



## THE GREETING

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Here's a true and faithful saying:

**NO ONE LIKES TO BE  
"SOLD" ANYTHING**

Customers want to believe they are in control. That they really make their own decisions. They don't want to believe *that they can be sold!* In addition, they want to believe (rightly) that the decisions they make, or are considering making, are sound. And conversely, we certainly don't want them to think that *we are going to make any decisions for them*—particularly this early in the relationship. It is necessary, then, to create a "*non-selling rapport*" with the customer right away. Make that new visitor to the gallery feel as though the *most important thing in your life at that moment is their presence in your gallery.*

Here's another true and faithful saying:

## **PEOPLE DON'T BUY ANYTHING FROM PEOPLE THEY DON'T LIKE**

As I said earlier, gallery sales have evolved over the last few years to a point where the customer has come to be thought of in much the same way as a con man's prospect. As a *mark*. A *mooch*. The salespeople know it and, worse, the customers know it. In many galleries, when a customer walks in he is immediately fallen upon by high-powered salespeople and forced to do unspeakable acts such as being ushered into a small room to look at art—whatever art is being shown. He is beaten into submission with a long schpiel designed to make him see how ridiculous he'll be if he doesn't buy one of these fabulous pictures right away! This worked pretty well through most of the '80s and '90s. Now, however, customers are more than aware of what it means to *go to a viewing room*. Like being led to the guillotine.

Our job is to make the customer feel at ease with the fact that he is going to be presented with an opportunity to make a buying decision in a private environment—that he is being *served*. (More about viewing rooms later.)

If we make the mistake of thinking of our customers as “them”—someone only to be separated from their money—believe me, they'll know it. They might not know what's wrong, but they'll have a vague idea that we have *another agenda* other than helping them. But, if we think of them as family, someone who deserves good counsel and guidance, they'll know that, too. And they'll remember. So, if you can't find it within yourself to *like your customers*, think about a career change, because you won't make a living in art sales.

Greeting a customer may be likened to *welcoming a friend into your own home*. Sounds obvious, I know, but it's surprising how many salespeople don't do it.

### **A NON-SELLING RAPPORT**

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When I talk of a *non-selling rapport*, I mean that you'll want to make it clear to the customer that you are there to help them, that you are knowledgeable about what is being shown in the gallery, but that you are not on the floor to try and talk them into anything they don't want.

Now obviously, you're not there to act as a **tour guide** either. They know it, and you know it. But since most art buyers are automatically disposed *against the salesperson* anyway, and since they either don't know anything about art, but only "know what they like" or are embarrassed to admit they don't even know what they like (which is usually the case), then *we have a lot going against us* before we even open our mouths.

The best approach to this problem, at least at the outset, is to have *no approach at all*—just make friends with them.

### **THE SALES PROCESS AS A "CON?"**

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They call them "con" men (or "con artists", ironically) because in order to take advantage of someone, the 'con' man must *give confidence*. Now, I've already talked about my position on integrity in selling. *It is not a con!* But we can still learn something from the con man's approach.

A con man always appears very confident. This, in addition to what he actually says, is what *instills that confidence* in his "mark."

We must do that, as well. We must instill confidence in the customer. And not only must you appear confident. You must *be confident*. How do you do that? You *choose* to.

Consider this scenario: a high powered CEO of a Fortune Five Hundred company enters a gallery to look for that special 10th Anniversary present for his wife. Here's a guy used to board meetings where high level executives surround him, agreeing with his every whim. A twenty-two year old salesperson, new to the gallery business, picks him up. Now how much confidence do you suppose is going to be present during their interaction? The corporate exec is being asked to commit to spending thousands of dollars on the say-so of a brand new college grad? Not likely.

In addition, the exec is eventually going to want to talk to the owner (because he'll probably want to negotiate a *discount*, or some horrible thing) and the salesperson is going to be intimidated because of the exec's perceived power. Not exactly the ideal sales situation. And yet, it happens every day. Many of these potential sales *go nowhere because there is no confidence felt on either side*.

For a salesperson to be confident, it takes study and professionalism and *a choice to be that way*. Easy for me to say, I know, and it does require quite a bit of experience, but if you are a new art salesperson, this manual should provide you with the tools to get going in that direction.

When you "choose" confidence, it's more than just a decision. A *decision* is an intellectual activity, whereas a *choice* is an emotional activity. You *choose*, surrender to the choice and don't look back.

## **ESTABLISHING CONFIDENCES**

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When we want advice, we always consult someone in whom we have confidence. That is the relationship you want with the customer. And you want that relationship immediately. Consequently, during this critical period, that of the greeting, you must do two things: *Make friends. Establish confidence.*

In that order.

### **A FAVORABLE BUYING DECISION REQUIRES THE PRESENCE OF A HIGH DEGREE OF CONFIDENCE**

If you don't establish confidence, you have little chance of making a sale. Don't bother trying to get him excited about that fabulous new sculpture. Don't bother pontificating grandly about the artist's lofty philosophy. If they don't like you, or don't have confidence in you (and the gallery) you won't sell them free ice cream.

Here are (some) of the confidences you need to establish in the mind of your customer:

Confidence in:

- **you**
- the **art**
- the **artist**
- the **gallery**
- **themselves**, to make a buying decision **today**