

## A Sales Professionals Four Most Important Words

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In sales, the right words can make or break a deal. Yet the four most important words in the business are never spoken, but govern behavior and determine whether or

not your customers have an exceptional experience. Ultimately they can impact your ability to close the sale.

The four words are:

1. Accountability
2. Communication
3. Comprehension
4. Consistency

These four words can literally mean the difference between success and failure in any sales organization. This does not discount the professional skills that are needed by any means; however, these behaviors form the foundation that is needed for sales skills to work.

**Accountability** is defined as “the quality or state of being accountable; especially an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions”\*

Think about it. Quality. Obligation. Responsibility. These are powerful and often fearful concepts. Yet, every day we all are held accountable for something. And, generally, accountability is a two-way street — people and organizations are accountable to each other. For example, a mortgage company agrees to accept the obligation of loaning the outstanding value of a property to a buyer, who in turn agrees to be accountable and repay the loan with interest on time each month. Teachers take on the obligation of educating their students according to the required

curriculum. Students (and parents) are accountable for attendance, homework, behavior and studying.

Yet, when it comes to our jobs, accountability is what most people fear most. No one wants to be held accountable, least of all salespeople. We can learn more about why this is by looking at communication, comprehension and consistency.

**Communication** is defined as “a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior”\*

An exchange of information. This would seem pretty simple, yet miscommunication is as common as clear communication. Often, it happens even more often, especially in business. As a manager, it's not enough to think that employees know what is expected. It's also not enough to simply tell them. People communicate in different ways and require different resources to ensure communication is remembered and learned. Some learn by hearing, others by seeing, and still others by doing. Effective communication requires all three methods. Tell your employees, show them and then have them do it.

Even so, is this enough? Do people remember after a single communication? In our world today, there is so much “noise” that for communication to truly be effective, it needs to be repeated and recorded. Managers must clearly tell employees every day what is expected in their job, for their sales and/or customer service performance, how they are measured, where to go for more information and how to handle challenges or problems.

Employees must have access to materials and resources that can make their jobs easier and to set them up for success. For example, if your business uses the Internet, be sure your employees have full access to internal resources as well as to the customer view of your business as reference tools.

Even the best communication, however, is worthless

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need to understand before they act. The same is true in business. Employees, who understand why processes exist, perform better. Often, simply asking questions will provide a reality check on whether or not an employee understands, and whether or not management is communicating clearly.

**Consistency**, our final word is defined as “harmony of conduct or practice with profession”\*

Another primary cause of misunderstanding is a lack of consistency from one manager to the other, or even by the same manager. If processes and expectations are applied inconsistently, not surprisingly employees get confused. How can any employee be held accountable if the rules change day to day? Managers must be consistent. And, if changes are made, they need to start back at the beginning, communicate what employees are responsible for, ensure comprehension and apply the new standards consistently. Only then can managers hold employees accountable and business achieve sales and service excellence.

### Conclusion

Accountability, Communication, Comprehension, and Consistency – when taken to heart and applied by management with their people, are truly the four most important words in achieving sales excellence.

\*Source: Merriam-Webster, m-w.com



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