

HAND-SELLING: The Quickest Way to Yes

by Stephanie Bond

Hand-selling, the technique of a bookseller recommending a book to a customer, might be the single most powerful sales tool at your disposal. When faced with row after row of titles, customers are usually relieved when an informed employee helps to narrow the choices.

Although hand-selling sounds simple enough, here are a few specific tips to help you and your employees be the most effective salespeople in the shortest amount of time:

1. **Know thy store layout.** Nothing is more frustrating than being led all around a store because the salesperson isn't familiar with the floor diagram.
2. **Master a greeting that "leads" the customer.** For instance, "How may I help you find a book today?" is better than "May I help you?" The first greeting is fresh and direct and, therefore, more likely to evoke a positive response from your customers.
3. **Be a gracious host.** Instead of simply pointing the customer in the right direction or giving them an aisle number, walk the customer to the section/title they are looking for.
4. **Ask "qualifying" questions.** Probe for information to better help you recommend a romance novel. For example, you might ask, "What kinds of movies do you like?" or "Are you interested in history?"
5. **Be an informed romance seller.** Use a romance review magazine to help familiarize yourself with new releases in each romance sub-genre.
6. **Go for multiple sales.** Once you lead a customer to the romance section, select a book and put it in their hands while providing a tidbit about the story or the author. Then select at least five other books for the customer based upon how they answered your qualifying questions. (Simply pull the extra books out to the end of the shelf.)
7. **A comfortable customer is a buying customer.** After you make the selections, invite the customer to sit at the nearest table to review the books. If the table is nearby, take the five extra selections to the table for them.

(continued)

HAND-SELLING: The Quickest Way to Yes (page 2)

by Stephanie Bond

8. **Follow up.** After a few minutes, check on the customer to see if the books you recommended are what they had in mind or if you need to make more choices, or possibly special order a title.
9. **Follow through.** At the checkout counter, invite the customer to return to the store. "Let me know how you like these books when you come back in." or "Bring in the names of the authors you like best and we'll be glad to order all the back titles for you."

Effective hand-selling is a valuable customer service perk that will have readers coming back for more. In these competitive days of bookselling, don't you want to close every customer who walks through your door? With a little practice and charm, you can help readers find the perfect romance novel—and who doesn't like a happy ending? ~**SBond**

© Stephanie Bond, Inc. All rights reserved.

Article first appeared in *Romance Sells*, a publication of Romance Writers of America.