

# THE SILENT SALE:

## *How nonverbal communication can make or break a deal*

*By Kenya McCullum*

**A**nyone who works in sales knows the importance of words. The inability to successfully articulate why a customer should choose your product or service can cost you a sale and negatively affect your bottom line. But there is another factor that can influence whether or not you close a deal – what you do not say. Although nonverbal communication is not considered an element of a successful sales pitch, it can mean the difference between getting the sale or leaving empty handed.

"Sales people are only taught what to say. The words do matter, but the fact is that the words that we say become sort of canned and repetitive, so people are then moving from the words to the rest of the picture, which is most of the time more important than the words" said Kevin Hogan ([www.kevinhogan.com](http://www.kevinhogan.com)), a consultant and former sales representative. "Once you know your product features and benefits, your customers will say yes if they want or need your product type, unless you give them good reasons to say no."

### **Beyond Words**

By controlling nonverbal cues, sales people can ensure that they do not give prospective clients a good reason to reject otherwise perfect pitches. There are a number of ways that nonverbal communication can be leveraged in your favor, rather than working against you.

**Customer Caring.** People want to feel connected to those that they are doing business with, so salespeople should convey the message that their

customers mean more to them than just numbers on a spreadsheet. You can show caring toward a customer by making eye contact with them – but not too much, because that can be perceived as aggression. Also, it is important to encourage your customers to talk about whatever questions or concerns that they have and be sure to attentively listen to them when they engage in that dialogue.

Another way to show interest in what your client is saying is by taking notes. While it is usually a bad idea to break eye contact with a customer for long periods of time, by taking notes during a sales meeting, you convey to your customer that what they are saying is so important that you do not want to risk forgetting it.

**Keep It Real.** Although it is important to be friendly with your customers, which can be conveyed by smiling, remember not to keep a smile plastered on your face throughout the interaction, especially if that response is not appropriate.

"The number one thing that sales people do, especially at conventions, is they smile all the time. That is a big mistake because the customer wants to see a variety of facial experiences," said Hogan. "Match the state that they are saying that they are in. If they are frustrated, allow yourself to be there, too. A constant smile only offers one dimension of a person. People want to see that you are a real person."

**Show of Hands.** We are all taught that a good handshake is important in giving a good first