

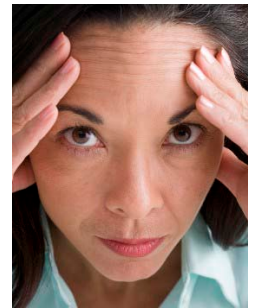


Sales and marketing Lessons Learned at the Car Wash

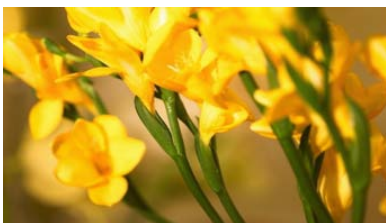
Last night, I was enjoying my drive home from dinner with a friend from my high school days. (I'll spare you just how long ago that was.) The weather was wonderful for a change. It had been a bright sunny day, not too hot, not too cold with a pleasant breeze. It was getting dark by the time I headed home, so I'd missed sundown, but the skies over the Berlin Reservoir were a gorgeous combination of blue, coral and grey hues, all reflecting off the water. With the windows down, the sweet aroma of honeysuckle bushes in bloom along the highway was an added plus. Perfect, right?

Whack! My perfection was interrupted by something hitting my windshield. A huge splattering of giant bug guts spread itself all over the driver's side. No problem, just turn on the windshield wipers, squirt out some washer fluid and get back to enjoying Nature. Hah! Bug guts seem impervious to basic windshield washer fluid and my wiper blades just smeared the bug remains across an even larger portion of the glass.

Today, I broke down and took a few minutes between appointments to run the car through a car wash. I needed to see out my mucked-up windshield for safety's sake. Besides, the car had been through several messy storms in our area lately, plus a bird had left a large calling card on my paint job. It was time. As I pulled up at the end of a short line of cars waiting to get into the actual car wash, an attendant came running out to share the daily specials with me. There were two of them, he explained. First, for only \$10, I could get the basic exterior wash, "Sheenology" (spray wax) and a 'tire shine special'. Or, for only \$15... You get the idea. The attendant started rattling off a list of seven or eight things they would do to my car in the same amount of time it takes to roll through the machinery. I stopped him about halfway through the list, my eyes glazed, over and told him I'd take the \$10 deal.



- **Lesson #1:** Don't give customers too many choices or deals that are too complex for their minds to process easily. A better delivery of the \$15 deal might have made me want it, but I never got past the 'eyes glaze over' phase and took the simpler, cheaper option.
- **Lesson #2:** Drop the jargon. Don't assume customers or prospects understand your industry terminology. Keep it simple and understandable. All of the marketing-speak names for their processes made no sense to me at all, and it cost them money.



The short waiting line moved quickly and within a few minutes I was inside the wash area receiving my preliminary spraying with a pressure washer. The windshield was already beginning to look better. As my car started moving through the wash process, I noticed something new... colored, scented soap foam was begin sprayed on my car. Blue, orange and green foam was running down my windshield, blending into a nice rainbow. The scent coming in through my vents was a pleasant, outdoor smell - a bit flowery - not the dank, damp, slightly moldy/mildew odor that usually accompanied my car washes of the past. Moving on through the process, I found that the waxing product had also been colored and scented...green and tan this time. Reminders of nature, perhaps?

- **Lesson #3:** Appealing to as many of the natural human senses as you can increases chances of making a sale, creating a positive customer experience and pleasant memory the customer can draw on when they need your products or services again. A logo will be much more effective if other senses like smell or sound can be added.

Attendants wiped my car dry to eliminate dripping water and spotting on the paint and to get any remaining crud off the windshield and bumpers. I drove off, quite pleased with myself for getting this done on a busy day. Driving off, all water streams dried off my windshield, I noticed one last thing.

- **Lesson #4:** Automatic car washes won't necessarily get every speck of bug guts off your windshield. Sprayed on water, soap and car wash 'scrubby fingers' don't take the place of good old fashioned elbow grease.

Think through your sales and marketing processes and systems. Develop some new strategies to improve them and gain more attention from prospects. Can your processes and offers be simplified? How can you appeal to more of the natural human senses, helping customers form pleasant memories of your company, products and services? Or, is your product line offering just too broad, adding unnecessary confusion to your customer buying process?

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