

Special Management Series

7 Powerful Sales Role-Plays to Train Your Team

This is a series of Training for your
Management TEAM

Presented by J.W. Owens



A Management
Perspective 303 Series

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Sales role-play - an improvisation game where your sales team interacts with individuals acting out the role of different customer archetypes - is an underrated tool for preparing your team for the unexpected.

Having a happy customer who knows exactly what they want and intends to buy it is great, but you need to be ready for any customer scenario.

Sales role-playing bolsters your sales techniques by:

- **Creating familiarity** with the types of individuals your team is most likely to interact with in the course of their work;
- **Building empathy** for your customers by having your staff perform as customers; and
- **Learning conflict resolution**, through the acting-out of interactions with dissatisfied clients.
- Let's look at **six archetypes for customers** who pose different challenges for your sales team. For the purpose of this article, we'll set the scene at a consumer electronics store, but these skills can be readily translated to any type of business – even online!
- **Setting up**
- For a successful role-play, **it's best to let your team know what roles they'll be playing** (e.g. a customer, a sales team representative) some time in advance. Have someone - preferably a manager - designated to run the activity and evaluate the performances. Use a large room with an open space and good acoustics; **this will give your staff an opportunity to watch others perform while they wait their turn.**

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1 The Hesitant Customer

- **Exercise:** A client walks in and spends a few minutes browsing. He clearly admires the devices on offer, but he doesn't take one to checkout. A sales-team member walks up to him, and asks politely if he can help him. It turns out that he really likes the latest iPhone, but is hesitant to commit to a purchase at the price listed.
- **How your team can prepare:** Ensure your team members are aware of inexpensive alternatives that your company could sell, which can better convert a hesitant customer into a paying one.

2 The Silent Customer

- **Exercise:** A customer browses at length, rebuffing inquiries from your staff to see if they can help her. After about twenty minutes, she brings a budget-line phone to the checkout counter and prepares to pay (we can accelerate the time for the efficiency of the training session, so the instructor can simply say "After twenty minutes", prompting the actor to move to a simulated checkout section).
- **How your team can prepare:** First, emphasize the importance of asking every customer if there is anything that they can help them with, both during the browsing process and at checkout. Second, be sure that the team members know to respect the wishes of potential customers. Lastly, remind your staff to ask all customers, before they leave the store, if they found everything they were looking for and if there is anything else they can do to help them.

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3 The Distrusting Customer

- **Exercise:** A customer shows interest in the most expensive devices you have for sale, but they show distrust of your staff members when they offer help in making a decision. After some discussion, it becomes clear that they do not have much technical knowledge about the products, and they do indeed seek information about the devices from your staff. However, they express concern that they may be pushed to buy something more expensive primarily for the company's benefit.
- **How your team can prepare:** Advise your team members that frankness can be powerful in gaining a customer's trust. In a circumstance such as this, they should emphasize that while selling premium products does indeed reflect positively on their performance evaluation, unhappy customers are far more damaging to their reputation than a missed sale. Customers like these should be told useful information about the products they are considering, while reminding them that the decision remains in their hands and that nothing is being forced on them.

4 The Niche Customer

- **Exercise:** A customer comes into the store and walks straight to a sales representative. They are interested in the best Android smartphone compatible with the open-source Lineage OS alternative operating system. It turns out they are a software developer and place a high value on the ability to modify their own computing devices.
- **How your team can prepare:** Sales team members need to familiarize themselves with the various edge-cases they may come across in their departments.

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5 The Unhappy Customer

- **Exercise:** A customer walks into the store, storms over to the Customer Information desk, and tosses a tablet on the counter. He bought it last week, and it won't turn on, despite all he has tried. After some investigation, it turns out that the tablet is defective. He is very upset and is demanding a replacement immediately. He refuses to leave until he feels that his complaint has been addressed.
- **Looking for better customer relationships?**
- Test User like for free and chat with your customers on your website, Facebook Messenger, and Telegram.
- **How your team can prepare:** Ensure that your sales team stays informed about all the tools they have available to address customer complaints about products they have purchased. They should keep up-to-date about, for example, any available warranties or protection plans available to customers. Perhaps the team is authorized to provide discounts or coupon offers to placate a particularly unhappy customer; if so, they should familiarize themselves with those options.

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6 The Technically-Savvy Customer

- **Exercise:** As soon as you unlock the front door, someone marches in, asking you to take her to the smartphone section. It turns out she knows practically everything about the products you have on sale, and she gives you an extended pop quiz on their specifications; Apple vs Android, AMOLED vs LCD screens, GPU strength, and so on. Answer her questions, and you might have her buy a \$1,000.00 phone right then and there. Hesitate, and she walks out, frustrated.
- **How your team can prepare:** Before the training session, instruct your team to research the details of the products that they are responsible for. This will ensure that they can handle any questions about them, even from the most technically-savvy customer.

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7 The Competitor-Savvy Customer

- **Exercise:** After helping a customer with their questions, they ask you: “Thank you for all your help, but why should I buy this product from your business? Why are you better than your competition?”
- **How your team can prepare:** Before the role-play, have your sales team brush up on your company’s value proposition; that is, what is at the core of your company that no other company can provide?
- At the role-play, the sales team member should compliment the customer on her product choice; this relaxes the tone of the conversation while also establishing your business as authoritative. Then, they should show how the product aligns with your company’s value proposition.
- If they’re still hesitant, talk about how the features of this product match their needs, further cementing your company as a knowledgeable force in the industry. If after all that they remain reluctant, you still have a potential lead on a sale; you can continue to connect with them, such as through an offer to demonstrate the product, or by offering a pamphlet with detailed information about its features.

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The Key: Be Prepared For Anyone, Before They Walk In!

- You wouldn't teach a beginner to swim by throwing them into the deep end. Similarly, **you shouldn't risk your company's reputation (and potential sales) by assigning staff a public role that they are not prepared for.**
- Be sure to train them for common, challenging customer archetypes in advance.

That way, you can trust your team to handle anyone that comes through the door!

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Good Selling !



J.W. Owens - 561-372-5922
results.jwowens@gmail.com

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