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According to Scott Stratten and Alison Kramer, authors of Unselling, sixty percent of all purchase decisions are now made before you ever get a chance to share your pitch. In short, the majority of your potential clients have already decided on a real estate agent or firm before they even know they need one. The firms that are securing these potential clients are the ones that are focusing on branding, support, experiences, and customer service.

In Unselling, Stratten and Kramer talk about everything but the sale. They examine how to avoid focusing on the sales funnel (funnel vision) and guide the reader on topics such as building an impenetrable brand, why customer service makes loyal customers, and finding the pulse of your industry.

THINK POINT #1: Check Your Pulse

Pulse is the relationship between a brand and its market. The pulse is always changing and is moving up or down depending on how the individual is feeling about the brand. When customers have a positive interaction with a brand, they become ecstatic customers. This is where customers become brand ambassadors and where normal static brands become impenetrable and go-to brands. When customers have a negative interaction with a brand, they become vulnerable customers—at risk of being “stolen” by a competitor or switching loyalty to another brand.

Stratten and Kramer say that to find your pulse, start by examining external and internal factors. External factors affect the customer from the outside in. Product quality, customer service, and public relations are external factors that affect the customer experience. They explain that customer service, for example, has two mindsets: it’s our problem, or it’s not our problem.

When it's not our problem, we attempt to dismiss every issue as soon as possible (e.g., you’re in the wrong line, you don’t have a receipt, you don’t have the right receipt). One of the easiest ways to fix this is to let client concerns be your problems. Every point of contact should be part of leading the customer to the solution.

Internal factors come from within the customer. While brands have no control of these factors, they do control how the customer experiences the brand with regard to these factors. For example, proximity and convenience are internal factors that play a huge role in determining a
customer’s decisions. Brands have no ability to alter where consumers are located, but they do have the ability to make obtaining the product or service as convenient as possible.

**THINK POINT #2: Connect with Your Customers Socially**

How often do you see companies in hot water over an insensitive tweet or an offensive post delivered via social media? It seems that every day companies are finding themselves in tight PR situations. The authors explain that while some companies can’t seem to figure it out, social media is not bad for business. When used properly, social media connects consumers to brands in ways that are invaluable. Social sites like Twitter are neutral and don’t typically affect whether customers like or dislike a brand. Just like a paintbrush won’t make a successful painter, social media can’t turn an awful product into a thriving brand, as it’s a tool that amplifies and shares what already exists. If customers complain about your product or service online, it is not a social media problem—it is a quality problem.

Stratten and Kramer suggest several easy ways to create brand endearment. First, pay attention to online chatter about your brand and industry by setting up a Google alert or using a keyword search on Twitter. Next, own the good you do. It’s easy to focus on the negative, but take some time to thank customers who love what you do. Finally, engage and be part of the conversation with your clients. Listen and value your customers; this will help create content and products that give value to them.

**THINK POINT #3: Fix the Funnel Vision**

Many salespeople and firms place focus on hot leads at the top and how they can be converted to sales at the bottom, or the sales funnel. Focusing on converting leads into sales, they often forget about the customers after they have moved through the funnel. The authors say that in today’s world, customers come to you prepared and educated, with trusted referrals in hand, and with their purchase decision already made before they ever hear your sales pitch. Social media has shifted information into the hands of the consumer. With 74 percent of consumers relying on social networks to guide purchase decisions, it's too big a tool to ignore.

Stratten and Kramer suggest that brands move from the sales funnel into the sales cloud. The sales cloud is made up of all the ways customers hear about your brand: referrals, social media, your website, blogs, reviews. In the sales cloud, people have access to a plethora of information, which is why creating an amazing experience for people is so important. If you are not creating that experience, another brand will.

Was the customer’s experience great enough to share? Ask yourself this and answer it honestly. Making the sale isn’t enough anymore—brands need to be creating shareable customer experiences through amazing service.
Conclusion

Take a moment, check your pulse, authentically connect with your customers socially, and stop thinking of people as leads. These are the key points that Scott Stratten and Alison Kramer wish to pass on to readers through their years of marketing experience. Remember that UnSelling is about creating repeat customers rather than converting leads to sales. Most importantly, it’s about focusing on relationships with customers and the quality of your service.

Recommended Reading


About the Author

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Jackson Price is a graduate student from Colleyville, Texas. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Commerce and Business Administration from The University of Alabama’s Culverhouse College of Business. Jackson is currently seeking an MBA with a concentration in Healthcare Administration and plans to pursue a career in the healthcare industry.