

Why are soft skills in sales so important? Because people do business with people they like....

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Take a moment to think about something you've bought for your business or when you needed something but didn't end up buying it.

Assuming you had the budget, there's a good chance your interaction with the person selling the solution ultimately affected your buying decision. Most of the time, the solutions you're deciding between are likely comparable and the timing of the purchase is right.

Unlike the 'hard skills' of selling, which can be taught – the what, the why, the USPs and so on – it's the soft skills, the people skills, which are crucial. The process of sales and business development is so people-centric, soft-skills are absolutely critical.

A mentor at the start of my sales career told me 'people will always do business with people they like'. It's so simple and it's stuck with me all these years because I've seen the proof time and time again.

We buy from those we connect with..

Assuming the person you're buying from is knowledgeable and the solution fits your requirements, the final decision can often come down to which person you connect with best.

I realised early on in my sales career that my ability to hold and instigate conversations with strangers, to network in a room full of people I don't know and the good energy I brought to the room was what would separate me from others and help me.

Half the sales battle is connecting with the prospect. Now when I hire salespeople I place as much emphasis on the soft skills as I do on their experience.

I remember as a new sales manager I needed a salesperson for my team, and I was working with HR to go through the candidates that had just come through the sales training. There was a guy who, for one reason or another, just couldn't catch a break and so was on the watchlist as someone who may need to be performance managed. I met this chap and instantly connected with him. He brought great energy to our conversation, had solid communication skills and had infectious ambition.

While recognising his track record didn't yet show success, I knew I wanted to give him a chance. I taught him the hard skills, but it was his soft skills which ensured he went on to

success and he turned into one of the best salespeople in the company.

We gravitate in life towards people with good energy, who have a warm personality, self-confidence and bring a positive mindset in all they do. Those are just some of the soft skills the best salespeople have.

People will always do business and work with people they like. I'm sure you can think of plenty of times when your connection with that particular salesperson is the reason you worked with them.

I hope this gives you some food for thought.

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