



# Are Your Sales People Killing Customer Conversations?

*Watch Out for These 5 Bad Sales Habits*

by Jan Johnson, Chief Product Liberator



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by Jan Johnson, Chief Product Liberator, Millennium Research, Inc.

I work with many corporate marketing managers, product managers, and product engineers who think that creating customer rapport means talking long and hard about why their product is the best. If the customer doesn't skitter away after five minutes, they believe customer rapport has been created.

The sad part is that both my clients *and* their customers have lost a valuable opportunity to **really learn from each other**, and in the process, they've lost the opportunity to improve both their businesses.

I've conducted thousands of interviews over the past 25 years, and establishing rapport can be accomplished at light speed, if you know what to do. Any potential rapport can be destroyed in approximately the same time frame, so you only have one chance to dig deep – and it starts by treading lightly.

### 5 Bad Sales Habits that Kill Customer Rapport

1. Tell your customers what **you** want to hear.
2. If they are not telling you what you want to hear, **redirect them** toward what you want to hear.
3. Don't bother to research **their business**.
4. Make sure they know exactly what **your** corporate responsibilities are.
5. If they have **complaints**, make sure you start talking about number 1 again.

I've watched product executives kill an opportunity to improve their business by doing any one or several of the above. *But it doesn't have to be this way.*

Here's my top five tips for creating rapport with the people who matter to you most from a business perspective: **Your customers.**

## 5 Ways to Create Rapport with the People that Matter Most

1. **Stop being the expert.** Given your corporate role, many people come to you for answers. It's natural for you to want to solve people's problems, but just stop, if only for a little while, and listen to what your customers need.
2. **Start with an open-ended general question.** "I see you're using (product/service)? How's that working for you? Genuinely listen, with interest, to what they have to say. People can tell the difference between really listening and just waiting for your turn to speak.
3. **Repeat back what your customers say.** This not only ensures you heard them correctly, but it gets you even more information, because they'll know you're listening and they'll open up.
4. **Listen to their words, watch their body language.** Are they shifting from foot to foot? Are they standing with legs apart and arms crossed? Might be time to change the topic, or better yet, ask if something is bothering them?
5. **Don't be satisfied with the first answer, but probe gently.** Too often in a corporate setting, our main concern is advocating our point of view. You live with your product every day. To you customer, it might be a 10-minute decision made once a year. When you ask questions, you'll get a top of mind, easy answer. But if you *keep listening and gently probing*, you'll uncover an amazingly rich stream of reasons, rationales, attitudes, perceptions and decision drivers.

At **Millennium Research, Inc.**, we cut through the crap to get to the features that are really important to the success of your products. The result is products that exceed the expectations of your potential customers, turning them into easy sales.

Our proprietary system shows your product potential and how to get there. Fast, focused and designed for success.

When you want to make sure every feature adds value, let's talk.

*Jan Johnson is a leader in agricultural market customer insights. Her focus groups are lively, insightful discussions that lead to “ah-ha” moments for clients. Ever-respectful and knowledgeable about farmers, her questionnaires elicit the most information with the fewest questions. Jan's comfortable, low-key style engages respondents in a conversation where they share emotions and experiences, revealing more than they expected. The largest producers, the smallest hobby farmers, veterinarians, contractors, loggers, and homeowners are equally open with Ms. Johnson.*



*Clients respect the in-depth industry knowledge she brings to each project, which leads to clearly focused, dynamic, and insightful studies. Clients have referred to her as “one of the best market researchers in the industry,” as well as “having the most insightful analysis in the business.” They praise her unique ability to synthesize findings into meaningful conclusions and recommendations that enhance their business and provide roadmaps for market success.*

*Her early career as editor of leading trade publications such as Seedsman’s Digest, Farm Store magazine, Feedstuffs, and Farm Industry News gives her an unequalled breadth and depth of knowledge across agriculture and distribution.*



***Millennium Research, Inc.*** helps companies isolate what is important to customers so companies know where to focus their efforts when creating products and services. The results are exceeding customer expectations, fortifying brand loyalty and driving outstanding sales results.