- Social Awareness
- Social Regulation

### **4 things you can do to develop your EQ and improve your sales**

- Notice your mood and its impact
- Find your rhythm
- Discover what drives you
- Find your people, keep your people

### **Notice your mood and its impact**

Your level of self-awareness can really affect how a prospect perceives you. If you can identify your own emotions and their impact on your prospect's responses, you can have more control over prospect interactions and these interactions' outcomes.

Take a minute to think about your last call. However, merely taking note of your emotional state can help you notice how (and when) your emotions impact a call.

To further deepen self-awareness, notice how the prospect responded to your emotions. If so, did the prospect respond with enthusiasm? Conversely, if you were feeling bored, did the prospect rush to end the call? Confusion, perhaps?

Reflecting on the dynamic between your emotions and your prospect's emotions can increase your awareness. If you can increase your awareness, you can increase your efforts to control this important dynamic.

## **Find your rhythm**

Self-regulating emotions at work means finding a way to channel them in a way that is appropriate for the task at hand. However, self-regulating emotions at work is not ever as simple as it sounds.

We all have bad days, boring days, and "off" days.

One way you can find your rhythm includes creating a daily routine. Forbes highlights seven possible elements of a morning routine used by highly successful people. These include setting the same alarm time each morning, meditating or working out, having family breakfast, reading or learning, greeting strangers, and creating (write it down) a literal to-do list.

Consider creating your own morning routine that starts the day off in a positive way. Then, consider splitting up the workday with breaks or rewards for when sales goals are met.

## **Discover what drives you**

Sales expert Barry Farber affirms motivation is intrinsic in relation to energy and enthusiasm. According to him, a salesperson's energy level is directly related to their mental and physical energy — but where does that energy come from?

Little spurts of caffeine or excitement won't sustain you in the long run. To find lasting motivation, take a moment to look at the "big picture" of your work life. Why do you do what you do? Do you love work because you love your co-workers? Do you find meaning in the mission of the company you work for? Do you enjoy setting and achieving difficult goals?

Discovering why you do what you do can help you find lasting motivation for long-term goals.

## **Find your people, keep your people**

Social regulation and social awareness are the final keys to having a good EQ.

Social regulation can help you find your client base by noticing your prospects' emotions and responding appropriately in each interaction with them. Social awareness can help you maintain your client base by keeping an awareness of how the connections you make become relationships with longevity.

Reflect on your capacity for social regulation in your recent calls. If the prospect was in a hurry, did you notice? Did you offer them the "Reader's Digest" version of your pitch? If they rejected a pitch, did you overcome your own feelings of rejection to try to understand what they were feeling? Social regulation is key to making connections with prospects by emotionally putting yourself in their shoes — as much as possible, at least.

After you've built a client base using social regulation, social awareness is key. Social awareness is an understanding of the relationships you have and how to sustain them in the future.

Consider building rapport with clients by taking a sustained interest in their work or life. Ask them open-ended questions that can lead to future calls and conversations. Spend less time talking about you and more time talking about them and how you can help them in the future.

## 4. How to collaborate and communicate in sales

Sales has never been described as a team sport.

As a sales professional, you are usually judged on individual performance and personal success, not on your ability to work well and get along with others. However, at the core of any strong sales professional is the understanding that it is a team of people interacting with your customer, not just you. Sales would be easier if you were the only person interacting with your customer, but you're not.

In fact, once you start the sales process, there is usually a team of people working with, talking with, and determining what your potential customer thinks about you and your product. So the better your skills of communication and collaboration, the better experience your customers will have.

The stronger your ability to increase information flow, efficiency, productivity, ultimately the better your customers' experience will be! And... isn't this what you want as a sales professional? So the more you learn to reach out and seek the input and ideas of others, the more you're willing to pitch in and be part of a team, the stronger and more successful your performance and the people around you will be.

Most sales professionals will agree that some of their highest and best sales years were when they had a strong team working with them. Your strengths as a salesperson may be getting in the door and landing the deal. But to service it, retain the business and expand the relationship, you may need to depend on "your" team. Sales is a challenge. New obstacles are put in your way every day. As a sales professional, your repeat business and your referrals are dependent upon your ability to communicate effectively and collaborate.

Here are a few strategies to get you there:

### **Be transparent**

Be open and honest about everything, including your goals and objectives, where you are strong, where you are weak and where you need help. The more transparent you are, the more others around you will trust you. The more they trust you, the more they will be willing to both ask you for help and help you in return. Transparency also helps others understand what they can reach out to you for or where they may need to jump in and offer you a hand. Being transparent makes you approachable, and that is a key step in collaborating with others.

### **Ask first**

Collaboration is about working together and supporting one another. Asking before telling is the best way to do that. Before you offer advice, before you give your input, find an opportunity to reach out and ask questions. Asking questions not only allows you to gain clarity, but it builds a bond between you and the person with whom you are communicating. For example, rather than telling your customer service rep when and how to reach out to your customers, why don't you ask them for their ideas? Say something like, "Tom, great idea to put together a strategy to contact our customers. What ideas do you have for what our customers need?" Remember, people would rather be asked than told.

## Pick up the phone

We get so lost in emails and texts these days that sometimes the best way to communicate and collaborate is just to pick up the phone, actually have a conversation. We can build such strong bonds through the art of just talking.

## Look for ways to help

Really spend some time thinking about your colleagues, other members of your sales team, what are they working on, and what they might need. Do not wait for others to collaborate with you. Instead, reach out and collaborate with them.

Collaboration is not just for your team members. It is for customers as well. Customers want a partner, someone on their team to work with them to help them find ways to grow their businesses and expand their customer base. Teamwork is so important in sales. Competition is tough. Customers are demanding. You need every member of your team in your corner and begin by getting in theirs.

# Summary

## What you have learned

### Train in a Day Essential Soft Skills To Up Your Sales Game Course Checklist

- I know what it takes to up my sales game
- I understand why soft sales skills matter
- ✓ I have discovered the essential soft sales skills
- I know how I can master soft sales skills
- I have learned how to build advanced soft sales skills

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## Still to Follow

- I know how I can master soft sales skills
- I have learned how to build advanced soft sales skills

