



JACARUSO

12 Hotel Sales Secrets



The Universal Truths that Lead to Long-Term Success

Toni Jacaruso

1

DIRECT SALES ARE AS IMPORTANT AS EVER.

A component of my business revolves around social media training and management. Most people are curious about, but wary of, social media. Some embrace this medium as the answer to all their sales problems. Others treat the whole phenomenon with skepticism. While I whole-heartedly believe that social media should be an integral part of your hotel's sales and marketing plan, it's important to remember this: NOTHING can replace aggressive direct sales efforts.

The latest new and shiny tool can never replace the tried and true method of human-to-human interaction. New tools can enhance the experience and speed up the process. But nothing will ever trump the immediacy and intimacy of a direct exchange of ideas, needs and strategies. And ultimately a human being will still need to close the sale.

Selling has always been and will continue to be about relationships and probability.

Where should a sales person spend the majority of their time to yield the best results? Connecting directly with the customer—all day, every day.

Continue to utilize telemarketing, advertising and social media to augment your sales efforts. Direct selling should be the priority in everything you do.



UNIVERSAL TRUTH: TO SELL IS HUMAN.

2

BUILD THE RELATIONSHIP FIRST.

I used to take long drives with my grandfather when I was growing up. He'd sit me in his lap and let me steer—how cool is that? On occasion we'd visit the Chevrolet dealership where he always bought his cars. He'd drink coffee and talk shop with the owner and the salesmen. He never bought a Ford or an Oldsmobile or went to another Chevrolet dealership. He always gave his business to the same dealership, year after year.



On one visit, I asked him why. He said, “I’ve got a relationship with them.” They never pressured Gramps to buy; never tried to sell him something he didn’t need. They knew his favorite sports teams and the names of all his grandchildren. No wonder he never went anywhere else!

One thing that will save your client from checking out the competition is their emotional connection with you and your team. So work on that bond — every day, every week, every month. The dividends that relationship pays will be commensurate with the time and effort you’ve put into it.

UNIVERSAL TRUTH: PEOPLE BUY FROM PEOPLE THEY LIKE.

3

FOCUS ON WHAT YOU BRING THE CUSTOMER, RATHER THAN WHAT YOU GET FROM THEM.

When you go into a selling situation with thoughts of how much revenue or how many room nights you want from the prospect, you have already lost. When entering a selling situation with the thought of, “How can I help?” you will maintain your integrity and become someone people will want to do business with.



Have you ever found yourself trying really hard to sell a guest on your hotel? And by “sell” I mean persuade, manipulate, and push your property down a prospect’s throat? Come on, we’ve all been there! Every sales person, at one time or another, has found themselves in a situation where they really wanted the business and they lost sight of everything but getting the sale. At that point the sales person becomes desperate to communicate all the fabulous features of their property, typically without thinking about what’s important to the customer.

Understand this: If you feel like you are being pushy, you are. If you feel anxious about getting the prospect to buy from you, they can feel that too. You will never be successful when you come from a place of fear— of not getting what you want or of losing the business that you have. Build your entire strategy around what you can bring to the guest, rather than what you can get from them.

**UNIVERSAL TRUTH: IT’S MORE IMPORTANT TO
GIVE THAN TO GET.**

4

CREATE A CULTURE OF GUEST SERVICE.

During WWII, a convoy could only go as fast as the slowest ship. The slower the slowest ship, the more danger to the convoy. In team sports, it's not the superstars who win championships, but the team supporting the superstars. The stronger the supporting players — the unsung heroes—the better the team. The same holds true in business.

If I were to call, or better yet, check in to your hotel right now, can you guarantee that I'll be happy with the service I receive? Chances are there is one person at your front desk, or in the housekeeping or maintenance departments whom you know doesn't provide each guest with the ultimate customer service experience. That person is your slowest ship, your weak link, endangering the entire business. Get rid of the weak link now and make your team stronger!



People do not have a relationship with a hotel. They have a relationship with your associates. If your associates are extraordinary, their relationships with your guests will be extraordinary. Help make your associates extraordinary. Have fun! Moods are infectious. If you're having fun, your staff will have fun and that will transfer to your guests. We picked this profession because at heart we love hospitality and want to be hospitable.

Treat every guest as if they were a guest in your own home. It takes a lot less energy to be friendly and gracious than rude. Always take the high road — it's never crowded!

UNIVERSAL TRUTH: MEDIOCRE GUEST SERVICE IS NEVER ACCEPTABLE.

5

ASK FOR REFERRALS.

Create evangelists for your property by blowing guests away with incredible guest service. This creates an opportunity to receive incredible referrals in kind. The best time to ask for a referral is when you exceed a guest's expectations. There exists a very real human urge to give back when you have received something spectacular. They will help you. Simply ask, "Who else do you know that would like to stay at our hotel?" Once they give you a referral, see #6.

UNIVERSAL TRUTH: HAPPY GUESTS WILL REFER OTHERS TO YOU... IF YOU ASK.



6

BE A HERO — FOLLOW UP ON LEADS... NOW!

“Mr. Plumber, my basement is flooding. Can you help?”

“Mr. HVAC, my air conditioner just went out and it’s 100 degrees outside. Can you come now?”

“Mr. Tow Truck Driver, my car broke down. I’m in a bad part of town. Please save me!”



The “hero” in these situations isn’t the company with the best price or the individual with the most experience or the best skill set. The hero is the first responder, the one who shows up quickly and makes the problem go away. What’s more, these victims of circumstance happily pay a premium price to have their “emergency” tended to. The victim has their problem solved and the first responder has a new client—for life.

When a potential guest leaves an unsolicited message inquiring about your property, you have received the gift of low-hanging fruit. Contact them—now. Treat the lead as a 911 call for help. Understand they require immediate attention. If you match the caller’s sense of urgency, you have the opportunity to be the hero. They want a solution to their problem, so BE the solution! Pick that low-hanging fruit... before your competitors do.

UNIVERSAL TRUTH: THE PERSON WHO RESPONDS FIRST BOOKS THE BUSINESS.

7

99% OCCUPANCY IS NOT FULL.

I have never heard anyone comment with pride, “I completed 99% of my degree plan!” followed by, “I put 99% of the day’s sales in the cash register!” then finishing with a flourish, “I told my spouse I’ve been 99% faithful!” If that person existed they’d be a divorced, unemployed, non-degreed thief, on their way to jail and the poor house.

When I was a regional manager, my GMs and DOSs would say, “We did great last night! We were at 99% occupancy!” The only things 99% indicate to me are an inability to manage inventory and leadership that isn’t willing to gamble. If a hotel hits 99%, then it’s a high demand night. In a typical corporate market there are 3-4 of them each week (Monday- Thursday). If your hotel’s ADR is \$100, at 99% occupancy you leave \$15,000 a year on the table. To achieve 100% occupancy you have to overbook. Will you have to walk someone occasionally? Yes. Can you walk someone without them hating you and tweeting to the world that your hotel is the worst property in the universe? Yes. All that’s needed is training.

UNIVERSAL TRUTH: 99% OCCUPANCY DOES NOT EQUAL 100% OF THE REVENUE.



8

TRAINED, MOTIVATED ASSOCIATES ARE REFERRAL MACHINES.

If you are a general manager, asset manager or owner, of course you expect your director of sales to produce revenue through their sales efforts. However, do you realize that you have an entire team of sales people at your fingertips? Every associate at your hotel is a potential lead-generating fanatic. A quality sales department will engage and motivate the entire staff to promote the property. Your team members are also members of the community in which they work and live. They will refer business to your hotel from friends and family, civic organizations, religious affiliations, etc., if properly motivated and trained.



UNIVERSAL TRUTH: YOU CAN'T DO IT ALONE.

9

YOUR COMPETITORS ARE PART OF YOUR SALES TEAM.



Treat them as such. It makes sense to engage, befriend and ally with your competitors rather than treat them like the enemy. If they are good competitors, i.e. their hotels are clean and they understand the concept of guest service, etc., even better. Sooner or later, a competitor will be in a sold-out situation and a guest is going to call and ask for a referral. Why not be the hotel they call?

If you haven't toured your competitors in the last 90 days, do it this week! Spend the night if you can, even if you have to do a trade-out to make it happen. The better you know them, the better equipped you are to sell your hotel against them. Remember; never speak negatively about your competition.

Take your competitors to lunch at least once a month. The benefits will far outweigh the expense by increasing referrals, goodwill and networking. Remember to include those competitors not in the STR report. They will become some of your best allies.

UNIVERSAL TRUTH: FRIENDS WANT TO HELP YOU, EVEN WHEN THEY COMPETE WITH YOU.

10

CLOSE THE SALE.

“Would you like to make that reservation?” Every sales call is a journey leading to this specific question. When the sales person knows the destination, then they can tailor their entire presentation toward that point. The goal here, as it is on every sales call, is to assist the client and the hotel by booking the reservation. And even for the calls that don't result in a booked reservation there is still a consistent destination: “What is our next step?” This moves the conversation forward, engages the prospective client to become part of the journey and ultimately leads to, “Would you like to make that reservation?”

Knowing the destination will give the sales person absolute confidence. Confidence is infectious. Arriving at the same destination during every sales call will increase your conversion rate exponentially. The more business booked using this approach, the more confidence the sales person receives. This same approach should be used in every form of communication — whether telephone, email or face-to-face sales calls. A universal approach will yield a universal result: increased profitability, happier clients and happier owners!



UNIVERSAL TRUTH: CONSISTENTLY ASK FOR THE BUSINESS, AND CONSISTENTLY YOU'LL GET IT!

11

CREATE INCENTIVES TO NURTURE PEOPLE'S COMPETITIVE NATURE.

If all of life's riddles are answered in the movies, as Lawrence Kasdan wrote in Grand Canyon, then the key to the successful sales person can be found therein. In Moneyball, Billy Beane remarked, "I hate losing more than I love winning." Matt Damon stated emphatically in Rounders, "Few players recall big pots they have won, strange as it seems, but every player can remember with remarkable accuracy the outstanding tough beats of his career."

Spectacular sales people have the competitive gene built into their sales DNA. They hate to lose. Their sales esteem comes from exceeding revenue goals as reflected in the STR report and any other equation they can use to measure themselves against their competition. Take advantage of these traits. Incentivize them. Create another equation that drives them to be their best.



UNIVERSAL TRUTH: COMPETITION BREEDS SUCCESS.

12

ENCOURAGE CONSISTENT FOCUS, NOT JUST CONSISTENT EFFORT.

Albert Einstein created the theory of relativity. On any given day Albert Einstein couldn't remember where his house was or to even put on socks. Thomas Edison found 1,000 ways not to create a light bulb. Thomas Edison gave us light. Sales people, when focused and directed, create light. Sales people left to their own devices can't find their socks. They are too often distracted by bright shiny objects and find 1,000 ways to stay busy instead of productive. Provide them with definite revenue and activity goals — outside sales calls, site tours, etc.—and steps to reach those goals, and you create sales Einsteins. Leave them to their own devices and they will forget which hotel they work for.

UNIVERSAL TRUTH: THE MORE FOCUSED YOU ARE, THE MORE SALES YOU'LL MAKE.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Toni Jacaruso

President and Founder, Jacaruso Enterprises Inc.

Toni Jacaruso knows hotels. Her passion, vision and drive are revolutionizing the hospitality industry. With 30+ years of hands-on experience, she founded Jacaruso Enterprises in 2007, pioneering the category of remote hotel sales support services. From sales training and lead generation to marketing and revenue recovery, Toni and her team are slaying countless challenges with innovative approaches that boost revenue, and improve hotel performance and profitability.

Want to learn more about our services or see how we can help you?

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