



# Automotive Selling Skills Course



Warren, Michigan  
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# WANTED: SERVICE, MAYBE EVEN WITH A SMILE

by  
**Matt Roush**

Service quality is a message that American business is taking to heart, right? Baloney, according to my experience.

Not long ago, I was shopping for presents for two birthdays in the family — a cordless phone for my mom and a small shortwave radio for my brother. I got home from work at 5:30. Dinner was at 6, and so I figured I'd use that half hour to check out prices at half a dozen stores.

I called up a department store. The first try, the phone rang 10 times. No answer. Well, maybe I dialed wrong, so I tried again. This time it rang eight times before an exasperated-sounding operator came on, giving the store's name as if it were a curse. I asked to be transferred to electronics. I got almost 10 minutes of bad music, so I hung up and tried the main number again. I explained to the operator what had happened, but before I could finish, she brusquely said, "One moment, sir" and put me back on hold.

Well, maybe the third time's a charm, I thought after another eight minutes, and called again and explained again to a different operator that I had been on hold for, oh, weeks. She demanded: "Could you tell me what you want?"

Oh, nothing much, I thought. Maybe a little respect as a potential customer, let alone as a human being.

At least this time I got an electronics sales clerk. I explained what I wanted and got put on hold again for another six minutes. Just as I was about to hang up, the clerk came on the line and informed me that "the assistant store manager is trying to answer your question."

What question? All I wanted was a couple of prices on cordless phones, plus a little explanation on features. The sales clerks can't do that? Then I got more hold music.

My dinner growing cold, I hung up and tried another store. Another surly operator put me on hold for five minutes, then explained that "there's only one clerk in that department now, and he's got several customers."

Over dinner, my wife — who's managed retail ranging from shoe stores to a card and gift shop to a women's clothing store — offered her analysis: "Remember you're dealing with part-time sales clerks. If they're on minimum wage, they don't give a (barnyard epithet); if they're on commission, they don't want to help customers over the phone if there are any customers on the floor."

After dinner, I decided the only thing to do was shop in person. Over the next 2½ hours, I visited nine stores in Dearborn Heights, Westland and south Livonia. I paid special attention to the service. and you know what? I spent more than I had to on both items.

At the store that had me on hold for half an hour, the personal service matched the phone service. It had the cheapest prices on good name-brand cordless phones, but the sales clerk could not be torn away from a discussion at the cash register with a couple of friends about store management, no matter how long I stared at her.

Instead I went down the street and paid \$10 more to a sales clerk who worked three sets of customers as expertly as a really good waiter in a busy restaurant. You know what, he sold all three of us.

As for the shortwave radio, I wound up at a specialty store where the salesman actually knew what a shortwave radio was. he intelligently discussed the merits of digital vs analog tuning and tossed in free batteries and a booklet offering frequencies of major national shortwave broadcasts to boot. It wasn't the cheapest, but it sure was the best.

Price is important, but not everything. Retail chains that offer deep markdowns but continue to see mediocre sales ought to pass this column around. All we customers want is a little respect, and maybe even a little initiative on the part of the salesperson. Even if it's a minor purchase this time, it may not be next time — if we're treated right.

**What is the point of this story?**

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# CARING SALEPERSONS BRING PROSPECTS BACK

by  
**John H. Johnson, Jr.**

For many years, auto dealers have had a closing ratio of about 20%. A dealer with a closing ratio of 25-30% has always been the envy of the industry.

The sad fact is that 80% of the people who walk through our doors do not choose to do business with us.

So what happens to those eight out of ten people? The answer is easy: They buy somewhere else. Some will buy another make; some will buy a used car; and a small percentage will not qualify for the new-car financing.

But many of the people who purchase a model that we carry will simply choose to do business elsewhere. As dealers, managers and salespeople, we are sweeping many people out the door in favor of those who are ready to deal today. How can we turn the "walkouts" into "be-backs"?

First, let's agree that most of the people who come into the showroom are going to buy a new car. Most of them will buy within a week of their first visit to a dealership, but most of them will not purchase on their first visit regardless of our efforts.

The dealership that will most often get the chance to "beat all other deals" is the dealership whose staff has taken the time to cultivate a relationship when the customer was not prepared to purchase. Making customers comfortable goes a long way toward making them want to come back when it's time to buy.

The successful salesperson of the 1990's will greet each prospect with equal enthusiasm. It is much more important to determine and understand customers' wants and needs than to qualify them financially as we have done in the past.

We must demonstrate our products completely and allow the customers to evaluate how they will meet their needs and wants.

Further, we must show the commitment our dealership has made to serving them after the sale.

We must ignore the possibility that they may not buy today in favor of developing the probability that they will buy from us when they do buy.

From the initial greeting to the close of the sale, we must treat our customers as if we wish to earn their business. Product knowledge and enthusiasm will be characteristics shared by the top automobile salespersons in today's market; the timing of the customer's decision will be secondary.

The dealerships that are getting the larger share of prospects to come back are those that give the customers all the information they need to make an intelligent purchase decision — including accurate pricing. Honest, straightforward answers to all questions produce sales and start a long-term relationship.

Customers who receive accurate information on product and price are more likely to refer other prospects, and more likely to buy again.

If you give customers pricing information even though they are not ready to buy, chances are you will be unique and show that you are the quality choice.

A person who enters a new car showroom expects to get little information about the product and terms of sale without a long battle. They expect to be pressured to make the buying decision now, without complete information.

The average consumers view a car salesperson as someone who is going to separate them from their money and give as little as possible in return. Their defenses are up and, in many cases, their minds are closed.

It's almost impossible for the dealer to overcome those obstacles by providing evasive answers, especially if the dealer wants a long-term relationship.

Most customers realize that the dealership must make a profit to stay in business and provide the service they expect. They also realize that precise answers are impossible in some situations. To put prospects at ease, we must show them that we do care about their needs and that we will give them good value for their dollar.

Dealers, managers and salespeople, put your brooms back in the closet! by taking your time and putting forth some extra effort, you will keep the "today" 20% and get a bigger portion of the "not now" 80%. After all, "not today" doesn't mean "not at all," and when really isn't as important as where.

**What is the point of this story?**

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# What is Selling?

Most successful salespeople have realized that selling is not just getting your prospect to buy your vehicle. It has become a conscientious effort to make this prospect a customer for life. The way you perform as a professional salesperson is directly related to whether they will, first of all, allow you to make the sale, and secondly, to return some day to purchase again.

**What is your definition of selling?**

**What does it take to sell a prospect in today's market?**

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# Professionalism

Though there are many reasons for the tremendous turnover rate we have in our industry, one of main reasons is that salespeople do not strive to do everything possible to succeed. Because of fear, laziness, lack of leadership, or poor training, salespeople simply rely on the luck of the sale instead of on the skill necessary for maximizing their success on each and every customer.

## Major objectives of the automobile salesperson:

- To sell cars and make money.
- To build a clientele.
- To represent the company in a professional manner.
- To continue learning your trade.

## List all of the qualities of a professional automobile salesperson:

• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____

## List 5 strengths you have as a salesperson:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## List 5 weaknesses you have as a salesperson:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

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# Getting Started

When you're starting any new career, it's very normal for a person to be a little apprehensive about moving forward. After all, you don't know a great deal about the business that you're in, and no matter how old you are, you're always the new kid on the block.

This is the time for you to become pro-active, and take the time to become organized. The more you can initially know about the responsibilities you're about to undertake, the more confidence you'll have in taking that first step towards a wonderful career in automobile sales.

"Be not afraid of growing slowly,  
be only of standing still."

**Chinese Proverb**

## Here are some things you can do to get started:

- Talk to customers even if you feel insecure.
- Become more familiar with the entire dealership.
  - Service      — Parts              — Used Cars
  - Office        — Body Shop        — Prep Department
- Introduce yourself to the other employees and managers.
- Get everyone to take a demo ride.
- Study your product knowledge.
- Practice your presentation.
- Be friendly.
- Work closely with your managers.
- Use the "Orphan Files."

**NOTES:**



# Greeting

Have you ever encountered sales clerks who were unpleasant or who ignored customers? I know I have. Each time this has happened to me, I've wondered why such individuals were hired into jobs that require courteous treatment of customers. By retaining such personnel, the store will surely lose money. Therefore, greeting the customer correctly should be the single most important point to learn.

A customer not only wants, but deserves to feel special. Just remember, you need customers more than they need you. They are going to determine whether or not you get paid for your time.

During the greeting process, the actual greeting begins before you even approach the customer. It begins the moment you lay eyes on him. How you respond the instant you come in contact with this prospect will determine the outcome of your relationship with him. It's at this time when you and the customer will either form a like or a dislike for one another.

### **Here are some ways to enhance your greeting:**

- Smile and be friendly.
  - give the customer a reason to listen to you.
- Show a lot of enthusiasm.
  - show appreciation for the customer coming into your dealership.
- Build rapport and make friends with the customer.
- Hand out your business card.
  - remember the customer's name.
- Make the customer feel important.
  - they will determine whether you get paid for your efforts.

**NOTES:**





## NOTES:



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please visit our website and purchase the  
entire Automotive Selling Skills Course.**