

THE POWER OF EMPATHY

A psychologist at the University of Michigan has found that empathy is on the decline, with three-fourths of today's students being less empathic than their counterparts in 1980. Additionally, social psychologists are rightfully concerned about an all-time-high spike in narcissism. Could all of this point to a return to the "me generation" of the past?

The silver lining for salespeople is that empathy is a powerful differentiator. Empathy is your emotional radar. It takes the focus off of you and places it where it belongs—on the customer. Empathy is also a check-and-balance for your aggressiveness. There is no problem that your aggressiveness will get you into that your empathy will not keep you out of.

Research shows that 70% of your success in sales is tied to your emotional intelligence (how you manage yourself and your relationships with others). A key component of emotional intelligence is empathy. Landmark studies in the early 1960's demonstrated that salespeople with equally high levels of empathy and goal-orientation were more likely to succeed in this profession.

You develop empathy by listening to your buyer, watching for non-verbal cues to their feelings, and mentally placing yourself in their situation. Fundamental to your developing empathy is your willingness to take the spotlight off of yourself. Whatever you sell, you must view it through the eyes of your customer.

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