

# Double your money

Work two customers at once and double your chances of a potential sale, recommends Dennis Reid

**W**hat do you do when there are more customers than salespeople? In many retail selling situations, particularly with small, highly-priced items such as cameras, you'll need to take security into account. You cannot physically serve two customers at once but, in most cases, there is a way that can result in sales to each.

Let's suppose that you are working with customer A and customer B enters the store. You have to acknowledge customer B. If you don't, they may leave without anyone saying 'hello'. This represents a loss in potential business and is rude. Yet, your allegiance is to customer A.

### The verbal contract

How do you excuse yourself without angering customer A? With a lot of love and care. You ask customer A: "Would you do me a favour?" to which they always reply: "Yes".

You continue: "Would you mind if I just say hello to that customer? I'll be right back. Will that be okay?" You will actually hear customer A say "Yes". In a sense, customer A has contracted with you.

Now, you walk over to customer B and say: "How are you doing? Would you do me a favour?" This greeting serves both as your opening line and sets up customer B for a verbal contract. They will give you a perplexed look and be thinking: "I don't know if I want to do you a favour, I just walked into the store." But, the customer always says "Okay".

You then say: "Would you hang on for just a minute? I'm finishing with that customer over there and then I'll be right with you. Will that be okay?"

If customer B says "Yes", which happens frequently, then they have made a verbal contract with you. They won't leave. They'll stay in the store because they told you they would.

Understandably, some customers will say "No, I've got to get going" or "I'm popping next door and I'll come back later", or similar. But most will agree.

When attempting to handle two customers, using the verbal contract yields far greater results than what usually happens in retail selling: You're serving customer A. Customer B enters the store. If you acknowledge this (not always the case) you may turn around to customer B and say "I'll be right with you" before turning back to customer A. Soon after, you realise that customer B has departed.

### Now let's 'walk through a typical verbal contract scenario.

*Salesperson:* "You just need to input your PIN number."

*Customer A:* "I can never remember my PIN number."

*Salesperson:* "Oh, I know what you mean." (Spots customer B). "Would you excuse me for just a minute? I want to let this gentleman know that I'll be with him shortly. Is that all right?"

*Customer A:* "Yes, of course."

*Salesperson:* "Thanks." (Approaches customer B). "Hi, could you do me a favour? I'm just finishing up with that lady and I will be with you in just a moment. Is that all right?"

*Customer B:* "Okay."

*Salesperson:* "Thanks." (Returns to customer A). "Thanks for that and here is your receipt."

### Here's another:

*Customer A:* "I think my brother will really like this digital camera."

*Salesperson:* "From what you've told me, I know it will be perfect. Now you just have to choose the best bag, Would you excuse me for one second? I want to let that young lady know I'll be with her as soon as you and I are finished. Is that all right?"

*Customer A:* "Sure."

*Salesperson:* "Thanks." (Walks over to customer B). "Hello there! Would you do me a favour? I'm just finishing up with that lady over there, and I will be with you in just a few minutes. Will that be all right?"

*Customer B:* "Okay."

*Salesperson:* "Thank you." (Returns to customer A). "You were deciding between these two bags. If you've made a choice I can put all your purchases into this carrier."

Even if you are going to be a few minutes, it's best to be honest with customer B. Most will be happy to browse for a short time. The verbal contract works because you are asking people to grant you a small favour using great courtesy. I'll bet you can achieve a favourable outcome the first time you use it.

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