

ON SALES

# SLOPPY JOE



It's easy to fall into bad habits in the midst of the Christmas chaos. Resist, says **Shane Decker**.

**THE ONLY THING BUSIER** than a one-legged cat in a litter box is a jewelry salesperson during the holiday selling season. Overworked? Of course. Exhausted? You bet. But selling during the holidays is easy, you say, because it's just clerking. Closing ratios leap 50% at Christmas-time, so you don't have to try so hard to make your numbers. When a man comes in before Christmas, he's not coming to "just look," he's coming to *just buy*.

The problem is, we let guys like this off the hook. The average person buys 15 to 20 holiday gifts. He may have bought a pair of diamond earrings, but that's just one gift. Why not more? Heck, why not *all*? And how do you know he won't return that one gift after the holidays?

The moral: don't get sloppy. Just because it's the holidays doesn't mean you throw out the window everything you know about selling. In fact, that's the time when you need to pay more attention to "the little things" than ever before. If you're serious about having a successful 2005 holiday season, take dead aim at these five critical details:

► **1.) Greet every customer.** Don't let customers go unnoticed, despite the fact that your store is full to the brim. Make sure to meet each customer with energy. If your sales staff is generally slammed, then hire a greeter. Believe me, it's worth it to ensure an awesome experience for these customers. A greeter can serve coffee and refreshments while customers wait, and give them a brief overview of your store.

If you don't hire a greeter, you must train your staff on how to

properly greet customers when the store is full. Never say, "I'll be with you in a minute." It sounds dismissive and can create impatience.

Instead, say, "Thanks for coming in! As you can see, we're all busy. Please be patient. Someone will be with you as soon as they can. Believe me, the wait will be worth it!"

Now you've addressed the customer with the respect they deserve, in a way that will make them feel more accommodating. Moreover, you've built anticipation ... they'll be looking forward to seeing how you will fulfill your promise of an exceptional experience!

► **2) Don't cut corners.** Artificially hurrying the sale will kill it more often than not. Besides, you may blast through your presentation because you see a "prime prospect," only to find out that they're just in the store to have their watch battery changed! Never assume. Be present with each customer until the sale is over. If you rush through the information gathering stage, you'll have more returned items after Christmas. Asking questions will help you give them exactly what they want.

► **3) Create sales.** See who your customer is shopping for and what they want. Then use lead-in lines to create add-on sales. "How many others are on your list?" is a great question to begin this process. Keep the sale going until the customer says they're ready

to check out.

► **4) Don't dilly-dally after the sale.** When you have five times more people coming in, you have to sell a little faster while maintaining professionalism. That means don't chit-chat after the sale about Christmas trees and reindeer poop. Your customer has things to do, and they know others are waiting — it's part of the enthusiasm of the season. Thank them for coming in, and move on to the next customer.

► **5) Create a holiday atmosphere.** People love Christmas-time, and your store should ooze holiday spirit. Make it feel and smell Christmasy. If it smells good and tastes good, they'll stay longer and buy more.

I know it's not easy to maintain this level of energy. Most retail salespeople will be saying "Are we *there* yet?" and "Shut the door, it's closing time." It *can't* be like that in your store.

Sloppy habits are hard to break. They'll carry into January, and it will take you months to recover. When you stay in top selling shape during the holidays, you'll close more sales in the short term and carry momentum into 2006. So eliminate the slop, and make it the "most wonderful time of the year" for your customers and your business!

*Shane Decker has provided much sought-after sales training for more than 3,000 stores worldwide. He can be reached at (866) 424-2472.*



## SALES TRUTHS

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT HOW YOU SELL



**TRUTH #4**  
**YOU MAKE MORE SALES BY LISTENING WELL THAN SPEAKING WELL.**

**WHY IT'S TRUE:** Many salespeople believe their job is to use their verbal skills to convince the customer to make a purchase. *Big mistake!* Have you ever wrecked a potentially good sale by talking too much? Sure, you have. We are all very knowledgeable about our store and our merchandise, but not every customer wants to hear about the four C's or how to propose marriage. The most important verbal skill you can learn is knowing when to shut up.

**PLAN OF ACTION:** Ask open-ended questions to get customers talking and uncover their real needs. And when the customer is talking, listen — *really listen* — to their response rather than thinking about what you are going to say next. The result: you may not have to close the sale ... the customer will do it for you.

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