

Are you professional?

Following our solution selling test we get down to basics

As a consultant working in the IT sector I often see that most people are hard working and have “shiny shoes” but the amount of true “professionalism” displayed is in many cases very poor. This may be because there is some confusion about what we mean by the term – a good example is “having the skill, competence, knowledge and character expected of a member of a highly trained profession” (ie an occupation that requires extensive education or specialised training).

I have compiled the questionnaire below to help you in determining how much of a professional salesperson you really are.

I make basic mistakes

- A Infrequently, and rarely repeat the same mistake
- B Occasionally
- C Frequently
- D Very often
- E Never (see honesty and integrity below)

I prepare a written call plan and write down actual outcomes

- A For every meeting
- B For important meetings
- C When my boss insists on it
- D Occasionally
- E Never

I review account and opportunity plans

- A Regularly with my boss and all key stakeholders
- B Regularly with a few people
- C Occasionally with my boss and all key stakeholders
- D Occasionally with a few people
- E Never

The accuracy of my forecasting is

- A Extremely accurate
- B Accurate
- C Sometimes accurate
- D Fairly inaccurate
- E Very inaccurate

I understand best-practice theory of selling and make conscious choices in my individual selling strategies based on considered alternatives

- A All the time
- B Most of the time
- C Occasionally
- D Rarely
- E Never

I am viewed as honest and with a high sense of integrity

- A By all people all the time
- B By all of my customers all of the time
- C By all people most of the time
- D By some people most of the time
- E By few people, rarely

My customers respect my opinions and perceive me as having general business acumen and applying mature common sense

- A All customers, all the time
- B Most customers, most of the time
- C Some customers, some of the time
- D A few customers, occasionally
- E Rarely

I read at least one book that will help me develop my selling competence

- A More than once every three months
- B Every three to six months
- C Once a year
- D Very occasionally
- E Never

I develop myself outside of the training provided by my company (enroll on external training courses, self-paced learning, reading relevant magazines etc.)

- A Constantly
- B Frequently
- C Occasionally
- D Rarely
- E Never

I ensure that I am up to date in matters relating to my customers by regularly updating myself, for example reading quality newspapers, business (or relevant industry) journals, periodicals, podcasts etc.

- A Constantly
- B Often
- C Sometimes
- D Infrequently
- E Never

I seek feedback and analysis of my performance from my boss and those around me, and seek to constantly improve

- A Constantly
- B Frequently
- C Occasionally
- D Rarely
- E Never

People view me as conducting myself in a manner said to be professional, ie dress and grooming, punctuality, record keeping, clarity of speech etc.

- A By all people all the time
- B By all of my customers all of the time
- C By all people most of the time
- D By some people most of the time
- E By few people, rarely

Key

- Mostly As – you are most probably a very professional salesperson; continue to act as a model for others.
- Mostly Bs – you exhibit many of the behaviours of a professional salesperson and may want to consider slightly upping your professionalism.
- Mostly Cs – you would be known as a semi-professional, exhibiting some professional behaviours, but not enough to be considered a full professional.
- Mostly Ds – you are a well meaning, maybe gifted, amateur.
- Mostly Es – you have almost certainly not read this far.

Rationale

- Everyone makes mistakes, but the professional takes steps to make sure that they don't happen again.
- A call plan and outcomes do not necessarily need to be formalised, but writing them down is a discipline that sales professionals will do every time; they do not “wing it”.
- Account and opportunity plans are the very basics of professionalism.
- Forecasting accurately really sets out the professionals from the gifted amateurs. The professional makes an objective and accurate assessment of the situation.
- The definition of a professional is that they are trained and then apply theory into practice. Making conscious choices is regarded in all professions as a key attribute, as opposed to amateurs who “give it a go”.
- Honesty and integrity is an absolute must. I am tempted to make this a simple yes or no answer, because these are things that you cannot act out in front of a customer – he will see through the act at some point.
- A professional will be perceived as an equal by customers, with well formed opinions that are respected.
- All professionals constantly keep themselves up to date and review/refresh their skills and knowledge.
- Constant development extends outside of a current employer – a professional takes responsibility for their development and views their position in the industry as being at least as important as the current job.
- A quick professionalism test is to look at what newspaper is read – a professional will normally regularly read at least one quality newspaper.
- Look at any successful professional sportsperson and how they spend time perfecting everything they do – professional salespeople do the same.
- “Housekeeping” is important to make sure we eliminate mistakes and instill confidence in those around us. **SF**

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