



## Marketing Messages

### MARY CHARLESON

#### *Sales lessons from the long winding road*

Dear Mr. Sales Rep:

A friend of mine drives a 20-year-old car. It's not because she can't afford a new one, she just hates the car buying experience. I assured her that the sales process had become a lot more sophisticated. I too am shopping for an economical second family vehicle. In fact I went shopping with my two kids recently. I didn't exactly run screaming from your dealership, but I certainly had to resist on several occasions the desire to teach you about sales. Mind if I share our experience? The sales and marketing universe thanks you.

**Lesson #1: Rapport building is important.** The more you know about me, the more you know about how to sell to me. Engage in dialogue and break the ice. Start to tap into what matters to me. I have emotional triggers, and unless you build rapport, you'll never find out what they are. If you are going to call me by name, make sure it's mine. Better, ask me my name before you spend 45 minutes with me. And while you're at it, introduce yourself. I might want to remember you when I come back to purchase.

**Lesson #2: Know your competitive environment.** You must be able to position your product compared to competitors and show the benefits. I shouldn't have to beg you for competitor comparatives. You've been asked this question before and you'll be asked it again. Prepare and position yourself. It is your job to know both your product and your competitors inside out.

**Lesson #3: Observe and listen intently. Ask lots of questions.** Don't draw hasty conclusions from observation, but use them as a clue for further probing. My questions are important, and if you listen, you will realize I am telling you how I want to be sold. I will tell you what is important to me and what isn't. Don't start selling until you can show me features that are relevant. I will tell you my absolute criteria. I will tell you about my lifestyle. I drove up in a Volvo with 2 kids. Safety is important to me. That front seat airbag sensor might have been a good feature to show me.

**Lesson #4: You must have sales materials to give away.** Your sales kit is your tool. A builder wouldn't build without a hammer. You can't sell without your sales tools. I don't really care if you've run out of sales brochures. Fix it. Pull some material off the web. Get more printed. I am on a research mission. I want to leave with information to help make my decision. If you rely on me to look it up on the web when I get home, I may just stop at a competitor and forget to get your sales information.

**Lesson #5: Up sell me if you can. That's your job. But push at your peril.** If you think after probing my criteria that I am making a mistake to not consider a better feature, tell me. Save me from myself. If you're right, I will respect you. However, if I tell you repeatedly I do not want something, please stop. I don't need the feature. I don't want to pay for it. And I certainly don't want to give you the increased commission on it.

**Lesson #6: Realize that if a woman sets foot on a car lot, she is there because she wants to buy a car. She may or may not want to buy your car.** And she won't be buying today if you've never met her before, so get over it. Women don't kick tires, they do research. I was gathering information about your car and about you. I was testing you. How do you think you did? Please don't ask if I'm going to buy today. I'll tell you when I'm ready. You hadn't answered all my questions yet and there was no rapport. I liked your car, but you were pushy. And yes I was the decision maker, I just wasn't deciding today.

You were polite and you represented a great product, but you just didn't do your job very well. Good sales techniques are at the root of all commerce. Nothing happens in this world until someone sells something. So isn't it worth learning how to do it right?

Sincerely,  
Mary Charleson

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