

The Sales Process

Gail Galloway, Perfect Wedding Guide

I've heard several wedding professionals say "I'm not a sales person or I'm not really good at sales." Well if you are meeting with brides or couples, talking to them about your products and services and hoping to book their wedding-- you are selling.

A percentage of us have never had any sales training and some have had a lot of sales training. Those who have never taken any sales training may think if they just tell someone everything they know about their product or service they are selling and then they don't understand why they are not making the sale. They don't take the time to

- get to know the couple
- learn what is important to the couple
- find out what the couple really wants

I personally look at this as "noise" and was guilty of it myself when I first tried to sell something. I was nervous, did not know what I was doing and was failed miserably. Since this time I have had a lot of sales training and practice. I've discovered that sales is a process and there are steps to all sales presentations. I've also changed my attitude about sales. I no longer look at sales as selling but rather as making friends and helping someone fix or cure their problem. As a wedding professional you are helping the bride and groom solve their problem of planning the biggest day of their life. I would like to share the steps in the sales process.

The first step is the meet and greet: When you first meet a bride and groom are you are glad to see them? Do you have any idea of what they think of you when they first meet you? It has been said "You never get a second chance to make a first impression." This is so true. Within the first minute of meeting or seeing someone we all form an opinion. This opinion could be right or wrong. If you do not make a good first impression it may be hard to overcome.

Have you ever tried to look at yourself from the other person's perspective? How do they see you? What are they looking at when they see you? Do you appear warm, friendly and confident? How are you dressed? Does your clothing say you are a professional? What about personal grooming? Is your hair neat or do you need a haircut and color? What about your nails? Are you someone they would like to do business with and trust with their big day?

You may not think these things matter but they do. Sometimes it only takes the smallest thing to turn a bride off and it should not be her first impression of you.

We may all have a tough time trying to see ourselves through someone else's eyes, so ask a friend. Then be open and thick skinned enough to listen and hear what they have to say. Remember, this is your friend, you asked for his or her opinion and the goal is to help you to make a good impression and to grow your business. So don't be defensive just listen!

By making a good first impression the bride and groom will open up to you more easily. They will also be more willing to hear what you have to say.

The second step is to meet in a comfortable and relaxed setting: Many of us work out of our homes and may meet brides or couples at coffee shops, book stores or other public places. Wherever you meet try to find some place that is quiet and not too busy. Look for a setting without a lot of distractions so the bride and you can really talk and get to know each other.

If you meet in your place of business look at it from your couple's perspective. What may not be a distraction to you may be a distraction to them. Is it quiet and orderly? If not, tidy up. If possible have coffee or soda available. Try to make them feel at home.

If you know a child will be in the meeting then bring a coloring book or something for the child to do. The bride can only concentrate on one thing at a time so by giving the child something to do it will be easier for her to discuss her wedding plans with you and to hear about your product and services.

Also either leave your cell phone in the car or turn it off. And by off I do not mean vibrate. This is your time with the bride. Whoever is calling you can leave a message. By answering the phone on the bride's time she will see this as RUDE. If you are expecting an important call or an emergency call please let the bride know this at the beginning of your meeting and ask if it would be okay with her if you answered the call.

The third step is the discovery or fact finding: Here is where you will ask brides or couples questions to find out what they really want and what is important to them. By asking the right questions and truly listening you will gain the information needed to customize your presentation.

Ask questions about the couple, their lifestyle and their dream wedding. Ask about the things they do and don't want at and for their wedding. By truly understanding your bride and groom you will have a much better chance of making the sale.

When talking to the bride and groom slow down. Look them both in the eye. Ask questions that are open-ended rather than yes or no. Open-ended questions will give you much more information. For example, a yes or no question for a DJ might be "Are you looking for a DJ?" An open-ended question for the same DJ might be "What types of music would you and your guests like to hear during your ceremony or reception?" Think about how much more information your couple will provide in the second question.

I suggest you write up a list of open-ended questions to ask couples. I'm not necessarily saying to bring these questions with you. But if you write questions out and occasionally review them you will be better prepared when you meet the brides. Soon asking open-ended questions will become natural for you.

The fourth step is to match the right product, service or package with the couple's needs, desires and budget: This is where you see why it is important to do a good job fact finding and asking questions. By asking the right questions and learning what the couple really wants you can select the right product, service and package to present to the bride, thereby increasing your chance of making a sale.

When selecting the right product, service or package please consider if you have or can do what the couple needs or wants. Is it in their budget? Do you have the date available and will you have the product available that day? Is it what the couple really wants and not just something you need to sell?

The fifth step is to make the presentation: As many of you know, I came out of the automobile business and the things we included in all of our presentations were Features, Functions and Benefits. The Feature is *what is it*.

The Function is *what does it do*.

The Benefit is *how it is going to benefit or what is its value to your couple*.

(Always remember the benefit has to be to the couple and not to you. After all, no one is going to spend their hard earned money on something that does not benefit them. When was the last time you bought something that benefited the seller and not you?)

Think about it, all of your products and services have several different features, functions and benefits.

Wedding Cake Baker example

Feature: offer over 10 different flavors of cakes

Function: the 10 different cake flavors would give the couple flavor options for their cake or different tiers of the cake

Benefit: by having a cake with the flavors the couple selected, both the bride and groom can have their favorite flavor and your guests can enjoy both flavors

When presenting your product or service please be mindful that some of these features, functions and benefits may be more important to one bride than another bride. For example a 23 year old first time bride may be looking for something different than a 43 year old second time bride. So choose those things that are important to her.

After discussing the features, functions and benefits be sure to use a wrap up question. Of course, we always want the answer to be yes. In the case of our cake baker the wrap up question could be: *Do you think by having 10 different flavors to choose from and the option of picking your favorite flavors for each tier we can create a cake you will both enjoy?*

When making your presentation please remember that this is the first time your couple has heard it or seen it from you. So don't assume they know all the industry words. Talk at their pace and level. Share your knowledge and share it with enthusiasm.

Sometimes you may meet with someone who has done a lot of research on your product or service. So it is important to know as much about your business and industry as possible. So be prepared. Keep up with the trends and what is available. Check out your competitor's websites. Get to know other wedding professionals in other fields. The couple may be so impressed with you they may begin to see you as an industry leader and turn to you for advice.

The sixth step is to make sure you have answered all of their questions. If not then you may need to go back to Features, Functions and Benefits.

The seventh step is to ask for the sale or the commitment.