

Selling and Your AGS Credentials
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Would you be interested in learning how your AGS credentials will *build your success*? Have you heard about The American Gem Society's Custom Sales Training Program? Read this article, share the information with your staff, and then take the first step to measured results – because *it's all about the bottom line!*

Selling Framework

The online or 2-day sales training class introduces a *Selling Framework* that takes you from Preparation to Follow-up. Two very important elements of this sales process include *Questioning* and *Listening* – skills that set the stage for selling effectively and successfully.

Your questioning strategy should work towards understanding your customer's needs. By developing your questioning skills, your dialogue with your customer will help to identify their needs. Your listening skills are used to understand those needs, which give you the information you need to persuasively position your solutions.

Many sales associates are too quick to suggest the product and then fail to learn what the customer really wants. This also shortens the time to *relate* to the customer – another topic for another article.

Here are some suggested questioning objectives:

- Identify what the customer is trying to accomplish
- Identify the customer's longer-term plans
- Determine your customer's personal drivers – their emotional needs and priorities, such as prestige and beauty

Then, for qualifying and pre-close questions consider:

- Time Frames – When are they looking to purchase?
- Budget – What are they comfortable spending?
- Compelling Events – Is there a compelling life event that is driving the purchase?
- Identify the influencer – Who might be involved in this decision?

You can increase your questioning *skills* and *structure*.

Questioning Skills

Preface your question with a benefit. For example, “So that you can picture Jennifer wearing the diamond I’m showing to you, what thought have you given to the setting?”

Acknowledgement is a type of prefacing in which you verbally show you have heard what the customer has said. This helps you make a connection too. For example, “Your proposal sounds so romantic, I’m sure she’ll say ‘yes’. Let’s be sure you have the ring on time – when would you need it to be ready?”

Trading information is another form of prefacing in which you give information to get information. You want the customer to share so that you gain insight into his thinking and uncover the reason behind his or her needs. For example, “Many people ask about shopping on the internet. At Society Jewelers we have answers to your questions and we have a selection of diamonds and settings for you to see. How do you feel about making a diamond purchase through the internet?”

Question Structure

Pace yourself. Be silent after you ask a question – and don't answer your own question! Don't ask more than one question at a time. When they are strung together, many go unanswered. You want to give your customer some time to think. You've probably heard of "open-ended" questions – they begin with why, what, when, where, and how. This will get you more information and insight. If you ask rather than tell, you'll give your customer an opportunity to share important information with you.

Listening Skills

Listening skills can help you be more persuasive and demonstrate a true interest in your customer. They help you build rapport and connect. You don't want to "zone-out". This means that you've heard, but haven't really listened. You might think you are an efficient listener since you can think while listening – think about what you will say next or even engage in self-talk. Effective listening focuses on understanding both the content and the emotional message. You're listening to the words and the tone of voice, as well as observing your customer's body language.

Keep in mind that you want to be attentive to your body language too. Maintain eye contact, keep an attentive posture, and smile! Make relevant comments, clarify ambiguous words, avoid assumptions, and ask follow-up questions. Your response shows you have been listening.

The American Gem Society Message

During the entire sales process, you can utilize the AGS message to communicate value to your customers. American Gem Society members differentiate themselves from non-member stores by having a unique story to tell that is anchored in a rich value proposition:

- *Longevity and Value* – The American Gem Society was established in 1934 as a professional association of jewelers dedicated to the knowledgeable and ethical representation of gemstones and jewelry.

- *Ethical Business Practices* – Member stores must prove a reputation of integrity and ethics both in the industry and in their community.
- *Professional Credentials* – The titles of Registered Jeweler, Certified Gemologist, and Certified Gemologist Appraiser require varying levels of gemological and/or appraisal education and industry experience. These credentials are earned every year through the successful completion of a recertification exam.
- *Accountability* – The tenets of the American Gem Society are: Ethics, Knowledge, and Consumer Protection. Our members are held accountable to these tenets through a commitment to the Society’s standards of diamond grading, advertising, and appraising.

Are you ready with your questions? Do you have good listening skills? Whether you enroll in the online sales training or participate in the 2-day instructor-led class, you will increase your confidence and make those sales.

Here’s what one member had to say about his sales after the class:

This week I was able to close a \$21,000.00 diamond ring sale after asking questions and relating – both to the husband and wife. It was clear that they wanted the ring; they said they wanted to think about it and would let me know the next day. Without hesitation I merely asked, “If you don’t mind me asking you, what is your hesitation from buying this today?” They simply looked at each other for a few seconds and he turned and nodded and said, “Can I write you a check?”

His fellow associate had similar results:

Yesterday, Holly used the sales training methods and sold a \$19,000.00 Rolex, and later in the day I made a \$10,000.00 sale. Everyone here is excited with the information that we brought back and it has proved invaluable! Thanks!

Be sure you have the answers to these questions:

What does membership in the American Gem Society mean to me (the customer)?

How does your merchandise compare to the jewelry offered online?

How can I be sure that your store maintains a high standard of business?

Your membership in the American Gem Society proves a commitment to uphold the strict standards of diamond grading, appraising, and advertising. You are held accountable to these standards through a Grievance and Review process that ensures your customers the most accurate, truthful, and ethical information available in assisting them with their purchases.

Take the opportunity to listen to your customers and find something truly special for them. Take the opportunity to engage your customers in a dialogue and make their shopping experience enjoyable. Seize the AGS advantage to make them feel that your store has a sense of integrity and that they are “protected” as a customer.

Enroll in the next class!! Call headquarters, 866.805.6500 extension 1020, to learn more about selling with your AGS credentials.