

Episode 8: Fueling Sales Growth: Building Authentic Relationships and Winning Customer Trust

John Keller

Welcome to the Redlist distribution download podcast, where we're dedicated to bringing valuable insights around strategy and leadership for distributor sales reps and associated staff in the fuels, lubricants, and chemicals industry. Today, we're really excited to have with us: Carl Peterson. Hello, Carl.

Carl Peterson

Hello. How are you doing John?

John Keller

Really good. Thank you. It's a beautiful day out here in Utah, and Carl maybe tell us, where are you? Where are you calling in from today?

Carl Peterson

I'm calling in from Charlotte, NC.

John Keller

North Carolina. That is beautiful, how is the weather out there?

Carl Peterson

It's a beautiful day today, a little cloudy, you know, probably 70-ish. So just a great Friday afternoon.

John Keller

I have actually had a chance to visit North Carolina this year and I just loved it. Thought a lot of good stuff out there, so we're really excited to have you on today and you know you've got some great experience. Welcome to the podcast. We've had people from several different industries, but you're the first one we've had so far from natural gas. So maybe if I could, you know, obviously you're an accomplished leader in a lot of you've LED a lot of different teams over the course of the last 20 or so years.

Carl Peterson

OK.

John Keller

But I wonder if you could kind of maybe walk us through a little bit about your background, so we can kind of know where you're coming from.

Carl Peterson

OK, how far back when we want to go, but you know, I'll go. I'll go back to my days. You know, I went. I was in the Marine Corps, got out of the Marine Corps, and got hired by natural gas Company. I was fortunate I had a few offers and so it left me where I was living and I said OK, but I didn't know anything about natural gas or know what natural gas was. To be honest, I never had it because I was from the South and I didn't know it, so I had to totally learn in. Everything about the industry.

John Keller

That was great. That was like in. That was in 2000. It sounds like so.

Carl Peterson

That was in 2000. Yep, I left the Marine Corps and join a I've been through a few acquisitions, but ultimately Piedmont Natural Gas, and now we're owned by Duke Energy.

John Keller

OK. And you started there, you started just as a normal sales rep, and then kind of you touched a lot of different parts of the company, though it sounds like.

Carl Peterson

Yes, been a little bit all around. I did start in sales. Pretty much residential then it quickly went into so pretty much residential commercial sales calling on a territory anywhere from 10 to 14 counties in eastern North Carolina and then ended up moving to run a couple of teams. I ran out of a call Center for the company and then I ran a team that handled customer inquiries, both email and the website. So there's a couple of ways they came in, so I managed those and then ultimately I let a project evaluate ours. Unregulated business, we have a products and services business that I head up now and then ultimately we get into that. So I led that. I developed that and started that business for the company. And then went really. Then it went back to sales. On the regulated side, and did that for a period of time sometimes moved up and around and did what we call sales operations. And now I have all that and the unrigged business again and variety. So yeah, I've been around the company and learned. Learned a good amount of things, so we're in. Currently, we're in five states. I think Duke Energy is the second-largest utility in the country. They serve about 8.2 million electric customers and on the gas side we serve about 1.6 million customers, Dukes in seven states on electric, we're in five states with the gas.

John Keller

Hmm.

Carl Peterson

So me and my team I support all five states and ultimately our goal is to help the company reach its objectives which is where growth company. So we're trying to grow our business, which is adding new customers, selling equipment, and all that good stuff. So good variety of stuff. There's lost up in between there, but uh, that's kind of a synopsis of, I guess, my journey to where I am today.

John Keller

No, that's a. That is a great journey. It's kind of fun that you mentioned you didn't know much about gas, where you got into it and now you probably see it everywhere all the time, probably can't see gas.

Carl Peterson

So that's very true, John. That's very true. I you know, you come in the young guy. At the time I would, I was young and bashed. I've always been to competitive person, a person and a lot of initiative. I always have. I strive to be the best. I you know, I'm very I'm. I'm a little bit competitive now.

Carl Peterson

There are pros and cons of that and I can go into that later, but you know, so I always have that initiative and wanted to be the best, and at the time came the company I wanted to be the sales Rep of the year. Well, I achieved that in 2005. So it's always. What's that next carrot for me?

I want to go achieve that. So you know, that's things have always driven me like that. So you know, I want to be the best I can be for myself, for my family, and for the company. How so? I strive to learn so coming in I didn't know and had some great mentors. Had some great folks that would share. I spent a lot of time learning the business, you know, from soup to nuts.

Basically, you know, I'm fortunate that in all my different roles I've moved around the company enough to learn a little bit about all the aspects of the company. So I tell my family, I think I'm pretty good at lots of things. I'm not a master of anything, but I'm pretty good at lots of things. Same thing with his business. I understand it at certain levels, but you know I'm not. I'm not an engineer. My degrees are in business. Umm, but I understand all the aspects of the business. Enough. Enough, you know, to be dangerous. Let's just say, right?

John Keller

No, absolutely yeah. One of the things it's saying is I think a lot of people that we meet in the distribution in field and didn't necessarily, some people start out maybe they were in a family of gearheads or they were in an oil family. There are. There are some people who haven't really deep into their marrow, but a lot of people really kind of come into it, you know, kind of like the journey you described. And as we are, as you think about coming into an industry like this, I think a lot of people, if they're getting into loops, they don't really think much about loops, but all of a sudden they see it everywhere. And if they didn't think about fuel all sudden, they see it all over the place where chemicals or gas or these similar types of experiences you're not aware of it you hear about it on the news. You hear about it in media, but you're not really aware of it as laid applies to, you know, it's kind of like so. But what's interesting is when you hear about the news, you hear about the media, there's a lot of negative information out there, a lot of people who are and what's interesting to me is there's even still a lot of negative things about natural gas. I mean, we see some places banning stoves, we see things going on, maybe talk a little bit about the stigma of natural gas and kind of what, how you combat that or how you deal with that type of.

Carl Peterson

Umm.

John Keller

Negative perspectives that the mainstream media seems to be so happy to share.

Carl Peterson

So oh, you know, good question. So I'd say with anything, you got to know your facts, right? We all need more facts. Do your own research. Don't believe it. Don't believe what I'm saying. Do your facts. I heard that and I'm going to revert them because I like him a lot. But he said you know, I went and saw Aaron Lewis last fall. Love Aaron Lewis. Hopefully, folks do, but I do and you know he's a very bright guy and knows his history, knows the research, and he'll tell you stuff, but he finishes up by saying don't believe me, you go do your own research. You know, you find you make sure that what you're saying believe in is factual and I would agree with that. So I'd say no, your facts because you know there are, there are natural gas is a great fuel for our country.

Carl Peterson

We have plenty of it. It is the most efficient fossil fuel on the planet. There are lots of things people don't know. They just, they hear things on the radio or they see things on the TV and think that's all factual and it might be, but it may not. So in reference to one, nobody's really banning anything yet. You know the facts are at Berkeley was trying that got appealed about a month six weeks ago. So that's not going to happen. Umm. In the states we serve, you know we're making sure that its people have a choice, a choice to choose the energy that that they want. And natural gas is a choice. We are not a have-to-have. We are nice to have. You have to have electricity. You don't have to have natural gas, so that's I get this a lot. Just like you referenced the stoves, well, the initial stove thing came out. You know in January time frame and I don't know if it was all scientific. So our industry has that now done scientific studies. Again, you know for that and come out with some things kind of debunk what was said really because it is all about indoor air quality and it's not that natural gas stoves are bad. They're not. There are other factors, so I'd say you got to learn all your facts because it's all not true. You know, for instance, you know we, Cato's electricity gets generated in this country. Well, the largest part of that is done by natural gas. How so it most people don't know that if we look at the source to site and what I mean by the source of the site is from where something originates to the end user's natural gas is the most efficient fuel on the planet and against electricity.

John Keller

Hmm.

Carl Peterson

And these are facts, not my facts. By the way, they're facts. They can be looked up. Umm, natural gas is 91% efficient, meaning that from the ground all the way to you the end user, you're going to get 91% of its electricity. You're going to get about 36% of it. Those are facts. Hmm. OK, you're going to lose it in distribution and transmission out and generation. You always will. OK. Umm, so it is the most efficient fuel on the planet and it, and people prefer it. So we all have challenges, but I'd say you got to have your facts and make sure it's factual. We always strive to be more efficient and I think everyone is becoming more efficient. You know more efficient appliance at the various things and same thing with our industry. So and I think that's a good thing.

John Keller

Yeah, it's interesting. I spent a little bit of time with natural gas a while ago and you know your statement that it's the most efficient fossil fuel is indisputable. I mean, as far as the org, as far as the actual molecular structure goes, right, and natural gas is pretty simple.

Carl Peterson

Mm-hmm.

John Keller

You got carbon and four hydrogens and you look at some of these complex things like diesel and some other things, like that's really complex hydrocarbons that get broken down. We have tons of it in America, so my last question before we move out of the natural gas question, maybe this one, you know as we're talking, it's kind of coming to my mind, but why do you think there is such a push against us using our own fuel like I mean it's just it's clean, it's better than anything.

Carl Peterson

Straight.

John Keller

It's more efficient than even electricity as you're describing. What? What is maybe some of the thoughts that you have personally? This is but the why would people? Why are they? Why are we pushing against natural gas? Why are we even? I mean, why is anybody upset about this?

Carl Peterson

Umm, it's a great question. I wish I had all the answers, so you know, probably doing something else. But you know my personal opinion, I think it's a valiant effort. I think like anything, I think there are some agendas and there's some pushes to go electric electrify and you know, with that won't do away with all that other stuff. The problem is our country is not set up to be all-electric. We couldn't. There are other things you have hydro, you have nuclear, natural gas, you have, you know, coal, the solar, wind, all that stuff. Yeah, the best thing about any portfolio doesn't have to be just this portfolio. Do you put all your eggs in one basket? The answer's no, you don't. You put your eggs in a few baskets, right? So same thing here so.

John Keller

Exactly.

Carl Peterson

Umm, I think there's probably some agendas and it's, you know, like for me I'll just you know I'm not. I haven't bought any EV electric vehicle not going to, not because I work for a gas company just because for me, you know, I like looking at things from start to finish. I've not heard anybody talk about an electric vehicle's end of life, what happens at the end of that life of that vehicle, how? How does the battery get disposed of? Who's paying for this stuff? And by the way, we all know all batteries over the life of them depreciate. You know, our phones, don't stay at 100%, right? All batteries you know, they over time.

John Keller

Umm.

Carl Peterson

So what happens with the car battery? And if someone asked to replace it, they're very costly. So a lot of questions for me. So personally, I'm not a buyer yet. Maybe a hybrid one day, if there were both. But I'm not a buyer, but I think there's a variety of things going on there and I don't have all the answers.

John Keller

You know it is interesting, though it is interesting that you bring up maybe it's the drive for electric transportation that is doing a lot of this cause when we were in when I was pretty involved in a natural gas project, it was when we saw the push for electric and all the subsidies that were going there like Oh yeah, you know, like even though gas is extremely efficient, it's hard. It's a hard way to beat, you know. So it's actually I have heard, you know, I

follow Elon Musk on Twitter along with 140 million other people. And is interesting because he started kind of opening up to the fact that, oh, maybe there's a space for hydrocarbon and the transportation future and so if I'm putting a big long game bet out there, I would just say don't be surprised if one day you find Tesla talking about maybe a gas option. I'm just going to throw it out there.

Carl Peterson

Yeah, I and I, I would agree. I think there's a place for everything. I'm not one that you. You go one way with everything. So I think you know we can be more efficient, you know, reducing carbon is a good thing, ohm, but there are ways to do that. We're doing that, you know, in our industry and our company as well. So there are ways to do it, but I just say go back to you got to understand all the facts of what you're talking about or what you're believing in and what you're standing for. So ohm you know I just say you got another fact.

John Keller

No, I think that's great. That's great advice. Umm, so I'm going to take that actually for my I'm going to take that actually this is I like I think the big takeaways here is really to know the facts and I think one of the other things you said is go to the source yourself right? Because I think what I've discovered with my kids and my life and talking with people is like, you hear something. But like, oh yeah, where did you hear that? And you try to find the source and you hear somebody else saying it and what you end up figuring out is that you were actually repeating somebody's interpretation and getting right to the actual source code.

Carl Peterson

Umm.

John Keller

The source of it can be night and day, you know, night and day. So I think I love when you say you said your first one was to know the facts and then your kind of you said and I go to the source, don't just listen to somebody else, don't take somebody else's advice. So I think that is a big takeaway, Carl. I think for our listeners, you know, it's like the challenge is like thinking about the news. That you've consumed or the conversations you've consumed? How much of that was actually going to the source? Like many other words, maybe you're going directly to uh. Maybe a federal source looking at hydrocarbon structure, right? Or looking at you, you ran up some statistics about the efficiency of gas in the 90 percentiles versus electric and the 30 percentiles. Somebody could go to the actual source and see if you can find it, not just some news story about it, but try to interpret the data as closely as you can yourself. And if I think if our listeners think about where they've consumed their information, my challenge, which they could obviously go to the source themselves, my child would say I've been way more than 90% of what we consumed is other people's interpretations.

Carl Peterson

I would agree. I think we're all guilty. I mean, I'm. I'm guilty. You know, time is, you know, I've heard others. What's the most valuable thing that I have? Well, a lot of this time, right? So you know, I'm just guilty.

John Keller

Umm.

Carl Peterson

I pull up the new stuff on my phone every morning and read certain articles and stuff. Do I spend the time? And so I always go back and research some of that. I don't so, but you got to be careful with that.

John Keller

No, I think it's great. Great point O Carl, I appreciate that background. Appreciate diving into gas a little bit.

Carl Peterson

Umm.

John Keller

I want to talk. I want to kind of move a little bit to this concept of selling a lot of our listeners up, you know, but a lot of our engaged in sales certainly interacts with lots of salespeople, right? If you might be a back office support person, you might be in management right now, but you're interacting with salespeople and you had mentioned in one of our earlier conversations really just this concept that we all sell and we're always selling everything. Uh, can you speak to that a little bit? Maybe tell me what you mean by that.

Carl Peterson

Sure. From childhood, all the way through life to a degree where all selling it may not be in the sense of when you think of when you go buy something, that type of salesperson, but you're always trying to influence or persuade something. You know whether you get your way, whether it's when you're a child, to get a piece of candy from your, from your parents or something, or you know, you're trying to, you're always trying to be persuasive. Well, being persuasive. You're trying to get something right? To get give type thing so you are. A. You're selling, so I think most people don't realize it and sales have a negative connotation potentially too, which you know I'm a salesperson, but I think there are ways to go about that. But the connotation, that we're all to a degree, we are all selling on a regular basis, is just whether or not we want to admit it.

John Keller

OK, so I want to dig in a little deeper on this point because I think there's a lot actually to unpack there, cause yeah, we all know that the Dilbert cartoon where they have this, you have the marketing and sales guys are really just, you know, dumb, manipulative people.

Carl Peterson

Umm.

John Keller

We have the engineers, guys who are just like the, you know, the only ones you see how the universe fits together, right? And so there's this, this stereotype of ohm, there's a sales guy, boy, he's going to schmooze me or he's just or you hear this a lot. The sales team is doing this or they're just over. They're overstating things. They're exaggerating. They're not informed and then you hear the other side and the cells go, why is nobody listening to me or oh, he's just an engineer, right? So there is this stigma that goes on and it's, I guess my first question is in the workplace to say you recognize I'm a sales guy, I do sales right in the workplace.

Carl Peterson

Umm.

John Keller

How would a sales guy effectively overcome the stigma so they can actually really connect with their coworkers? Or, you know, the people that they interact with.

Carl Peterson

So John, take that a few ways because it's a great one. First off, everyone's our customer, right, internal and external. So you got to realize that and understand that you need everyone to be an individual doesn't work. So it is about a team and so you want the better you internally can work with folks, the better external success you're going to have. Do I from time to time have to call up a teammate and you know, because I need something cause the customer needs something? Yeah. If I didn't have that report, but I didn't have those relationships to be much harder to do, so I would say that you know, you can learn from everybody. I learn every day right?

Carl Peterson

Something from somebody I learned. None of us know it all is younger. Maybe I thought I did a little more, but you know I learned all the time and I'm not the expert, but as a leader, I make sure that I have good folks around me that know a lot of things that are really good at what they do and part of my job is, you know, knocking down barriers and stuff like that. Yes, providing strategic direction and helping them out, but ultimately letting them do what they do and supporting them. So I think those internal relationships and working with people internally are equally, if not just as important as that external. And I think that's how you have that. So and that all comes from being authentic, right?

Carl Peterson

You know, I talk about, you know, understanding your audience and authentic leadership. So basically servant leadership. Oh so paying things forward. So if I because for me my approach always is, how do I help? Umm, how do I help the customer be successful? Or how do I help my teammate be successful cause the end of the day, if they're successful then I'll be successful, but if all I think about is me, then it's just not going to work. I'm going to have fragmented relationships. I'm going to have mediocre sales. Probably I might hit a home run once in a while, but I won't. I won't hit those doubles. Those single doubles and triples on a regular basis, right? These are more important because ultimately you're not always going to hit that home run. So, but I think that's very, very important. But you got to be authentic.

Carl Peterson

So that starts with. You got to be credible, right? You have to know you have to. It's how you interact with people. It's how you deal with people, but it's also you got to do what you say you're going to do, and you got to be there to help and support. But you got to know, you know, they got to know that they can trust you, right? And that you know what you're asking to do or working with. You know that they believe you and you're just not that salesperson at your you're talking of where? Hey, they're just trying to schmooze me or get over on me.

John Keller

Got it. OK, now those are really good points. Now let me ask another question in the same vein because you know you're 30 stereotypes all your sales guys, but you.

Carl Peterson

Umm.

John Keller

So you spent a lot of time learning how to persuade, learning how to take people to the frameworks, learning how to get to, yes, learning how to get to know and then pass know and back to your start like all these different frameworks that go on.

Carl Peterson

Hello.

John Keller

Uh, obviously. How do how to do those? In your mind, how did those types of skill sets transfer over to personal relationships like family and loved ones?

Carl Peterson

Umm, they absolutely do. However, you know and I'll own mine. I'm a marine, but never going to change. I own that It's OK and I think you know, as you get older, wiser, however, you want to say it, you know you, you know, I'm not the same person I was ten years ago, 15 years ago. Umm, but you know all of it does translate. You know how you deal. You know the end of the day and I'm a believer in this and I truly believe this. Umm for me, a happy wife is a happy life. So you know, whatever makes my wife happy. I'm going to make sure that that that's what it's about. Sending my family, it means the world to me. So you can't interact with them differently, right? And the same thing.

Carl Peterson

You know, my kids now are the ones. Get ready to graduate high school in a week and the other is going to graduate college in six months. So they're young adults and you know they're going to be on their own and learning from them. But you know, I think it absolutely translates and how you, you know, goes back to though it's the shadow of the leader, so to speak, right or the be conscious of the shadow you cast. Right. So I think we all have to be cognizant of that. You know whether I'm out there on a sales call and the customer, you know, working with the customer, what shadow am I casting? I think we all go back to understanding your audience and what shadow are you casting. Same thing at home. If I cast the wrong shadow as the man of the family, the father, then that's on me. Uh, I have to own that. So I believe in being accountable as well. You know there's nothing for me.

Carl Peterson

I would prefer and I like it because I can tell too. You know, I've done this long enough. We all make mistakes and that's OK. The thing is, do you learn from that mistake or not? But if you try to cover it up, I can. I can most people can read right through that. OK, if they don't the first time they will the second time. So you know, just being honest then. Hey, you know what? I messed up or I missed this deadline or whatever own it and move on. People will respect that so much more. I respect that more because I know if you're if you're not, if you

don't own it, you're not accountable. Accountability is key, right? We need accountability and I expect you to be accountable. Same thing with my family. So to be accountable, we can work through the rest, but if you're not accountable, then we got to play this little thing. So never, never, never.

John Keller

As it really sounds to me like you know, as I'm looking at this and really how it kind of fits into relationship selling right? Like as I'm causing.

Carl Peterson

Mm-hmm.

John Keller

Obviously, family relationships and coworkers are still relationships and customers. I'm assuming you're mine. You're going to say? Yep, it's the same thing.

Carl Peterson

Yep, Yep. So and in our business, John, you know we don't have the short sale and long sales, right, so to speak, let's say the short sale is very transactional, right? You go to Lowe's or home, do whatever you buy something that's transactional sale or maybe even a little longer. Our sales and our business are probably much like some of the other folks that you've talked to, they're longer sales cycles, and our sales cycles can they could be, you know, a month or two or three or they could go up to two years, three years, all right. So we're successful in our business because we relationship sell, we sell to everybody and that's one of the questions I get. Well, your utility. You have your monopoly well, umm, we're nice to have natural gas. As I mentioned earlier, is nice to have. You're not. It's not 1/2 to have, so we do compete. We do, although we have franchise territories in which we serve. If you want natural gas, I still compete and we compete against the other fuels, whether it be oil or propane. Electric. So we do have to be out there selling because people don't have to have us. So that's something that I get a lot around that aspect.

John Keller

Exactly. I mean, I thought when we first chatted too, I'm like, oh, man, like, really do you, are you out there selling and you're sure enough you're saying no, you were really out there. You got teams out in the field.

Carl Peterson

So and so and that that lends to why I mean and we deal with everybody from the individual homeowner to you know, the largest customers. We have all of them and we're out there building those relationships because when you have those like we do a lot obviously in new construction and builders and without those relationships without being, you know I'll just say relevant. If they don't know you, it's easier than anything it's somebody else. One of your other guys said this on a podcast. If you're not there, you know that relationship, it's easier to make a decision and move away from a product, right? But if you have that relationship, you know, and that lends to why we try to become what's called trusted advisors and there's lots of different courses out there. I've had several over my career, all good courses, but there's different. But at the end of the day, there's still a sales process, right, ohm, but all ultimately you want to become a trusted advisor, meaning that, you know, you are the customers, who believe you and that they trust you. They think your input is valuable. You have the expertise and the credibility and they rely on you, so that's what we're trying to build with our

customers that they know that, yeah, we're just not providing the gas, but they can call us and we can work together and help each other become successful.

John Keller

You know, I think that's, uh, do you think it's something as big as like, you know, you get you're between your electric and your gas, you get 10 million customers. And I think building a relationship can be hard in that regard, but I think the takeaway that I'm hearing from this segment really is the takeaway that I got when it comes to the relationships of selling and coworker's family customers.

Carl Peterson

Mm-hmm.

John Keller

I think if it seems like I could submit to being authentic, right? I mean you, you talk about, you talked a lot about, you know, be aware that you part of a team, but don't just be aware of it. Act like it. Uh, you know, let him know that. Be trustworthy, but act like it. Do you know? Like whatever you say, if you say you can do something, do it. So there's this concept of being authentic, and I think that's really hard sometimes, Carl because nobody wants to get rejected. Nobody wants to be canceled in their relationships or in their podcasts, right? I mean, whatever each day. Come on, we. So how do you actually like it? Remember, remember how do you personally say no? Be on be going to be authentic today. I'm just going to try to please that guy or trying to just say the politically correct thing. I'm going to be authentic. Like, how do you do that?

Carl Peterson

I mean, I mean, it's a great question and sometimes you know everybody can be misperceived, right, even myself. So I'm me. I can just be open and honest and transparent and this is what I have. But you know, if you're selling, you got to do your due diligence. You've got to know your products. You got to learn your customer, right? How do you help? How do you become a trusted advisor if you don't know how to help them be successful otherwise, then it's just all about me, right? But if I take the time to learn about you and what your business is and what you're trying to achieve, I and my goal are I'm trying to figure out, personally, how I can get my product you to use my product to help you be successful. If I can do that, it's a win for both of us. So I don't come from it from a salesperson's perspective, just to try to sell you my product, right, because that's not authentic as much.

Carl Peterson

And I remember many years ago when I was a Rep, we do a lot of cost analysis and comparisons. We doing different fuels and I remember being a ref and talking to a homeowner one time about getting natural gas I ran a comparison at that time from a dollars and cents, not from an overall raw value proposition but from a just am I going to save money annually when I ran it the answer was no. Did they actually at that time would cost you more money? He was absolutely baffled that I would say that. I said, well, it's true, I said. That doesn't mean that naturally still in better for you, I said. But you actually won't save money, and he just found that, you know so odd he goes, because most salespeople would have tried to just sell me, no matter what I said. Well, that's not what I do and it's not right. So I'm going to tell you exactly what's right and your shows right now. You're not going to save money annually, so I got to share that with you. So I think that's the nuts and bolts of it, John.

But you know, you mentioned, you know, learn it takes time for relationships. It absolutely does. Some of the relationships I have now, and I have key accounts and lots of different folks.

Carl Peterson

They take time. You can't build our goal and my goal is to have true relationships. So what's a true relationship? Well, I can take someone to lunch, but do I have a relationship with him? Umm, that's not the relationship I'm talking relationship. I'm talking about that. It's like if I have a true relationship to me is if I call somebody and then pick up the phone and answer it, if I text them, they respond. Or if I invite them to something they come, then you have a report on a relationship, right? A true relationship, right? It's just not an acquaintance. Well, the ones that, that's what I. That's what we and that's what I try to do. So I'm trying to build those types of relationships right with that person.

Carl Peterson

Like I can call a couple right now and these are pretty significant folks. They would respond or pick up the phone well if they didn't really know me. I didn't have a relationship, the one I wouldn't have their number, and two, they wouldn't pick up the phone, OK, or text. So that's how I gauge that. But I think you just got to be open and honest. You got to know your product and really understand others, but I come from it, I guess differently with I want to understand your business and see what you're trying to achieve and if can I help you be successful with my product. If so, then hey, this is what I think I can do, and here's why have doesn't work out great. So I think I think I mentioned this, we first talked you know I'll say you know get comfortable with no umm no. Doesn't bother me. Yeah, we all don't like rejection like you said, but no, doesn't bother me from it. Just tells me that, hey, you know I need to do something different. I need to come back at a different time.

Carl Peterson

I need to do different research. I need to my approach didn't work OK and timing is everything. So maybe the timing was off. So for me, it will be OK. It just tells me I'll come back later. I'll figure out something different. OK. Ohm and I think that's tough for people like you said people don't like to know like rejection and but that's kind of what it does for me. I'm like, OK, so, but if you don't prepare, then it's easier to be told no. But we all get told no. But as a salesperson, I think you've got to get comfortable with it. No, because if everyone sold 100% of the time, and got yes every time, then you know it wouldn't really be sales, but it's just not reality. OK, you know, and one of the things that I see over the years you asked me the first time we talked about this. So and I think we all have a habit. You know, we sometimes want to get out everything that we want to say and everything we're trying to pitch and you know, and I've had some folks and sometimes couple things.

Carl Peterson

One you can have your agenda and you and your sales call and be prepared for that sales call, but you have to go with the flow of that call if the customer pivots, you have to pivot with them. Don't force your agenda, because then it comes across and it doesn't work out well. Umm. And then so you got to have that flexibility is what I'm saying in your sales call and another big one is you know we're also passionate about our products, right, our companies,

our products and that's great. But too many times we will think and answer for the customer without letting the customer think or answer for themselves some time. For instance, I may say John doesn't want that. He, John won't pay that price. Well, did I ask John? No, I have to let John tell me. That's too much money or I don't want that product. OK, umm and I see that a lot.

John Keller

Yeah.

Carl Peterson

So you know my career and I've probably been guilty once or twice too. Like, oh gosh, that's kind of expensive. I don't think they're going to do that. Well, how do you know unless you ask them, right? So I think you got to put your best foot forward and then present it and let them tell you no. Or let them tell you it's too much. And I think salespeople are guilty of that.

John Keller

You know, that's a really it's interesting because as you're I'm hearing you a lot of times, Carl says, hey, really put yourself in the shoes of the customer, help the customer win. Don't assume you know what the customer is thinking and it feels to me like I want to almost send that up to say, uh, that when you help the customer win, you will win.

Carl Peterson

That's correct.

John Keller

And is that and I know that you, you know, one thing we kind of circled up on was this concept of like creating a win for the customer and sometimes customers are going to tell you now. To reconcile for me this, how do you get a win when are the customers telling you know?

Carl Peterson

So I think that's timing once again, you know you can do your best and that's what you know I'm a firm believer that things happen for a reason when the timing is right. I believe that so does everything go my way? No, it doesn't. But I have to. I have to adapt. I have to overcome and I have to adjust so you know win. The more you understand them and understand what they're trying to achieve, the higher probability of creating that win at that time, right?

Carl Peterson

However, the timing might be off where you know it might be a win for you, and at that time might not be a win for them, but that's OK. It might take six months or a year. You just, persevere. You. You stay the course and I'm a believer that it'll come to fruition, right, or you may miss this one, but another one may come up because of what you did and how you handled it. So I got an example for that one. So we're working on a bigger deal right now. Umm was a very large builder and you know one of their products, they don't always use natural gas. So we're, you know, we had an opportunity and we're trying to help them and you know we'll the one we didn't get it and OK now Fast forward two or three months well all of a sudden now there are two more projects coming to the same product now we're going to get those.

Carl Peterson

So a lost one. OK. Love to win them all. We all would. But you know what we did? How we did it, it was paid forward that, you know, they came to us and said, hey, I got these two that I think I am going to give you. So umm, I think you got to stay the course, John. And you can't get. It's easy to get frustrated. It's easy to you know, gosh, I got told. No. but once again I think if you get to know people and you try to build those relationships and become that trusted advisor, you can kind of you'll get to the point where you'll know you'll know when to ask for that sale and when not to.

Carl Peterson

Right. I think that's part of what salespeople struggle with too. In my experience, I'm scared to ask for a sale. Dan. Today, you got to ask for the sale. It's, but it's how you ask for it too. Umm, you know how I asked? No, and I'll leave it in. But I'm going to leave it in a conversation when I deem as appropriate. I'm not going to force the sale. OK, I've also seen people talk themselves out of the sale, so the other one is, you know when it's going and you know you got to sail. We have to know when to stop talking. Umm, I've seen people continue to talk and next thing you know, you had the sale and you lost the sale. So you get so caught up, or that you're so passionate and you want to share all this stuff and but you talk to yourself out of the sale. So you got to know, and you got to judge what's going on to know, give as much as you need to, but know when to stop before it can go the other way.

John Keller

And really is because at that point, maybe you're losing sight of what you were talking about earlier, like really looking at it from the needs of the customer. Like maybe if you were paying really close attention to what the customers feeling and what they were thinking and you were trying to put yourself in their shoes, you wouldn't need a show-off.

Carl Peterson

Umm.

John Keller

How much do you know, right? You would need to keep talking.

Carl Peterson

What? What and the level of detail, right? So it's all about I'm a sales guy. I'm not an engineer. Yeah, I know. I understand that stuff to a degree, but if you start doing schematics and doing all that, you're going to lose me quickly, right? So give me the Cliff notes. All right. I can comprehend that and do that. So same kind of concept right? Give the customer what they need and give them enough of what they need. But you got to know when to cut it off and stop.

John Keller

That's great, Carl. There's a lot of stuff here today, so I want to kind of do a recap since we're kind of is kind of wrapping up here.

Carl Peterson

Yes, Sir.

John Keller

So you know, some of the takeaways that I've picked up today are really first and foremost, whatever industry you're in, know the facts. Go right to the source. Don't just listen to other talking heads telling you to try to know this. Know the facts and then also really be authentic. Be your authentic self and that's going to enable you to have what you called true relationships. And then if we're really focusing on that, that really if you help the customer wins. My third major takeaway today, if you help the customer win, you're going to win. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but eventually, and for the rest of your life, I borrow from Casablanca. There. So this causes like if you help the customer win, you're going to win.

Carl Peterson

Umm.

John Keller

And that did capture that pretty good summary.

Carl Peterson

Umm. You did, John. I was that was pretty good. That was pretty good.

John Keller

Carl, I really appreciate it. I think I really you know for all of our listeners out there who are listening there is just so much here that can be used in whatever sales are going on in your life and also in other relationships in your life. So, uh, encourage you guys to kind of listen to Carl and see what you can do to apply that in your life. So thank you, Carl. Appreciate that and yeah.

Carl Peterson

Yep. Thank you, John. I really appreciate it. Enjoyed the time?

John Keller

Yeah. Thank you. So to all of our guests, like if you enjoyed today's episode, be sure to subscribe. Share and leave a comment. Listen to us while you're on the road. In between all your customers and again until next time, this is John calling in from the distribution download podcast I. Thanks, Carl.

Carl Peterson

Thank you, John. See you.