

DEMONSTRATING LOVE TO OTHERS IN BUSINESS**By Rick Boxx**

When salespersons demonstrate that they care more about what is best for me, instead of focusing on what is best for themselves, it can be so refreshing. Last year, I was speaking to the CEO of a tech company about the software needs of our company. This executive owns a well-respected software company that serves a number of non-profit organizations.

After he had listened as I explained our needs, the CEO answered in a way that surprised me. He said, "We could probably make our software work for you, but truthfully, Rick, it wouldn't be the best option for you." How would you feel if someone responded to you in that way, willingly admitting that you would be better off buying a similar product from another company?

I do not know about you, but I felt valued – and loved – by his candid response. It was a very real example of what Jesus taught when He exhorted us to, "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31). The sales executive effectively put himself in my place and acknowledged our organization should find someone else with more expertise in the area where we needed help.

Too often in the business world the emphasis is on closing the sale, whatever it takes to do so. That is why some people will mislead their customers and make promises they know they will not be able to keep. All that matters to them is the sale, the commission, the profit. However, as followers of Christ, we are commanded to demonstrate His love to others in every interaction and encounter that we have, whether it is making a sales proposal, having a casual conversation, or attempting to help someone in solving a problem they are facing.

The Bible teaches that love – unconditional and sometimes sacrificial – is one of the calling cards of serving the Lord and others: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7). Telling truth, even when it harms us personally or has a negative impact on what we are trying to achieve, is one way we can reflect the love of Christ to others in the marketplace.

In the New Testament book of Philippians, we find an intriguing comparison that shows how we can stand out in the competitive, often cut-throat world of the marketplace. We are instructed to conduct ourselves, "so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe" (Philippians 2:15). Note this does not say that we are the stars. It says we are to "shine like stars." In other words, we are to be more like the moon, which reflects the light of the sun. We reflect the love of Christ.

Besides being effective as "Christ's ambassadors" (2 Corinthians 5:20), there is a second benefit to being honest in a sales setting. It helps to build trust and communicates to clients and

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potential clients that they can depend on us. The Old Testament book of Proverbs states this clearly: “The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out” (Proverbs 10:9). “The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity” (Proverbs 11:3).

The sales executive I referred to earlier chose to admit honestly that his software product would not meet our needs, but he knew that when we had other software needs, we would feel confident in considering his company and recommend him as trustworthy. When we receive love, we want to show love.

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever had a similar experience, dealing with a salesperson who admitted their product or service was not suitable for what you needed? Or have you ever been in a position to tell a prospective client or customer they would be better off working with another customer?
2. Why is it so difficult to demonstrate integrity – and love – to others when the possibility of making a sale is in jeopardy?
3. “Love” is not a term we often hear in the business and professional world, so when we see it in action it can be almost shocking. Jesus said we are to, “love your neighbor as yourself.” How often do you think about then we engaged in business transactions?
4. Consider what other benefits might be gained by being forthright, being honest about what your products or services can and cannot do. What if there is no “second chance” after admitting that what you are selling is not in the customer’s best interests – was your demonstration of “love” still worthwhile?

Challenge for This Week

This week, try to pause for a time and consider what it means to demonstrate love in the marketplace, even with strangers or people you do not know well.

Discuss this with a friend, mentor, trusted advisor or small group you are involved with. Encourage them to share their perspectives.

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages: Romans 13:8-10, 15:2; 1 Corinthians 10:23-24; Galatians 5:24; Philippians 2:3-4