

SALESMANSHIP VS THUGSMANSHIP

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Abstract: This study examined how honesty plays a vital role as a quality of a salesperson and has laid down the opinions of a sample of customers and salespersons as recommendations. 100 customers and 50 salespersons across India were questioned on their experiences with salespersons and customers, respectively, the qualities desired by them, the strengths and weaknesses observed in the salespersons. Confirming to the title and scope of our study, this research led to concrete conclusion that Salesmanship is an art and a science and not just any other gimmick where a salesperson gets away by lying or cheating to the customers.

Keywords: Salesmanship, Honesty, Integrity, Salesperson, Customer

I. INTRODUCTION: -

Determining client needs and wants and responding through planned, personalized communication that influences purchase decisions and enhances future business opportunities is selling. It is basically the process by which one person helps another to make the decision to buy something. One of the skills used in personal selling is salesmanship. I.J. Sapiro defines salesmanship as, "The art of successfully persuading prospects or customers to buy products or services from which they can derive suitable benefits, thereby increasing their total satisfaction." Salesmanship is seller-initiated effort that provides prospective buyers with information and persuades them to make favourable buying decisions concerning the seller's products or service. The salesperson of today must react and interact in any different ways to many different people. A good salesperson is a one who can readily establish an emotional link with their prospects.

Integrity matters in business and sales and there is no doubt in it. Having strong ethical values and sticking to them is integrity. Convincing can easily tempt people to sway into gray areas when it comes to honesty and manipulation. Whether dealing with sales, are in a debate, or promoting a product via a marketing channel, it can be tempting to throw in an outrageous claim or flat out lie in order 'to win'. To become a successful sales person, one must be trustworthy, honest and dependable. Most people are honest, and most salespeople are honest. There are a still a few industries that still hire people who are dishonest, and who train in approaches that are designed to hide the truth. But this is mostly an obsolescence now. A good salesperson must be honest. As obvious as that might seem, it is one of the fundamental qualities of a good sales representative. Salespeople must be completely honest, and their ethical conduct must be beyond disgrace in their dealings with their clients, which will in turn promote client faithfulness and satisfaction. Sales representatives should also be honest with their organization, their employer. For example, they need to have complete trust in their representatives who work from home, are on the road or are on out-of-town business trips when they write down their hours. In this respect, there are many systems or software that can help them verify the facts, but a relationship of trust remains a key to success.

Salesmanship helps to increase employment and income of a country through large and rapid sales turnover. Salespeople provide marketing information to producers so that consumers can get new and better products. Salespeople perform several non-selling tasks, e.g., after sale service, meeting complaints, conducting marketing research, providing credit information, delivering goods, collecting payments, etc. Salespeople help minimize price fluctuations and trade cycles by matching demand and supply. Today salesmanship holds a key position in the business world of manufacturing and distribution. As facts stand today, salesmanship is universally accepted as an essential today, might not have been there but for the efforts of the salesman. One can easily examine the utility of salesmanship to producers, society, consumers, government and the salesmen himself.

II. OBJECTIVES: -

- To throw a light on honesty as one of the essential characteristics, a salesperson needs to possess.
- To prove that salesmanship is not equal showmanship but, instead is the right mix of knowledge, skills and attitude.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

One of the 5 basic reasons as to why a potential customer will be reluctant to a sale is lack of trust. Trust proves to be the basis for a potential buyer to believe that the seller is genuinely concerned with his/her interests. According to Robert B Miller, Stephen E Hieman and Tad Tuleja, lack of trust kills more sales than the other 4 reasons of customer having no need for purchase, he/she does not have the money, does not have the desire to buy and there is no urgency that he/she sees. So, what builds credibility? Miller, Hieman and Tuleja list down these 10 elements that help a salesman/woman to build credibility:

- a. Track record of delivering results
- b. Track record of accomplishments
- c. Experience in the customer's business or industry
- d. Technical expertise
- e. Educational background
- f. Language and speech
- g. Appearance, dress and grooming
- h. Personality and demeanour
- i. Professionalism: for e.g.: Punctuality, Mannerisms
- j. Associations with company, contacts in the industry

(Robert B Miller, Stephen E Hieman and Tad Tuleja, 2011)

It is advisable that, in a negotiation, a salesperson is always ethical and honest because, that is one attribute that earns you those brownie points. Giving an example, Rahul Jadhav and Prashant Chaudhary point out that, if a counterpart makes a mistake in the invoice that is to your advantage and you still inform him/her, you lose an extra amount probably but, you win that customer and respect for lifetime.

(Rahul Jadhav and Prashant Chaudhary, 2013)

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design used is descriptive in nature the procedure using a questionnaire and analyzes these to make a critical evaluation of the performance.

Methodology adopted:

Sources of data collection: - Data is collected through primary and secondary sources

Primary Source of data: - Data is collected using Questionnaire Method.

Secondary Source of data: - The data is collected using internet websites.

Sampling: - Sample Random Design

Sample Size: - Sample size of research is 100 samples from customers and 50 samples from salesman.

Sample method: - The sample has been collected through Questionnaire.

LIMITATIONS:

1. Understanding of the questions by customers-respondents and personal biases by the salesperson.
2. This topic has not been explored much hence, we had limited content review for literature.
3. The number of customer-respondents and salesperson-respondents is limited to 100 and 50, respectively.

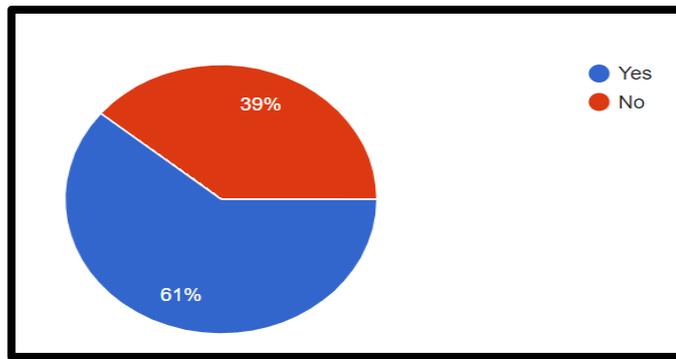
V. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

FROM CUSTOMERS: -

1. Do you believe a salesperson on the quality of a product/service being sold by him/her?

Table 1

Do you believe a salesperson on the quality of a product/service being sold by him/her?	Total No. of customers
No. of respondents	100
Yes	61
No	39



1. Figure 1

Interpretation: This graph tells us that, as against the general perception of Sales person lying to sell a product/service, 61% of customers still believe him/her when it comes to quality of a product/service.

2. In your opinion, does the Sales fraternity hear out your requirements well or are they too quick to judge them?

Table 2

In your opinion, does the Sales fraternity hear out your requirements well or are they too quick to judge them?	Total No. of persons
No. of respondents	100
Hear them out well	71
Offer a product/ services without listening to my requirements	29

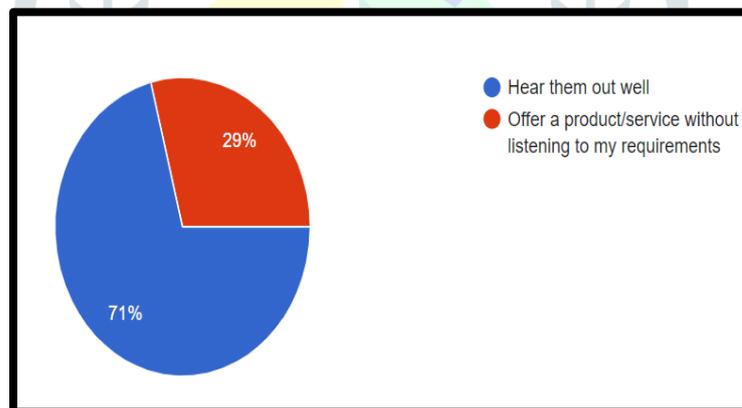


Figure 2

Interpretation: Even if, 39% of our respondents do not believe a salesperson on the quality of a product/service, 71% of them agree that, the salespersons do hear out their requirements well.

3. Have you been cheated by a salesperson?

Table 3

Have you been cheated by a salesperson?	Total No. of customers
No. of respondents	100
Yes	55
No	45

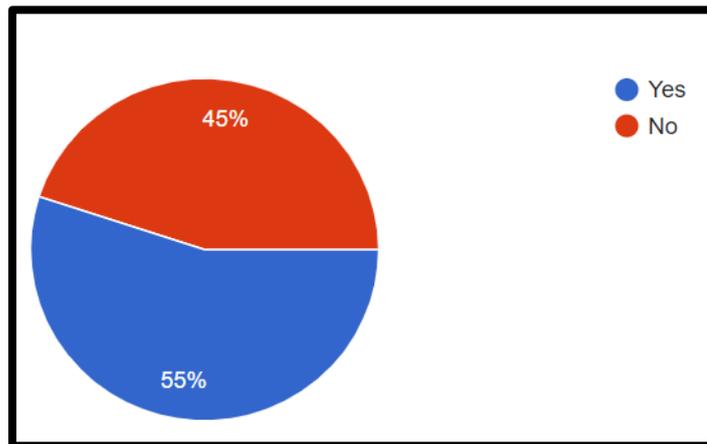


Figure 3

Interpretation: Here, majority of our respondents i.e. 55% say that they have, at one point or the other been cheated by salespersons.

4. If Yes, please specify the area in which you have been cheated?

Table 4

If Yes, please specify the area in which you have been cheated?	Total No. of persons	Percentage
No. of respondents	58	
Quality of the product/service	26	44.8
Final price of the product (Final Price means basic price plus any kind of charges/taxes that are levied)	9	15.5
Commitment on after sales service	12	20.7
Time of delivery of a product/ service	4	6.9
Promotional offers on the product/service (any coupons/loyalty discounts/discounts for bulk purchases/offers mentioned on pamphlets/published in newspapers/magazines/websites)	6	10.3
others	1	1.7

Interpretation: *please note that, there has been ambiguity in the minds of our respondents and hence, while 55% say they have been cheated by the salespersons, 58% have answered as to the area in which they have been cheated by the salespersons.

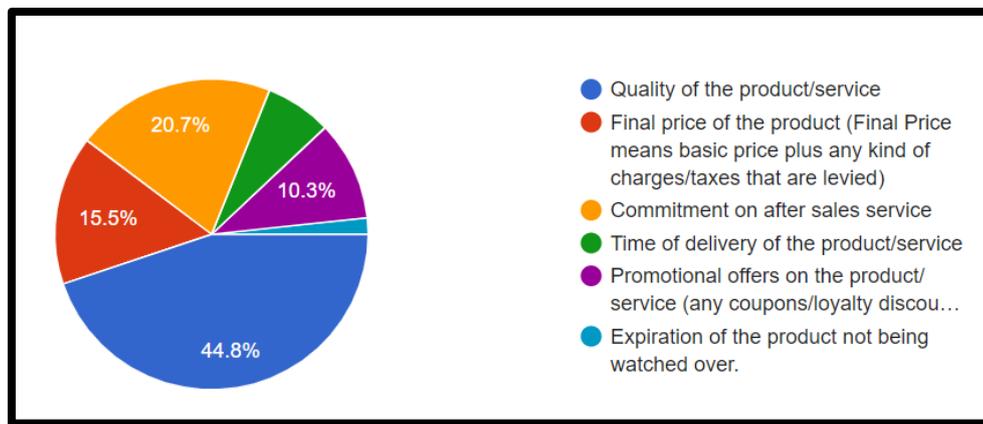


Figure 4

Interpretation: Quality of the product/service and commitment on after-sales service have been the 2 major areas according to our respondents where they have been cheated.

5. In your opinion, out of 5 times, how many times a salesperson lies to a customer?

Table 5

In your opinion, out of 5 times, how many times a salesperson lies to a customer?	Total no. of person
No. of respondent	100
0	2
1	9
2	27
3	42
4	13
5	7

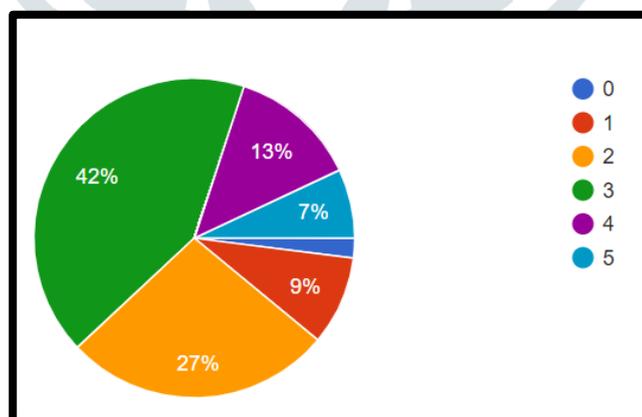


Figure 5

Interpretation: 42% of our respondents are of an opinion that more than 50% of the times, a salesperson lies to his/her customers.

6. Do you entertain a sales person approaching you personally/in a shop/a mall or over the phone?

Table 6

Do you entertain a sales person approaching you personally/in a shop/a mall or over the phone?	Total no. of persons
No. of respondents	100
Yes	26
No	74

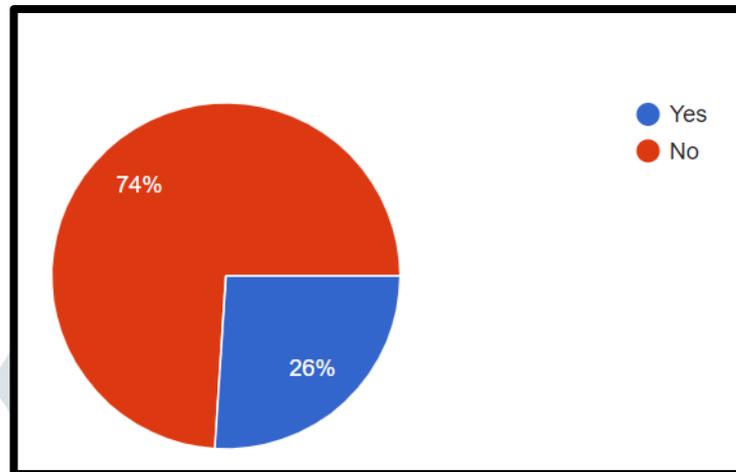


Figure 6

Interpretation: 74% of our respondents do not let the salesperson approach them while shopping in a mall or on phone/mail. This graph shows a direct connection with the reasons behind customers doing so: 55% have been cheated by the salespersons, 42% think that sales persons lie to them majority of the times.

7. If No, please specify the reason.

Table 7

If No, please specify the reason.	Total no. of persons	Percentage
No. of respondent	75	
Wastage of time	15	20
Do not believe them	33	44
You feel being interfered/ disturbed	27	36

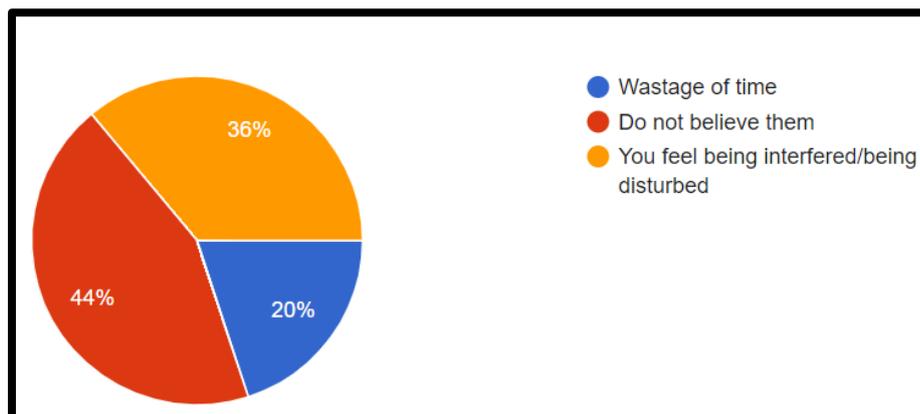


Figure 7

Interpretation: Here it is, besides being cheated by the salespersons and not believing them, customers consider entertaining salespersons as wastage of time and being disturbed instead.

8. Do they respond to your complaints/bad reviews for a particular product/service?

Table 8

Do they respond to your complaints/bad reviews for a particular product/service	Total no. of persons
No. of respondents	100
Yes	67
No	33

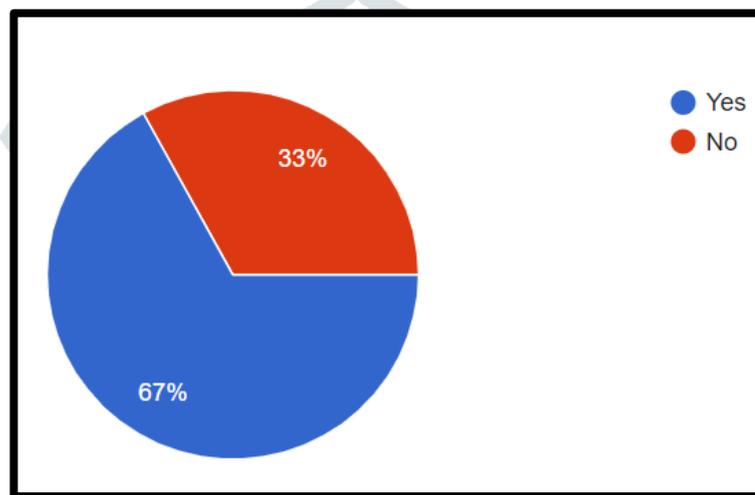


Figure 8

Interpretation: This graph at least shows a positive sign towards the behavior of salespersons and says that, 67% of our respondents strongly agree that their complaints/bad reviews are taken seriously and hence, responded to, by the salespersons.

9. If Yes, how?

Table 9

If Yes, how?	Total no. of persons	Percentage
No. of respondents	73	
They apologize	25	34.2
They replace/repair the product/services	35	47.9
They compensate the price	11	15.1
Other	2	2.8

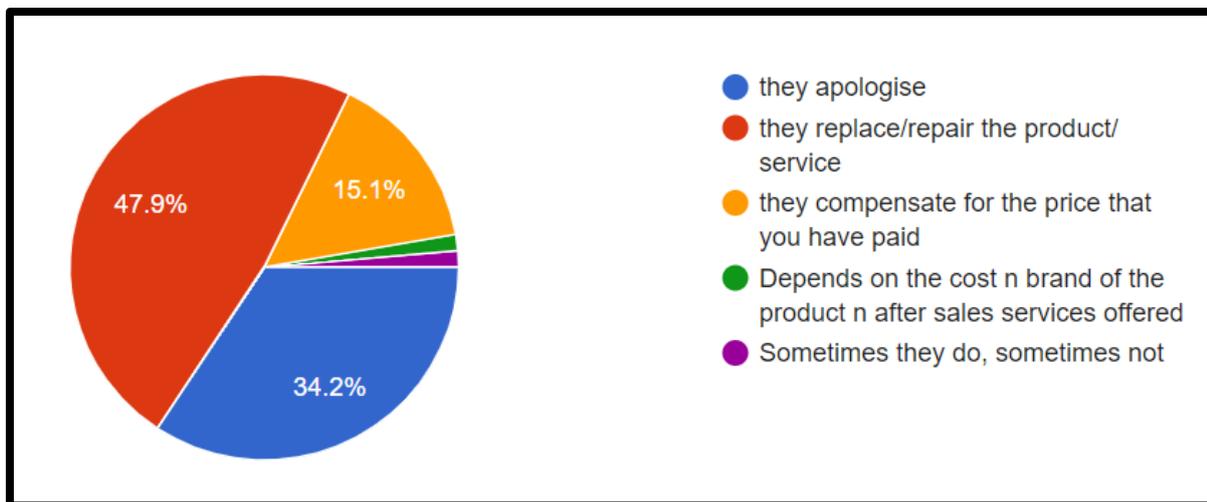


Figure 9

Interpretation: Combine together, 80%+ of our respondents say that, the salespersons respond to their complaints by either apologizing or replacing/repairing the product/service.

10. Are you satisfied with their response/action taken by them?

Table 10

Are you satisfied with their response/action taken by them?	Total no. of persons
No. of respondents	100
Yes	48
No	42
Sometimes	10

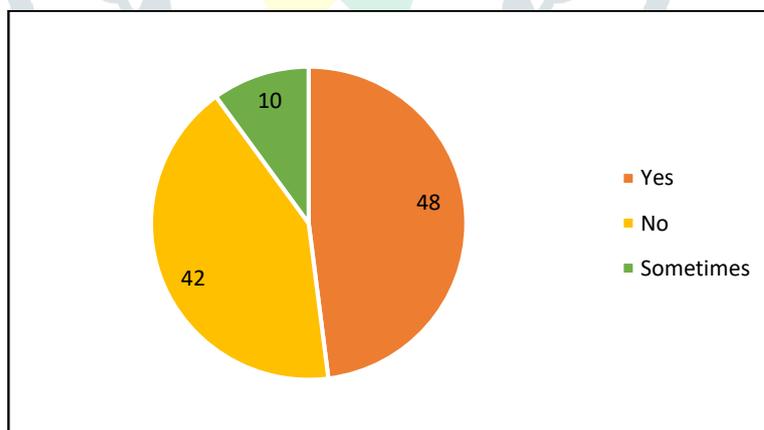


Figure 10

Interpretation: However, 42% of our respondents are clearly still not satisfied by the response of the salespersons.

FORM SALESPERSON:

1. In your opinion, does a salesperson has to lie to sell a product/service?

Table 11

In your opinion, does a salesperson has to lie to sell a product/service?	Total No. of persons	Percentage
No. of respondents	50	
Never	25	50
Sometimes	19	38
Most of the times	6	12
Always	0	0

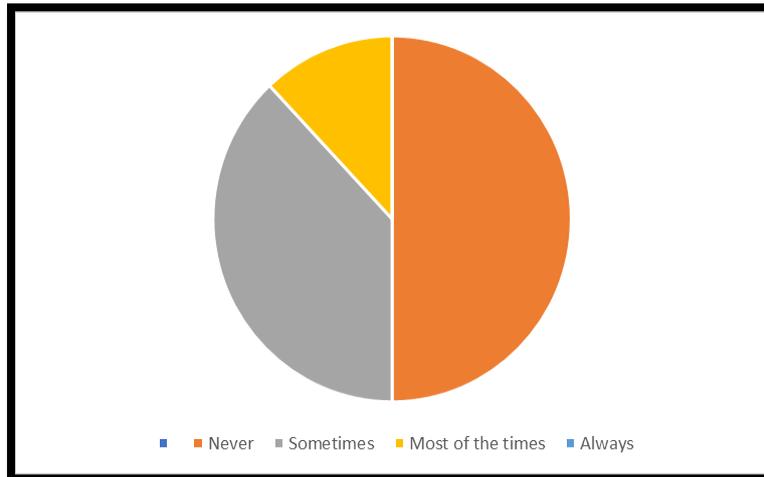


Figure 11

Interpretation: The analysis for the first question tells us that, 50% of salespersons are of an opinion that, a salesperson does not have to lie to sell a product/a service

2. What is your greatest strength as a salesperson? (Choose any 1)

Table 12

What is your greatest strength as a salesperson? (choose any 1)	Total No. of persons	percentage
No. of respondents	50	
High integrity	3	6
Effective listening	1	2
Good communication	12	24
Confident	9	18
Knowledge of the product/service	7	14
Understanding the needs of the customers	16	32
Presentation skills	2	4
Others	0	0

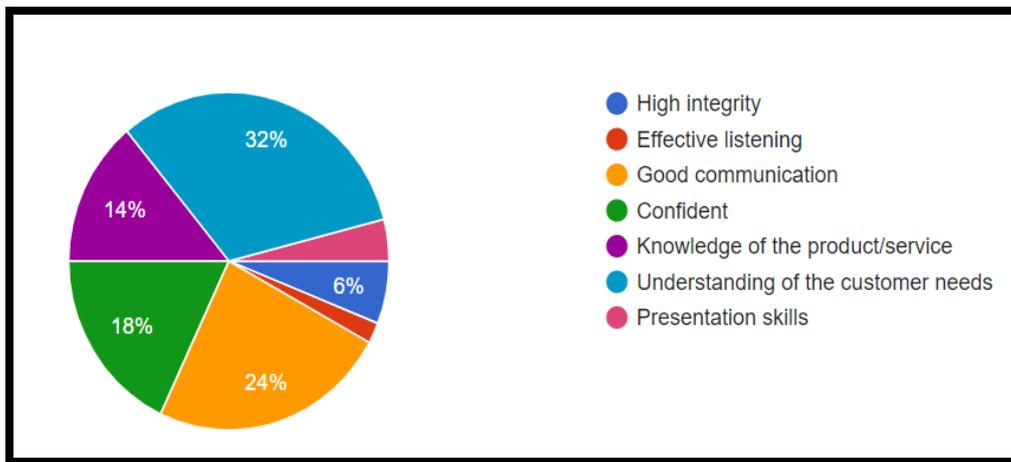


Figure 12

Interpretation: Amongst the 7 greatest strengths we had presented to our respondents, the top 4 came out to be:

- a. Understanding the needs of the customers
- b. Good communication
- c. Knowledge of the product/service and
- d. High Integrity

The analysis for this question too, underlines the importance of Honesty as a quality in Salespersons.

3. What is your weakness as a salesperson? (Choose any 1)

Table 13

What is your weakness as a salesperson? (choose any 1)	Total No. of persons	Percentage
No. of Respondents	50	
Low integrity	5	10
Ineffective listening	9	18
Poor communication	2	4
Low confidence level	9	18
Poor knowledge of the product and services.	3	6
Difficult to understand the needs of the customers	8	16
Poor presentation skills	9	18
others	5	10

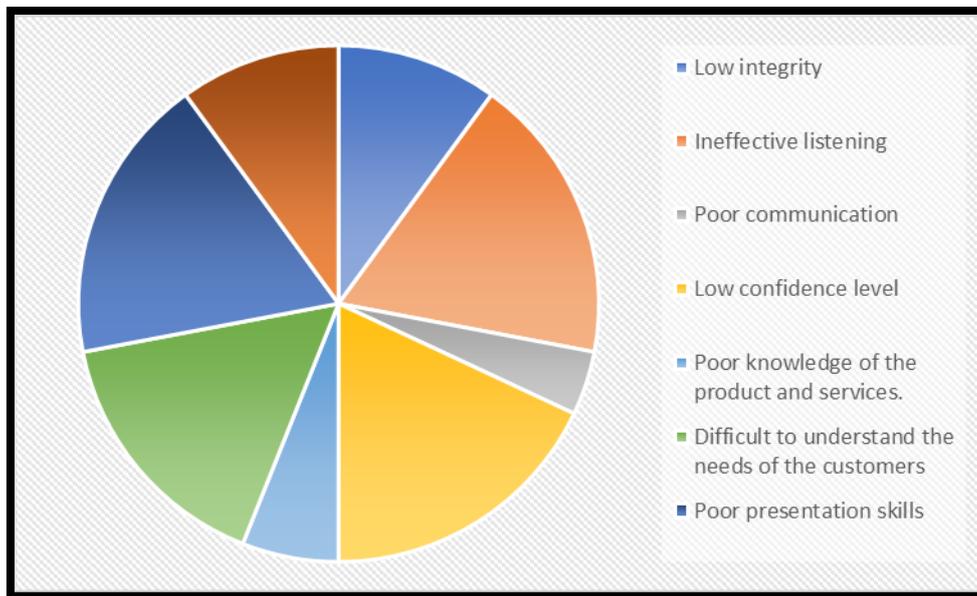


Figure 13

Interpretation: While, ‘understanding the needs of the customers’ came out to be the greatest strength in the previous question, it also has come out to be amongst the top 3 weaknesses for our sample of salespersons-respondents.

4. Do you agree with the customers’ perception of ‘A salesperson cheats the customers’?

Table 14

Do you agree with the customers’ perception of ‘A salesperson cheats the customers’?	Total no. of persons	Percentage
No. of respondents	50	
Agree	11	22
Disagree	39	78

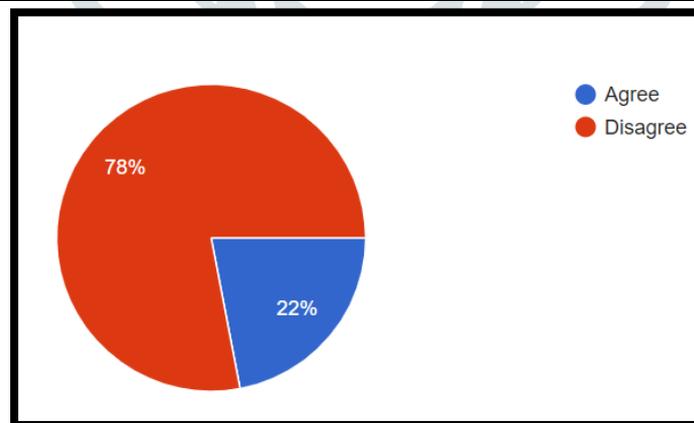


Figure 14

Interpretation: In the previous question, ‘low integrity’ stood to be a weakness amongst 10% of salespersons and here, 78% say that they do not agree with a salesperson cheating a customer. These 2 interpretations prove the importance being given to ‘Integrity’ as a quality of a salesperson.

VI. Recommendations:

These recommendations are based on 2 of our open-ended questions that we asked the customers and the salespersons, respectively.

1. Honesty, as a quality most desirable in a salesperson, again won with majority amongst our customer-respondents.
2. A very good suggestion that came from 1 of our customers-respondents is that, a salesperson should work on the limitations of a product/service of the organisation he/she is working in.
3. Giving customer his/her personal space while he/she is looking for a product/service also has strongly been voiced as a recommendation by the sample of our customers
4. Less aggressive and more patience has too, been recommended
5. One customer-respondent sums up our whole research paper very well, he/she says: the salesperson is at his/her best when he/she is honest about his/her product/service and yet is able to convince the customer to buy the product/service
6. The sample of our salespersons echo the same opinion as the sample of our customers has. They too, are in support of Honesty as a major value to be possessed by salespersons.
7. Additional qualities suggested by salesperson which were not pointed out by customers are:
 - a. Clarity of thought
 - b. Solution-oriented
 - c. Spontaneity
 - d. Presence of mind

In our opinion, these qualities have very well been thought by our salespersons-respondents. A couple of them did not even occur to us as values/qualities of salespersons and hence, experience very well speaks out here.

8. These recommendations clearly tell us that Salesmanship does not equal to Thugsmanship as misinterpreted by many but instead, is an art that requires many qualities as pointed out in the recommendations above.

VII. Conclusion:

Educating the customer and providing a solution to his/her problems is the aim of modern salesmanship. This helps in winning his/her confidence. It aims at winning the confidence of the buyers by persuading and educating them about the availability of products and services, their special features and their utility in satisfying their respective needs. Salesmanship is a mutual benefit process. It results in benefits not only to the sellers but also to the buyers. It helps in solving the problems of the buyers and satisfying their needs. Customer satisfaction leads to increase in profitable sales volume for the salesperson. Salesmanship has become an essential part of business activity. Today everybody is a selling something or the other. It has been rightly pointed out that sales are the life blood of business. The job of today's salesperson is not confined to selling consumer goods. He also has to sell industrial, agricultural goods and services like transport, repairing, teaching, painting, banking, legal consultancy, medicine, insurance, etc. Thus, the scope of salesmanship is vast and varied with the advancement of science and technology, the scope of salesmanship has become inexhaustible. It is a skill which is important in every sphere of human activity. Everyone of us, in one sense or the other is a salesperson. The job of a lawyer pleading his/her case, a teacher teaching his/her ideas, an applicant applying for a job, resembles the job of a salesperson. In each of these cases, skill and ability of a salesperson is very much necessary in order to be successful. Thus, we observe that the skill of salesmanship is not confined to selling goods and services but is applicable in several other fields.

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