

## How to Cultivate Customers into Clientele

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Prospects, customers, clients or clientele – it’s not about words, but about the attitudes they drive. Simply changing the words sales teams use can change their attitudes and drive an increase in closing ratios and bottom line profits. For example, instead of referring to every new lead as a prospect, sales teams should use the word “customer”. A customer has purchasing power and is likely to buy, while “prospect” is simply hope. While this is an important first step, ultimately the goal is to convert customers to clients, people who engage the professional advice or services of another over time.

It is a proven fact that when a customer comes into a business and asks specifically for a particular salesperson, the closing percentage is 60% or higher than a person who is drawn in through advertising and general awareness. When a client comes in, not only do they ask for a specific salesperson, but they rely on his or her advice. And, knowing the client, the salesperson is able to sell them product or service that meets their needs so precisely, that there is little room for negotiation. So, which would a salesperson rather have?

Salespeople cultivate customers through prospecting and referrals. They convert customers into clients by establishing and maintaining personal communication that allows them to get to know them and build a sense of trust. It’s this trust that allows clients to trust the salesperson for advice, and allows the salesperson to secure referrals and higher value and volume sales. In creating clients, the most effective tool a salesperson has is the telephone. Yet it is often the least used; most salespeople are reluctant to call customers after they take delivery because they are afraid of being put in a negative situation where the customer “gives them an earful” of what is wrong. This negative attitude becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

If, however, the salesperson approaches the call with a positive attitude and chooses the words that will guide the conversation to a positive outcome, success is virtually guaranteed. When sales managers make the commitment to train their teams to adopt a positive attitude and help them develop clientele, the payback is tangible and exponential.

When customers become clients, they begin to rely on their salesperson (and by default the business) to help them make decisions for all their needs. All this leads to higher sales, commissions, and bottom line profits.



**Richard F. Libin** has written two acclaimed books that help people of all walks of life improve their sales skills, because as he says, “everyone is a selling something.” His most recent book, *Who Knew?* ([Who-Knew.com](http://WhoKnew.com)), was published in early 2017. His first book, “Who Stopped the Sale?” ([WhoStoppedTheSale.com](http://WhoStoppedTheSale.com)), is now in its second edition. As president of APB-Automotive Profit Builders, Inc., a firm with more than 48 years experience working with both sales and service professionals, he helps his clientele, through personnel development and technology, to build customer satisfaction and maximize gross profits in their businesses. Mr. Libin can be reached at [rlibin@apb.cc](mailto:rlibin@apb.cc) or 508-626-9200 or [www.apb.cc](http://www.apb.cc).