

Indian Salesmanship - The World's Best

November 16, 2005

11:45 p.m., Bangalore: Glen and I consider ourselves pretty capable salesmen, but we were repeatedly humbled in the presence of sales greatness in India.

Regardless of city, the Indian sales person has an array of tried-and-true techniques for what I call the **Indian structured sales call**.

1- People Do Business with People They Like - Shopping is a process, not an event, in India. Every shop we entered insisted we sit, have tea or coffee and some food, and visit a bit before the clerks started selling. After a while I got quite used to this and enjoyed these conversations of getting to know the owner.

2- Entry Level Price Point - Every Indian vendor, regardless of product, starts their pitch with an initially good-looking *product one* that is priced at a point that sounds very appealing.

3- The Upsell - As one starts to make the buy decision, the “better quality” product, *product two*, is presented. Now, while product one looked perfectly fine by itself, in comparison, product two puts it to shame.

4- The Best Quality - Having settled on product two, the final, top-of-the-line, best quality *product three* appears—and you have no choice but to buy it.

5- The “Just for Looking Only” Gambit - This is the hail mary of Indian sales: the vastly superior *product four* at ten times the price of product three. It is generally introduced as “now this is art, not merchandise.” I never succumbed to this ploy, but my guess is, one out ten times, someone buys “art.”

6- The Cross Sell - No Indian vendor misses a chance to follow the initial purchase with a companion product—earrings to go with the necklace, fine Kashmiri scarves to go with the sari, a small carpet for your closet to go with the large bedroom carpet. I can attest to the sales uplift this strategy produces.

7- The Kingfisher Variation - When the customer declines tea, the store offers a glass of the rich, tasty Indian Kingfisher beer. This conveys great hospitality and loosens the customer's purchase inhibitions. I saw this used only once, but to great affect. (Refer to my post *Damn, They Sell Carpets in Jaipur Too.*)

8 – “Let Me Introduce My Father” - Now they wheel out the **BIG GUN** of Indian selling: DAD! While you thought you were dealing with the forty-ish owner, the master is about to go to work. Don't worry, it's over very quickly....

9 - The Marble Sales Inversion - This is important. The only exception to the Indian structured sales call is in hand-cut inlaid marble. Here they start with the largest and most expensive pieces. The reason is, if they showed you the cheap stuff first, which is exquisite, you'd spend a tenth of what you might spend. Ask to see all three showrooms **BEFORE** you make the first marble purchase. I know what I'm talking about. I have a hand-cut, inlaid marble table arriving any day now.

There are twelve more steps to the Indian structured sales call, which are contained in my new book, *My Father Would Like You to Have This Beer*.