

The Speedy Sale

Topic: Unethical Sales Presentation Techniques

Characters: Sam, Consumer electronics salesperson for an outlet of a major discount store
Bernie, Sam's customer for a color television set
Michelle, Sales manager for the consumer electronics department at the discount outlet

Bernie is very interested in buying a color television. He tells Sam, the salesperson in the discount store where he feels he can get the best buy, that his old color TV recently died and he really misses seeing his favorite shows. The sooner he can buy and get a new TV delivered, the better, he explains. Sam knows that the particular model which Bernie seems to prefer by far to the others will go on sale for 15 percent off in three and a half weeks. However, he assumes that Bernie is not willing to wait that long and might look elsewhere. Also, Sam will not make as much commission on the reduced price. Therefore, he reasons that it would make little sense to inform Bernie of the pending sale.

When Sam tells Bernie that the TV set he is interested in is currently out of stock and will not be in for another week, Bernie is dearly disgruntled. Fearing losing the sale, Sam goes out to the back room to ask his sales manager, Michelle, if anything can be done to speed up delivery. Michelle says that this would be impossible, and she suggests that Sam could tell Bernie that the store can get the set within 24 hours and simply sell him the demonstration model. Michelle explains that the demo is in as-new condition and Bernie will never know the difference.

Sam feels that selling the demonstration model to Bernie wouldn't be on the level. Knowing that it will take five working days to have a new set delivered to the store, Sam thinks of a different sales strategy--tell Bernie he can get a set to him in two days, then call Bernie tomorrow to say it will be sometime next week due to a flood of orders at the factory. Sam wonders how he can lock in the sale today.

Author: Geoffrey P. Lantos, Associate Professor of Marketing, Stonehill College.