

Training essential in IT sales environment

By [Daniel Silke](#)

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I am a good example of a connected, discerning customer who already has done most of his research even before entering a store and I usually shop around looking for the best deals from different vendors. Therefore, I was armed with all the information I needed and I knew the different offerings from the two major outlets selling the new Apple iMac. I was setting the outlets up for a bit of healthy competition by visiting both just before making my decision where to lay down my credit card.



Although I knew what I wanted, I also wanted to experience some good sales advice. It is an expensive purchase and knowledgeable staff tends to validate my own splurge of R13 000 and give me confidence that this is a product that will last - and will be expertly serviced.

My local computer chain store seemed a good place to start. It had stock and the deal with software and Internet access seemed good, so it had a good chance of reeling me in with exceptional service.

The morning started well. I was quickly approached by a salesman who was very eager to help me after I told him I was in the market to buy. I wanted to have a knowledgeable person assist me and I was delighted he appeared so quickly.

My first question to him was to test not only his product knowledge, but to gain confidence in the store itself. I asked him whether a wireless keyboard was included with the package - the answer of which I of course, knew already. To my surprise, he replied in the negative and when I disputed this, he took a closer look at the in-store signage just below the computer and admitted that he was not aware the specifications had changed. Strike One: a salesman on the floor of a store working premium products should know his stuff. He should at least be as knowledgeable as the customer - and this was an easy question to get right.

Nothing puts me off more than ignorant or lazy salespeople. They can damage a business no end. However, he was friendly and enthusiastic and I was still not prepared to dismiss him. Therefore, I told him that it was between him and the competitor down the aisle of the mall. In a surprise move, he then asked me if he could accompany me out of the store to

the competitor to see what deals they had on offer. Strike Two: the last thing I want is a pushy salesperson following me to another store and potentially interfering in my own research or negotiations. I told him that I simply did not want him there and that I would be going alone to compare packages.

To his credit, the salesman did not give up and, in response to my admonition, made his boldest - and potentially best move yet. He suggested that instead of leaving his store (once I am out of the store I might never return), I could go online there and then check the details of the competitor's deals. This was a brilliant move designed to keep me there and to confirm the sale without letting me leave and, although he had no idea of the other store's deal (no material difference in price of package), he was still confident enough to allow me to research on the spot.

He punched in his Internet code to a neighbouring laptop on display to allow me to access the Net but the Internet did not connect! Strike Three - if the Internet in a computer store has trouble connecting, this seriously dents my confidence levels in the after-sales service or overall image of the store. It is critical for stores to offer working connections - especially if they are displaying electronic or IT-related products.

I immediately left the store and went to the competitor. I bought the PC there but I could have been retained in the original store had the salesman (and the store) been just a little better prepared. My store of eventual purchase was outstanding at offering me back-up service confidence by expertly trained technicians and the salespeople knew their product inside out.

I felt sorry for the original salesman. He actually did, upon reflection, try his best and utilised some bold moves in the process. He was let down by poor training and an in-store IT environment that was lacking. I love my new Mac and I feel validated by the store where I bought it. Companies beware: consumers are well informed and demand a degree of sophistication when choosing vendors. All aspects of the consumer experience are now judged and stores will never know how much business they lose - just like mine.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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