

Styles in Customer Service

There are various styles in customer service. Sales techniques can range from subtle or soft-sell to more direct or hard-sell, depending on the type of product or service being offered.

Hard selling is more common in selling real estate, cars, furniture, major appliances, insurance, and financial services because these products and services are usually sold on a commission basis. In most retail stores, however, you will encounter soft selling.



1 Audio 3.10: Listen to two sales dialogues. Answer the following questions.

1. How are the two sales styles different?
2. What hard-sell techniques does the salesperson use in the first dialogue?
3. What constitutes soft selling in the second dialogue?

2

In a small group, discuss your personal experiences as a customer with various sales techniques.

1. In what situations have you, as a customer, experienced hard selling? What was being sold?
Describe how the seller tried to convince you to make a purchase. How did you respond to it?
2. What are some effective ways of responding to hard selling?
3. Hard-sell techniques are often used in advertising. Give examples you have recently encountered (e.g., TV commercials, Internet or print advertisements).
4. What sales techniques do businesses mostly use in your previous country?



3 Audio 3.11: Listen to a consumer rights advocate discuss hard- and soft-selling techniques. Answer the questions below.

1. How can a consumer recognize hard-selling techniques?
2. Why do many customers not like a hard-sell approach?
3. What specific examples of phrases used in hard selling does the expert give?
4. How can consumers protect themselves against hard-selling techniques?
5. What makes soft selling good customer service?

4 The following words come from the interview you heard. Match the terms on the left with meanings on the right.

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|--------------------------|--|
| 1. ____ explicit | a. not very noticeable or strong |
| 2. ____ hype | b. to gradually become more involved in a bad situation |
| 3. ____ bellow | c. to be tricked into believing something that is not true |
| 4. ____ blather | d. very surprisingly |
| 5. ____ blatant | e. to be unfairly criticized for something |
| 6. ____ in-your-face | f. very unpleasant |
| 7. ____ be put off | g. causing fear |
| 8. ____ intimidating | h. very direct and often shocking or surprising |
| 9. ____ obnoxious | i. to feel uncomfortable or uncertain because of something |
| 10. ____ get a bum rap | j. very clear, obvious |
| 11. ____ astonishingly | k. to talk foolishly |
| 12. ____ to fall for | l. to shout in a loud, deep voice |
| 13. ____ get sucked into | m. publicize in an exaggerated way |
| 14. ____ subtle | n. clear; very well-explained so there is no confusion |

5 Imagine you have to sell one of the items below. Decide what selling technique you would use and try to persuade your partner to buy the product/service. Your classmates will evaluate how effective your technique was.



Situation 1

You want to sell your car. It has 200,000 kilometres' mileage, but it is very reliable and in mint condition. You need money to buy a new car, so you want to sell the old one as soon as possible. You place an ad on the Internet and get a phone inquiry about it.

Situation 2

You are an insurance agent and work on commission. You sell rental property insurance. Your insurance company offers low premiums, flexible payment schedules and different plans depending on coverage.