

building on a day-to-day basis. If not, find ways to train them to do so.

It means that if you are a salesperson, you have some work to do. Here is a quick list of what salespeople should be doing in order to move into the future of selling:

■ **Personalize your encounters.** One-size-fits-all sales calls do not work anymore, if they ever did. Neither do canned presentations. Personalization means knowing your customer better by asking thorough and more questions, and then using the information you have discovered to solve problems — not just pushing whatever you can.

■ **Tune in to your customers.** After asking a great question, it is time to listen. Really listen and tune in to the words coming from the customer — they are important. Watch their LinkedIn profiles for clues as to their viewpoints and priorities.

■ **Live with empathy.** Notice I did not say “show” empathy — that is inauthentic. I mean live with empathy. Work on your ability to put yourself on the other side of the desk and see things from the customer’s point of view. Facing the same situations, what would you do? How would you react or feel? That is empathy.

■ **Focus on the buyer’s journey.** In sales, we are trained to think about the “sales process” — projecting what we want onto the customer. It is time to flip that script. Instead, think

A great salesperson will always be better than AI ... I am a 100%-passionate advocate for personal selling by human salespeople to human customers.

about the journey the buyer takes to reach a purchase and what that buyer wants at each stage (this is part of living with empathy).

■ **Use technology to its max.** Competing with tech means using tech. The battle over CRM is over. It is a good thing. Embrace it and use it. Use reviews of your customers’ businesses to learn more about them and find opportunity. Even using ChatGPT as a research tool is completely fair. It is a tool — use it to be the best salesperson you can be.

Make no mistake about my outlook. A great salesperson will always be better than AI. A good salesperson will always be at least as good as great AI. I am a 100%-passionate advocate for personal selling by human salespeople to human customers. And just as I am challenging you to up your game, I am challenging myself to up mine. This space, in future issues, will help us do just that. ■

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