To many customers, the salespeople are the store. Typically, they’re a retailer’s only employees with whom customers come in contact. Salespeople help customers satisfy their needs by providing the retail services discussed in Chapter 17. Their actions can stimulate return visits to a store and build customer loyalty.

Salespeople help their store realize its goals by selling merchandise. Retailers make profits only when merchandise is sold. Thus, all of a retailer’s employees are either providing customer service and selling merchandise, or supporting someone who does.

To be effective, store managers must understand the sales process. Many retailers require management trainees to spend considerable time selling during their first year in a management training program. Through this initial selling assignment, trainees develop understanding of the firm’s customers—what they want and how they buy merchandise. They also gain appreciation for problems salespeople face.
Cecile Satterwaite is clearly the top salesperson at Leon's Fashions, a privately owned women's clothing chain. She has developed a loyal clientele that travels to buy shoes from her. A government worker in Washington, D.C., always tries to schedule a vacation day whenever she visits Dallas on business. She rents a car and drives 100 miles to Tyler to buy shoes.

The attention Satterwaite gives her customers keeps them coming back. Satterwaite may bring out as many as 300 pairs of shoes from the stockroom for a single customer. She walks to the mirror with the customer each time the customer tries on a pair and then kneels down before the customer to slip the shoes on and off.

Satterwaite watches out for her customers' best interests. If a shoe doesn't fit, she won't let them buy it. She also discourages customers from buying a shoe that, she says, "doesn't look pretty on your foot." If the customer insists on buying it, she'll say, "If you buy that shoe, don't tell a soul I waited on you."

Satterwaite has never wanted to do anything but sell shoes. "I do love to sell. It's exciting. It gets into your blood." She won't even leave the store for lunch, preferring to bring something back, and she gets antsy on Sundays because Leon's is closed. Satterwaite sells over $600,000 of shoes and earns more than $100,000 each year.

Cecile Satterwaite's secret for selling $600,000 worth of shoes annually is, "We just kill them with kindness."


**Roles of Retail Salespeople**

Salespeople span the boundary between the retail firm and its customers. Even the most appealing merchandise doesn't sell itself. Retailers need to communicate with customers to stimulate needs, provide information to help customers evaluate merchandise, and encourage them to make a purchase decision. These communications are delivered by ads, sales promotions, publicity, signs and displays in the store, and salespeople.

As Chapter 14 said, these communication vehicles are used to affect different stages of the customer's decision-making process. Advertising, publicity, and sales promotions create awareness and build an image of the store. Messages delivered through these media presell the store and its merchandise. Salespeople provide more detailed information and actually make the sale.

Salespeople have a unique capability as communication vehicles. They can develop and present a message tailored to each customer they encounter. Salespeople can also gauge the customer's reactions and alter the presentation during the interaction. This flexibility makes the salesperson the retailer's most effective communication vehicle—and the most expensive;
Many retailers call their salespeople sales associates or sales consultants. These terms recognize the important and professional nature of the sales function and avoid the negative image sometimes linked with the term salesperson. They also emphasize that salespeople’s role is to use their knowledge about merchandise to help customers solve problems—just like a business consultant.

Many people find retail selling to be a rewarding, exciting career. Retailing View 18–1 describes a salesperson who earns over $100,000 per year selling women’s shoes in Tyler, Texas.

To sell merchandise, salespeople must move customers through the five stages of the buying process (discussed in Chapter 4). The selling process is a set of activities that salespeople undertake to facilitate the customer’s buying decision. The stages in the selling process and the buying process are closely linked (Exhibit 18–1).

In the first stage of the selling process, salespeople approach customers with unsatisfied needs and try to stimulate problem recognition. In the second stage, customers search for information to satisfy their needs, and salespeople collect information about customers so they can determine what merchandise might be appropriate. In the third stage, salespeople present and demonstrate merchandise to assist customers’ evaluation of alternatives. Then the salespeople attempt to make a sale—to motivate customers to purchase merchandise. Finally, salespeople build
future sales by influencing customers' postpurchase evaluations of the merchandise and offering follow-up service. Retailing View 18–2 describes a sales process from a customer's point of view.

Not every sale goes through each step in the sales process, just as every purchase doesn't go through every step in the buying process. Sometimes steps occur in an order different from Exhibit 18–1's, but these steps do illustrate the set of activities retail salespeople perform as they sell merchandise.

The approach to a customer is a method for getting the customer's attention and building interest in the merchandise quickly. The approach is particularly important in retail selling. In many other sales situations, salespeople can obtain information about potential customers before they meet them. But in retail sales, salespeople are usually confronting customers for the first time and have only a few seconds to size them up.

Purpose of Approach. While some customers come into a store with definite needs, seeking a specific item, the majority of customers—even when they have a specific need—start their buying process by browsing. The purpose of the salesperson's approach is to narrow the customer's focus from a broad generalized interest to a consideration of specific items.

Elements in Approach. The approach consists of greeting the customer with a genuine smile, introducing yourself by name, developing rapport, and getting the customer to consider specific merchandise. Many customers are anxious, particularly when considering a major purchase. Customers also may feel threatened, thinking a
salesperson is going to be too aggressive. The customer’s anxiety can be reduced by a smile, an introduction, and an opening comment about something other than the merchandise the customer is looking at. For example, an initial statement can be a flattering remark about something the customer is wearing or a comment about the weather.

This initial rapport building continues until the customer’s verbal or nonverbal communications indicate she’s ready to talk about the merchandise. Then the salesperson starts to direct the customer’s attention by asking a question, mentioning a feature or benefit of the merchandise, discussing the good’s manufacturer, or pointing out a special value. Here are examples of these techniques:

“This shirt is 100 percent cotton. Cotton shirts are a lot more comfortable in hot weather than shirts made from synthetic fibers.”

“Try this remote control for the television. See how the channel and time are displayed when you change channels?”

“It’s real easy to change a kitchen faucet. This pamphlet shows you how to do it.”

“How large is the area you’re interested in painting?”

“Isn’t that attaché case handsome? Bodega is probably the finest manufacturer of leather goods in the world.”

Approaches that point out features or benefits help customers “see” the merchandise better. Many times customers don’t recognize hidden features of the product, such as its multiple uses, the quality of its construction, or even the manufacturer’s name.

The “Just-Looking” Customer. Salespeople should avoid using the simple approach “May I help you?” The response to this approach is often “I’m just looking.” But most customers aren’t just looking. They’ve come into the store to buy something—and the salesperson is there to sell something.

Patience is the key to handling the “just-looking” customer. The effective salesperson shows an interest in helping the customer and then gives the customer a chance to look at the merchandise alone. Sandie Robbins, a furniture salesperson for J.C. Penney in Anchorage, Alaska, related a just-looking story:

A couple told me they were not interested in anything in particular when I approached them. I kept an eye on them anyway. A little later, I noticed they seemed very interested in one piece. When they started checking the price, I approached them again. This time I cracked the shell. Since then I have been to their home three times to advise them, and they’ve bought almost $12,000 of furniture from me.²

After the initial contact has been made, the next step in the retail sales process is to collect some information from the customer. The salesperson needs to determine the customer’s needs and the type of merchandise the customer prefers. Basic information a salesperson should know about a customer includes

- The type of merchandise the customer is looking for.
- The price range the customer is considering.
- How the customer plans to use the merchandise.
- The customer’s life-style.
Through questioning, this salesperson found out the customer was interested in buying a piece of crystal as a gift for his wife.

What possessions the customer now has (such as wardrobe, appliances, or consumer electronics) might be used with the merchandise under consideration.

The customer’s preferences for styles and colors.

Salespeople collect this information by asking questions. For example, a salesperson might ask if a TV under consideration will be used in the bedroom or family room. The answer tells the salesperson whether a console or a stand-alone model would be most appropriate. Upon learning that small children are in the house, a salesperson might suggest a less complicated, more durable model. The customer should be encouraged to ask questions as the salesperson makes a presentation. These questions indicate how effectively the salesperson is communicating the TV’s features and benefits.

Customers often want to know the salesperson’s opinion. Even when customers know the exact style of draperies they want, they might want to know the salesperson’s opinion about the fabric’s durability. Salespeople should have developed expertise about their merchandise—and they want to take advantage of this knowledge.

This conversation shows how a salesperson collects information from a customer.

Salesperson: Good morning. I’m Joe Turner. Have you shopped at Barney’s before?
Customer: I’ve been in before to look at these sport coats, but I haven’t bought anything.
Salesperson: If I could find out a little bit about what you’re looking for, I can save you some time. Where will you be wearing the sport coat?
Customer: Well, as I said, I’m just looking. I want something sporty, something I can wear after work.
Salesperson: You look to be size 40 or 42. Is that right?
Customer: I usually wear a 42.
Salesperson: I think you’ll be interested in the sports coat we have over here. Try this one on just to check the size.
Customer: OK. I’m not sure I like this one.
Salesperson: Why don’t you like it?
Customer: The color, to begin with. I really don’t like maroon.
Salesperson: What color do you like?
Customer: My wife says I look best in blue.
Salesperson: What kind of sports coats do you already have?
Customer: My two favorites are a navy blue blazer and a sports jacket that has a small pattern. Something like this one, only blue and gray. These are too dressy. I want something sportier.
Salesperson: Let’s see. You want something that’s not too severe in styling, something blue or that at least will coordinate with blue, and something with a casual look. I think you’d be interested in these jackets.

This interaction illustrates that effective selling requires a two-way flow of information between salesperson and customer. To satisfy customers’ needs, salespeople must ask questions and then listen carefully to customers’ replies and comments. Effective listening is the most important step in building rapport with customers.

Successful salespeople have a high degree of empathy for customers’ feelings and attitudes. They recognize that the key to success over the long run is to have customers who are pleased with the merchandise they buy. Selling merchandise isn’t enough. The salesperson must make sure that the merchandise will not be returned—but that the customers will. Later in this chapter, we’ll detail the art of asking questions and listening.

The third step in the retail sales process is presenting the merchandise and communicating its benefits to the customer.

**Selling Benefits.** Customers buy benefits, not features. A benefit is a specific need that’s satisfied when a customer buys a product. In every buying situation, customers are asking themselves, What am I going to get out of buying this merchandise? Salespeople answer this question by explicitly indicating which needs expressed by the customer will be satisfied by the merchandise.

**Features** are a product’s qualities or characteristics that provide benefits to customers. Exhibit 18–2 shows features and benefits of a certain brand of golf clubs.

An effective sales presentation must link the merchandise’s features to the benefits it provides the customer. A presentation that includes only features fails to answer the question, What’s in it for me? A presentation that focuses only on benefits doesn’t help the customer understand how and why the merchandise can deliver the benefits. Features are included in the presentation to assure customers that the benefits will be delivered. Exhibit 18–3 contrasts a presentation that emphasizes features with one that stresses benefits.

**Demonstrating the Merchandise.** In-store shoppers, compared to catalog customers, can see the features and benefits of the product demonstrated. Demonstrations are most effective when they appeal to the senses of sound, touch, sight, taste, or smell.

A demonstration can generate excitement and enthusiasm by giving the customer hands-on experience with the product. Hands-on experience shows customers
**Exhibit 18-2** 

**Features and Benefits of Golf Clubs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Advantage</th>
<th>Benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compact woodhead model</td>
<td>Smaller head provides golfer with more confidence on controlling club</td>
<td>More confidence results in smoother swing for more control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shallow-faced fairway woods</td>
<td>Ball leaves club above high point of 9&quot; roll</td>
<td>Gets ball into air more easily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-degree lofted driver</td>
<td>Extra loft makes it easier to get ball into air off tee</td>
<td>Gives more consistency and control with driver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All edge grain maple laminate</td>
<td>Hardwood surface of maple is positioned toward the face</td>
<td>More durability in face area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sole weighted blade</td>
<td>Lower center of gravity</td>
<td>Imparts more spin to get ball into air easier and quicker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider effective hitting area</td>
<td>Allows ball to fly well if hit off center</td>
<td>Straighter, longer shots on off-center hits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offset blade</td>
<td>Forces hands to lead club-head into the shot</td>
<td>Makes it easier for golfer to hit through shot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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**Exhibit 18-3**

**Selling Benefits, Not Features**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentation Emphasizing Features</th>
<th>Presentation Emphasizing Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This chinaware has a hard glaze that is applied after the pattern is on the cups and plates. The handles are molded into the cup before it is fired. All the china is fired at 2600°F.</td>
<td>This chinaware will last a long time. It is stronger than most chinaware because it is fired at 2600°F. To prevent the cup handles from breaking off, they are molded into the cup body before it is fired. The pattern will also last a long time. It won’t fade because a hard leadless glaze is applied over the pattern.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
what the product will do for them. In cosmetics, customer involvement is usually the deciding factor in making a sale. When a customer isn’t sure what color is best for her, the salesperson can help her try different colors to see how they look. By demonstrating a range of cosmetic products in a makeover, the salesperson can sell multiple items rather than a single product.

The most effective demonstrations occur when the customer gets actively involved: “Feel how soft this sweater is.” “See how this suit makes you look thinner.” “Hear the quality of these speakers.”

Often customers have reservations about making a purchase. Reservations or objections are concerns raised by the customer. Salespeople must anticipate potential reservations and know how to respond to them.

Reservations can arise at each stage in the sales process. For example, a customer may not be willing to talk with a salesperson during the approach. Reservations can also arise when the salesperson is presenting merchandise.

Types of Reservations. Some common reservations (Exhibit 18–4) arise because the customer doesn’t want to buy at the time or isn’t satisfied with the price, the merchandise, the store and its service, or the salesperson.

Customers often resist making an immediate decision. They may say, “I haven’t made up my mind.” “I’ll have to talk it over with my wife,” or “I think I’ll wait awhile.” These reservations indicate the customer isn’t convinced of the need for the merchandise or its benefits. The real reason for postponing the purchase may be the price or the merchandise itself. Also, some customers just don’t like to make decisions. Reassurance works better than pressure with indecisive customers.
Types of Reservations

Price is probably the most common source of customers’ reservations. Regardless of the price, someone will consider it too high, out of line, or higher than another retail outlet’s price. Other common price reservations include “I can’t afford it,” “I was looking for a cheaper model,” or “I’m going to wait for this to go on sale.”

Objections involving the merchandise include “The quality of this screen door is poor,” “The dress is the wrong size,” “I don’t think this copying machine looks good,” or “I don’t like the material in this suit.”

Customers might not like the store itself. For example, customers might visit a store for a sale, even though they usually don’t shop there. During such a visit, they may feel uncomfortable about buying merchandise. These customers may need additional information about merchandise quality and the store’s return policy.

Customers also can have reservations about a specific salesperson. The salesperson’s personality, behavior, or dress might clash with the customer’s expectations. The customer may be thinking, I don’t like dealing with this person. The salesperson probably can’t overcome this reservation so it’s best for everyone involved to direct the customer to another salesperson. The store is more likely to make a sale, and the other salesperson may reciprocate.

Effective salespeople know the types of reservations likely to be raised. They may know that their merchandise is more expensive than competitors’, that their selection in a particular category is limited, or that the store doesn’t accept a particular credit card. While not all reservations can be forestalled, effective salespeople can anticipate and handle some objections in their sales presentation. For example, a salesperson might say, “This power drill is expensive, but let me show you how many different things you can do with it.”

Uncovering Reservations. Some salespeople make a mistake in treating an unfavorable comment as an objection. Here’s an example.

Customer: Is this power drill expensive?
Salesperson: This drill really isn’t that expensive. Are you concerned about whether it’s worth it?
Customer: No, I just want to know the price.
The reservations customers state are often just excuses for not buying. Customers seldom say, “I don’t have any reason—I just don’t want to buy.” Usually the customer gives a reason that appears to be the real reservation. Some customers agree to everything or make no comments. Then they decide not to buy the merchandise. The salesperson then must uncover the reason.

Salespeople can bring concealed reservations out into the open by observing how customers react to their sales presentation. When customers become less interested in a feature or the price, the salesperson should stop and begin a new approach or make a point clearer. Customers sometimes indicate the basis of their reservations by the way they handle the merchandise. For example, they may examine a shirt and then put it aside, implying “It doesn’t look well-made to me” or “It’s the wrong style (or color).” When these situations arise, the salesperson should ask a question such as “Did you see the double stitching around the collar?” Open-ended questions that encourage customers to talk more include “Would you like to tell me about it?”, “Why is that?” and “Can we talk more about that?”

**Methods for Handling Reservations.** The best approach for handling reservations is to relax and listen. Allow customers to verbalize their feelings completely. Ask questions to clarify their reservations, but don’t interrupt to provide an answer even though the answer might seem obvious.

Salespeople need to respond to reservations in a way that won’t start an argument. One way is to turn the customer’s statement into a question. If the customer says, “These refrigerators are all too big,” the salesperson might reply, “Oh, where will you be putting the refrigerator?” The answer will help the salesperson present a refrigerator that overcomes the customer’s objection.

Answering a reservation with a question is usually more effective than trying to prove the customer’s reservation isn’t valid. Asking a question sometimes leads customers to answer their own questions. A customer may say, “I can get this VCR much cheaper at Circuit City.” A good reply is “Is price the only factor you’re considering in buying a VCR?” The answer might be “No. I’m also interested in the service I’ll get if it doesn’t work. In fact, I came to your store because my friend said you have a great service department.”

Responding to a reservation with a question is a good method for separating excuses from real objections. Inexperienced salespeople may be too quick to respond to a reservation, not realizing the initially expressed reservation isn’t the real reason the customer isn’t buying. Generalized reservations such as “I don’t think I want to buy this lawn mower” are hard to handle. If a customer expresses a general reservation, the salesperson should ask questions to narrow the objection to specific points. For example, a customer might say, “I like to look at merchandise in your store, but I don’t buy anything here.” A good response is “What don’t you like about our store?” The customer’s answer to this question might reveal a misunderstanding or a point the salesperson can easily clarify. For example, the customer might say, “I don’t like your return policy. I like to get cash refunds rather than a credit to my account.” Knowing this real reason for the customer’s not purchasing, the salesperson can respond, “We changed our return policy some time ago. We now give cash refunds.”

Salespeople should aim to soften the reservation by getting on the customer’s side. This can be done by agreeing with and then countering the reservation. Customers usually expect the salesperson to disagree with an objection. Instead, the salesperson should recognize that the objection is offered sincerely and respect the customer’s view. A salesperson might say, “I know how you feel. Everything seems to cost so much today.” After agreeing, the salesperson should proceed to provide
information the customer might not be aware of. Skill is necessary in stating the counter. For example, a men’s clothing salesperson might respond to the reservation “I don’t like these new pleated pants” by saying, “You know, Mr. Smith, I felt the same way when I first saw these pants, but they’re very comfortable and quite stylish. I bought a couple of pairs when they first came out a year ago, and now they’re my favorite pants.” With such a counter, the salesperson agrees that the customer’s reaction isn’t unusual but then proceeds to turn the objection into a benefit.

Price concerns. Price reservations are the most common objections salespeople face. To avoid price reservations, salespeople need to establish the merchandise’s benefits before they discuss price. If the customer feels the benefits don’t justify the price, no sale will be made. On the other hand, when the customer feels the benefits exceed the price, there’s a good chance of making a sale and having a satisfied customer.

Price reservations are best handled with a two-step approach. First, the salesperson should try to look at the reservations from the customer’s viewpoint. Here are some questions to gain understanding of the customer’s perspective:

“We’re usually quite competitive on the merchandise. What stores are selling this model at a lower price?”

“You say you saw this at a lower price at Sears? I wonder if you were comparing apples with apples. What were the features on the Sears model?”

After learning more about the customer’s perspective, the next step is to emphasize the item’s benefits. All customers want to buy a less expensive product if they believe it has the same benefits as the more expensive one. But many customers will pay a higher price when additional benefits are pointed out to them. Many high-quality products look just like low-quality products so salespeople should emphasize features that justify the extra cost.

Some benefits are provided by intangible features—features customers can’t see, such as durability of the merchandise, service provided by the store, credit availability, the return policy, and the assortment that enables a customer to purchase an entire outfit in one store.

Finally, price reservations can be handled by suggesting merchandise with a lower price. But with this approach customers may not buy merchandise that best meets their needs.

Stalling. Another common reservation arises when a customer says, “I want to think it over.” Here’s an approach for handling this reservation:

Customer: I want to think this over. I can’t make a decision now.

Salesperson: I understand how you feel. Many of our customers are uncertain before they buy a fur coat. And you probably have several questions you still need to have answered before you make a decision, isn’t that right?

Customer: Yes, that’s right!

Salesperson: Let’s make a list of some of your questions. Which of these questions is actually keeping you from making a decision now?

Making the Sale

The fourth step in the sales process involves getting the customer to make a purchase decision. Sales presentations are made to encourage purchase decisions. The salesperson must be ready to make a sale when the customer is ready to buy. The customer who says, “This table is scratched. Do you have another one?” is giving the
salesperson a chance to make a sale. Here it would be a mistake to present additional features and benefits. The customer is apparently ready to buy. The appropriate response to the customer’s question is an answer and an attempt to make a sale such as “We have the same model in the warehouse. When would you like us to deliver it?”

Some salespeople make excellent presentations and then fail to ask the customer to purchase the product. This failure to close the sale often occurs because the salesperson is afraid the customer will say no. Many sales are lost due to this fear of asking to ring up the sale.

**Timing.** The right time to attempt to close a sale is when the customer appears ready to buy. There’s no perfect psychological moment in a sales presentation to make the sale. Customers make up their minds to buy when they feel the benefits outweigh the price. For some customers, this point can occur when they first see the merchandise. For others, it might not occur until they’ve looked at a wide variety of merchandise, visited several stores, and asked many questions.

**Buying Signals.** **Buying signals** are verbal or nonverbal communications from customers indicating they’re ready to buy. Facial expressions often show when a customer isn’t ready to buy. Customers who frown or seem to be puzzled may be indicating they aren’t thoroughly sold on the merchandise. Customers’ nonverbal signals indicating a salesperson should attempt to make a sale include:

- Resisting a salesperson’s attempt to move merchandise out of the way.
- Intently studying or reexamining the merchandise, handling it, and looking at it from different angles. For clothing, holding it against their body.
- Smiling or appearing to be excited when looking at the item.
- Handling or using a product for the second or third time.
- Suggesting a move from the living room to a more work-oriented room such as the study (when the customer is talking to a salesperson at home).

*The customer’s interest and reaction to the softness of the towel indicates she is ready to buy.*
Customers' comments are usually the best indicator that they're considering a purchase. The following statements may indicate they're about to make or have made a decision:

"I guess the blue paint goes better with my wallpaper than the gray paint."
"Can you alter the pants?"
"Do I understand you correctly that I can return this and get my money back?"
"Did you say that this is guaranteed for a year?"
"Do you have this desk in a darker wood?"
"I've always wanted a food processor."

**What If an Attempt to Make a Sale Fails?** When an attempt fails, the salesperson needs to analyze the situation and determine why the customer declined to make a purchase. Sales attempts can fail for many reasons, including the salesperson's attempt to make a sale prematurely, misinterpreting the customer's interest in buying, making a poor presentation, emphasizing unimportant benefits to the customer, or not demonstrating the merchandise properly. Before salespeople can take corrective action, they must find out why the sales attempt failed.

When an attempt fails, the salesperson should continue to present merchandise and look for another opportunity. The salesperson may have to collect additional information from the customer to determine the cause of failure.

An important lesson for inexperienced salespeople is that when a customer says no, the salesperson shouldn't presume that the sale is lost. A no might mean, "Not now," or "I need more information," or "I don't understand."

**Methods of Making a Sale.** No method or approach for making a sale works in all retail situations. Some approaches are to ask to ring up the sale, to assume the sale is made, to build a series of acceptances, and to emphasize an impending event. Often, a salesperson will use more than one approach during a presentation.

*Asking for the order* is the most straightforward and effective method for making a sale. But salespeople should be wary of appearing overly aggressive when using such a direct approach. The direct approach works best with decisive customers who want to get down to business.

In *assuming the sale is made*, the salesperson allows the customer to follow the path of least resistance. Again, be careful using this approach, because customers may feel that the salesperson is pushy. Here are some questions that can be used in an assumptive approach:

"Do you want to charge the lumber?"
"Why don't you try on the pants while I get the tailor to see if any alterations are necessary?"

*Giving the customer a choice* is another version of this approach. Remember, the choice is between two items or a set of items. It's never between buying the merchandise or not buying the merchandise. Examples that involve choices are

"Would you like the 30-piece or 48-piece set of this china?"
"Do you prefer to buy this on our monthly billing plan or pay for it now?"

*Building a series of acceptances* is actually a method for building up to a sale. Customers typically find it hard to refuse to buy merchandise when they agree that it
satisfies their needs. By getting a customer to answer questions with a series of yeses, he makes some easy decisions leading up to the buying decision. For example,

Salesperson: This tie goes well with your suit, don’t you think?
Customer: Yes, it certainly does.
Salesperson: The 100 percent silk fabric certainly gives it a rich appearance, doesn’t it?
Customer: Yes. Silk ties are very striking.
Salesperson: Is the tie in your price range?
Customer: It’s a little high, but it’s in the range.
Salesperson: Do you want to charge the tie or pay cash for it?

Emphasizing an impending event motivates a customer to buy immediately. The technique stresses that customers will lose something if they hesitate to purchase the merchandise. For example,

“‘The sale ends today. Tomorrow the price goes up $20.’”
“‘This is the only remote-control TV we have with stereo sound.’”
“‘The weather is beginning to turn cold, and these skis are going to sell fast.’”

Effective salespeople suggest additional items before the original sales transaction is completed. It’s much easier to convince a customer to add on to a sale than to begin an entirely new sales process for additional items. Many retailers keep track of their salespeople’s multiple-item sales and use this information to evaluate their performance. (See Chapter 15.)

Customers appreciate new ideas and suggestions for items that will go with merchandise they’ve already decided to buy. Accessories, for example, can offer variety and excitement to a wardrobe. Effective salespeople can point out that adding the right look in scarves, wearing the right shoes, and/or pinning the right piece of jewelry to a scarf will create the special effect a customer is seeking.

When selling additional items, salespeople should avoid becoming too aggressive. The salesperson can mention available merchandise without offending a customer. But trying to sell a CD player to a customer who came in for a record might be annoying. When additional suggestions are appropriate, the salesperson should make them in a positive way. Asking “‘Anything else?’” isn’t as effective as saying “‘You’ll need some film for your new camera.’”

The relationship between a customer and a salesperson shouldn’t end when a sale is made. It’s becoming increasingly important for salespeople to build long-term relationships with customers so they’ll return to the store and seek out the salesperson the next time they’re buying.³

Goodwill is the value of customers’ feeling or attitude toward the retailer and salesperson. The fundamental method for building goodwill is to make sure customers are satisfied with the merchandise they purchase. Customer satisfaction is achieved when salespeople are customer-oriented and not sales-oriented.⁴ Customer-oriented salespeople focus their attention on the customer’s needs, not just on making a sale. The use of deception or overly aggressive behavior to make a sale builds ill will, not goodwill.

Methods for building goodwill include keeping the customer’s interest paramount, reaffirming the customer’s judgment, and ensuring proper use of the merchan-
By showing the customer how to use cosmetics, a Walgreen salesperson builds goodwill and loyalty.

disse, handling customer complaints, remembering the customer between visits, and providing “above and beyond” service.

Reaffirming the Customer’s Judgment. Customers are often unsure about their decision after making a purchase, especially if the item is costly. Salespeople can increase the chances that customers will be satisfied with their purchases simply by reassuring them. A salesperson might say, “I’m sure you’ll get a lot of good use out of your computer,” or “Be sure to call me if you need any help. I’m eager to hear how your guests like your dress. Here’s my card.”

Many salespeople send handwritten notes to customers thanking them for making a purchase and ensuring them of good service in the future. Exhibit 18-5 shows an example.

Ensuring Proper Use of the Merchandise. If customers aren’t familiar with the merchandise, they can become dissatisfied when they first use it. Computer salespeople can build goodwill by visiting a customer right after the computer is delivered to make sure the customer knows how to use it. A salesperson who has just sold several suits, ties, and shirts to a customer may make up a chart to show the different combinations that look good. This chart may help the customer realize the full potential benefits of the clothing he’s purchased.

Customers may be satisfied with the merchandise they’ve purchased but may not get the maximum benefits from it if they’re not aware of its capabilities. Salespeople should take the time after a sale to demonstrate how the merchandise is used. They should make sure customers receive instructions and special brochures provided by the manufacturer. When manufacturers provide new information, the salesperson has an excellent opportunity to develop goodwill by sending the information to customers who purchased the merchandise in the past.
Handling Customer Complaints. Responding to customer complaints gives the salesperson an excellent opportunity to build goodwill. Most customers don’t go to the trouble of complaining to the store even if they’re dissatisfied. When a customer takes the time to complain, salespeople should view it as an opportunity to demonstrate their concern for the customer’s satisfaction. (Chapter 17 covered approaches for handling complaints.)

Remembering the Customer between Visits. Keeping in contact with customers between store visits is an effective means to build goodwill. Some methods for maintaining customer contact are phoning a customer when new merchandise arrives, taking special orders to secure the merchandise sought by the customer, setting aside merchandise the customer might want, calling the customer to make an appointment for a private showing of new merchandise, and following up on merchandise sold to see if the customer is satisfied with it.

Providing Above-and-Beyond Service. Salespeople build long-term relationships with their customers by providing service above and beyond customer expectations. Here’s an example of above-and-beyond service from a study of star salespeople:

Cathy works in the jeans department, but you could not tell this from her sales records. She goes wherever her customers’ needs take her. For example, one customer called and
A
t Nordstrom, salespeople don't just tell customers how to solve their problems; they assume personal responsibility. Customers aren't told to go to a credit office to correct a mistake in a bill. They aren't passed along to different salespeople or directed to different departments. The salesperson they talk with is personally responsible for making the customer happy.

Tales of service above and beyond the call of duty abound. For example, a Nordstrom customer brought back a pair of shoes a year after buying them and asked if they could be repaired. The salesperson provided a new pair instead. In cold climates, salespeople have been known to warm up a customer's car while the customer pays for merchandise. If Nordstrom doesn't have a size or color that a customer wants, a salesperson will go to a competing store in the mall that carries the merchandise, buy it for the customer, and then sell it to the customer at the price charged at Nordstrom.

When merchandise is returned, the salesperson who made the original sale is debited, and commissions made on the sale are lost. This policy emphasizes to the salesperson that keeping customers satisfied is critical. The salesperson has a stake in making every sale the final sale.

New salespeople are given a "personal" book. The store manager explains that the personal book represents the salesperson's income. In the book, the salesperson keeps track of customers' names, telephone numbers, likes and dislikes, charge account numbers, and anything else that will help the salesperson become a personal shopper for the customer. New salespeople also receive personal and business cards and an open account to send thank-you notes or flowers to customers.

At Nordstrom, newly hired salespeople earn from $7 to $10 per hour, $2 per hour above the typical local retail wages. Compensation is based totally on sales generated. A top salesperson can gross between $50,000 and $80,000 per year.

Nordstrom pays salespeople well, but its expectations for them are high. Each salesperson's sales per hour are posted on bulletin boards near the employee entrances to the store. Nordstrom also stresses ethics and teamwork. A salesperson who knowingly takes sales from customers being serviced by another salesperson will be fired immediately.


Retailing View 18–3 describes sales practices at Nordstrom, a department store chain noted for its above-and-beyond service.

**Building Special Relationships.** Customers develop strong relationships with salespeople who offer functionality, friendship, and trust. As Chapter 3 said, time is becoming a scarce resource for consumers. They have less time to shop and many consumers don't like to shop. Customers rely on salespeople who save them time and offer useful advice.

Sales associates often develop strong friendships with their customers, although these are business friendships and don't extend beyond the workplace. For example, a customer interviewed in a research project referred to a salesperson as being "like family" and brought baked goods to her to show her appreciation. Retailing View
SteinMart’s Boutique Ladies Sell through Personal Relationships

Jay Stein, chairman of SteinMart, an off-price chain, says, “The boutique ladies are our secret weapon.” Back in the 1980s, SteinMart began hiring wives of local business executives, doctors, and lawyers to sell merchandise in the store’s designer boutique. The “boutique ladies” have limited work experience, but they have extensive networks of friends developed through volunteer charity work. They also have a flair for fashion and an enthusiasm that draws their friends to the store.

For example, when a shipment of $39 designer silk separates arrived, boutique lady Joy Abney (wife of the former managing partner of Coopers & Lybrand) “got right on the horn and told them to get over here.” Her friends spent $2,000 in her department that day.

There’s a waiting list to be a boutique lady at SteinMart. The 1,200 boutique ladies typically work one day a week and are excused from cash register duty and evening shifts. Many of the women are pleased to find out that an older woman without a resume is welcome in the workplace. “My husband thought the only thing I could do was car pool, but working here comes natural.” It’s a lot like volunteer work because “you are helping people. It’s also fun to get a paycheck that’s all mine.”


18–4 describes how SteinMart, an off-price chain, hires society women to sell merchandise to their friends.

As we said in Chapter 12, trust is the critical element in building long-term relationships between salespeople and customers, and between vendors and retailers. Customers trust salespeople who are dependable, honest, and take the customer’s perspective. A quote from the study of star salespeople reveals these traits:

If I don’t think it’s going to look good on you, I will tell you. I find the key is being honest. If you can really speak truthfully from your heart, it works. Lots of salespeople just sell to make the sale, but I sell from the customer’s point of view.7

In the next section, we look at knowledge and communication skills salespeople need to be effective during the sales process.

To be effective, retail salespeople must know the store’s policies and merchandise. Skills they need to effectively manage the selling process include listening, questioning, interpreting and using nonverbal communications, and being flexible.

Knowledge and Skills for Effective Retail Selling

Knowledge

Store Policies. When customers are about to make a buying decision, they often want information about the store’s policies. For example, salespeople should be able to provide information about a store’s program for testing merchandise quality and safety or its unconditional guarantee to refund the purchase price in cash for all merchandise returned. Salespeople should know whom to contact in the company when questions arise they can’t answer: whom to call to find out if an item is available in another store when it’s sold out in their store, or a buyer to contact about a special order a customer wants to place.
Merchandise. Knowledge of the merchandise is critical. Without it, the salesperson can’t satisfy the customer’s needs by matching the merchandise features to benefits sought by the customer. It’s not enough for the salesperson to say, “This camera is a good buy. It’s high quality and has a low price.” Customers expect specific information about merchandise: how to operate it, which features justify its price, or how one brand differs from another.

Some retailers seek out and hire people with considerable knowledge about their merchandise. For example, Home Depot salespeople usually have considerable do-it-yourself experience. With this knowledge, they can help customers select appropriate materials and tools and then advise them on how to use this information for home repair work. Similarly, Williams Sonoma prefers to hire salespeople with interest and experience in food preparation.

Most retailers provide training in selling skills. For example, at Parisian (a regional specialty department store chain) all newly hired salespeople get 45 hours of training before they interact with customers. During this training period, they spend at least one half-day shadowing a top salesperson in the department in which they’ll be working. After 90 days on the job, they have an additional 12 hours of refresher training.

Salespeople at Lands’ End get 75 hours of training before they’re allowed to answer phones and take orders. During the training, they learn about and feel every product in the catalog. This product knowledge helps them answer questions like “What does the mesh knit shirt feel like?” or “Do the wool flannel trousers have buttons on both back pockets?”

In addition, vendors provide information about their merchandise. Alfred Fuoco, chairman of Evan Picone (a manufacturer of high-quality women’s clothing) says, “As store chains have grown larger, they’ve taken money out of their budget for sales help. That has hurt us.” To address this problem, Evan Picone has 16 representatives who tour stores to train salespeople and to organize displays of its merchandise. Besides 15 consultants working with retail salespeople, Liz Claiborne has even hired architects to design selling areas for Liz clothing in department stores.9

Liz Claiborne stores have specially designed selling areas where sales associates interact with customers.
Vendor sales representatives often meet with salespeople before the store opens to demonstrate new merchandise and answer questions. Vendor reps also spend time in the store working with salespeople and customers.

Inexperienced salespeople often believe effective selling is achieved by talking a lot. They go into each customer interaction thinking they have to out-talk the customer. Actually, listening is the most important part of effective communication. Salespeople who monopolize conversations will never learn what customers want or what they think of the merchandise being presented.

People can speak at a rate of 130 to 160 words per minute, but they can listen at a rate of 800 words per minute.

Because of this difference, salespeople are often lazy listeners. They don’t pay attention, and they forget or miss a large part of what customers say.

Effective listening is an active endeavor. It’s much more than just hearing what customers say. Good listeners project themselves into the customer’s mind. If a customer says he wants a “fancy” computer, the salesperson needs to listen carefully to find out what fancy means to that customer. Through effective listening, the salesperson demonstrates concern for the customer’s needs by selecting appropriate merchandise to present and demonstrate.

Effective listeners are actively thinking while they’re listening. They’re thinking about the conclusion the customer is leading up to, evaluating the information the customer is presenting, and sorting out important facts from unimportant facts. Active listening also means the salesperson attempts to draw as much information as possible from the customer.

Techniques for active listening include repeating or rephrasing information, summarizing conversations, and tolerating silences.

**Repeating or Rephrasing Information.** During the sales process, salespeople need to verify information they collected from customers. Here’s an example:

*Customer:* I’ll take two high-quality blank videotapes and one standard-quality tape.

*Salesperson:* Sure, Mr. Johnson. That’s two high-quality and one standard-quality.

*Customer:* Wait a minute. I got it backward. I want two standard-quality and one high-quality.

*Salesperson:* Fine. Two standard, one high-quality. Right?

*Customer:* Yes. That’s right.

To verify a customer’s intent, salespeople can restate the customer’s comment in their own words.

*Customer:* The picture on that TV isn’t what I expected.

*Salesperson:* I see. You’re dissatisfied with the picture quality.

*Customer:* Oh, no. As a matter of fact, I think it’s the clearest picture I’ve ever seen on a TV. I didn’t expect it to be so clear.

**Summarizing the Conversation.** Active listening involves mentally summarizing points the customer makes. Somewhere in the presentation, the salesperson needs to check out these mental summaries.

*Customer:* . . . so I told him I wasn’t interested.
Salesperson: Let me see if I got this straight. A salesperson at Discount Electronics told you he’d sell you this Zenith console TV for $695. But then you found out that you had to buy a warranty because this was a special model made for Discount, and then you had to pay a shipping and handling charge. You thought that was a rip-off?
Customer: That’s right.
Salesperson: Well, all of our TVs have a one-year warranty from the manufacturer, and we add on an additional one-year warranty at no cost to you. Plus we deliver the TV and install it with no charge.

Tolerating Silences. Perhaps this technique for better listening should be called bite your tongue. Both salespeople and customers need time to think. Because people tend to exaggerate the amount of time passing during these silent periods, salespeople often feel they need to fill the gap by saying something. Tolerating silences, however, gives customers time to sell themselves.

Customer: Well, do you think the sound from these compact speakers is good?
Salesperson: (silence)
Customer: Just a minute. . . . Let me hear it a little longer.
Salesperson: (silence)
Customer: It’s certainly better than my present speakers’ sound.
Salesperson: Fine, Mr. Ruth. Would you be interested in charging this on your regular account or using our 180-day payment terms?
Customer: Hmmm . . .
Salesperson: (silence)
Customer: I think I’ll pay with a check.

The Art of Asking Questions

Salespeople should ask questions for several reasons. First, questions get the customer to participate in the sales process. By asking questions, salespeople encourage customers to actively engage in a conversation rather than passively listening to a presentation. Participating in a conversation makes them more likely to hear and remember what’s said. Second, questions show customers the salesperson is interested in them. Finally, salespeople can collect valuable information using questions.

Types of Questions. Here are examples of questions that can be used to collect information:

“‘What kind of wood paneling do you have now?’
‘How often do you play records on your stereo?’
‘What do you know about compact disc players?’
‘Consumer Reports’ rated your brand as only average in picture quality. Is that your experience?
‘Your stereo isn’t compatible with your TV. I guess you can’t put the soundtrack on the TV through your stereo system, can you?’

Here are some statements or questions that encourage customers to keep talking:

‘‘Uh-huh.’’
‘Can you give me an example of what you mean?’’
“Please tell me more about that.”
“That’s interesting.”
“Is that so?”
“You said you were dissatisfied with your present dishwasher?”
“So you’d like to have more shelf space?”

**Guidelines.** Here are some guidelines for effective questioning:

1. *Encourage longer responses.* Don’t ask questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no. For example, ask, “What do you know about this brand?” rather than “Have you heard of this brand?”

2. *Space out questions.* When a salesperson asks several questions one right after the other, customers may feel threatened. One method for spacing out questions is to encourage customers to elaborate on their responses.

3. *Ask short, simple questions.* Avoid questions with two or more parts. When faced with a complex question, customers might not know which part to answer, and the salesperson might not know which part of the question is being answered.

4. *Avoiding leading questions.* Leading questions just put words into the customer’s mouth and don’t tell the salesperson what the customer is actually thinking. The question “Why do you think this is a good product?” gets at a customer’s positive thoughts but doesn’t reveal her reservations.

**Nonverbal communications** are nonspoken forms of expression—body language (body angle, face, arms, and hands), space, and appearance—that communicate thoughts and emotions. Salespeople need to (1) interpret customers’ nonverbal signals and (2) use nonverbal communications to improve their selling effectiveness.

It’s hard to interpret nonverbal signals by observing a single gesture or body position. Salespeople thus need to consider the pattern of signals a customer generates to interpret the person’s feelings. Exhibit 18–6 shows some patterns of nonverbal communication.

To increase their effectiveness, salespeople can also use nonverbal signals as follows:

1. Use cooperation signals (see Exhibit 18–6), to indicate sincere interest in helping customers satisfy their needs. Avoid power signals. They intimidate customers and make them feel uncomfortable.

2. Nothing creates rapport like a smile. The smile should appear natural and comfortable—not a smirk or clownlike exaggerated grin. To get the smile right, practice in front of a mirror.

3. Direct eye contact reflects sincerity; glancing from side to side or at a wall has the opposite effect. But staring can make a customer feel uncomfortable.

4. Hand movements can have a dramatic effect. Pointing a finger can be used to reinforce important points in the presentation. Too many hand gestures can distract attention from the verbal communication, however.

5. Good voice and speech habits are critical. To avoid monotony, salespeople should vary the rate and loudness of their speech. Simple messages may be delivered faster than more complex messages. Important points can be
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretation</th>
<th>Body Angle</th>
<th>Face</th>
<th>Arms</th>
<th>Hands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power, dominance, superiority</td>
<td>Exaggerated leaning over.</td>
<td>Piercing eye contact.</td>
<td>Hands on hips.</td>
<td>Hands behind neck or back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Steepling (fingertips touching).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

emphasized by increasing loudness. The clearest speech is made when the mouth is opened by the width of a finger. When the lips are too close together, enunciation is poor.12

The chance to tailor the presentation to each customer is unique to personal selling communications. Thus, selling effectiveness is related to the salesperson’s ability to exploit this opportunity. Adaptive selling is an approach to personal selling in which selling behaviors are altered based on information about the customer and the buying situation.13

Knowledge enables salespeople to be flexible and adapt their sales presentations. Salespeople need to know their customers—the different types of customers and the presentations that work best for each customer type. Retailing View 18–5 describes types of customers an undergraduate student encountered during her summer retailing internship.

In theory, salespeople should treat each customer differently, but in practice, salespeople don’t have time to develop unique strategies for each customer. Effective salespeople tend to categorize customers, as Cynthia Carter did in Retailing View 18–5. Each category contains a description of the customer and the most effective sales approach for that customer type. By developing a set of categories, salespeople reduce the complexity of retail selling and free up their mental capacity to think more creatively. Categorization also enables salespeople to use the knowledge gained through past experiences. When they encounter a customer with unusual needs—a customer who doesn’t fit into an existing category—they add a new category to their repertoire.14

Salespeople with more categories of customer types have more selling approaches to use and thus have a greater opportunity to adjust to a specific customer’s needs. Salespeople can devise more categories by studying the customers they encounter and analyzing their successes and failures in selling to them.

An effective salesperson would use different sales approaches with a mother doing leisurely shopping with her daughter and a frantic customer looking for a last minute gift.
Retail Customers Come in 31 Flavors

Cynthia Carter, a University of Florida undergraduate, spent 12 weeks during the summer as a paid intern at J.C. Penney’s University Square Mall store in Tampa. Part of her internship was spent as a sales associate. Here she developed the following insights into how to effectively sell to different customer types.

"Experienced sales associates recognize that customers come in all shapes, sizes, and flavors. Some are more pleasant to deal with, but the true mark of a successful sales associate lies in the ability to assist every type of customer, all 31 flavors. Here are six of the customer flavors I encountered during my internship.

"The vanilla customer answers ‘I’m just looking’ to every question you ask or suggestion you offer. They’re rather faceless and uninteresting, but they often actually need your assistance. It’s most important that you don’t threaten them by being overbearing. Simply let them know you’re available when they realize they need your assistance.

"The I’ll take four corners—chocolate, strawberry, bubble gum, and peanut butter and jelly—customer has three screaming children terrorizing the racks and dressing rooms. She doesn’t have much time to shop. Ask her what she needs and she responds, ‘Anything that doesn’t need ironing.’ She really needs your help. Give her a ‘hanger gun’ to her kids, sit her in a dressing room, find out her size, and bring her clothes to try on. She’ll be grateful for your help and will be back to spend money dressing her children.

"The why don’t you have banana marshmallow swirl customer is very upset when she can’t find what she wants. She freely criticizes the store for not having merchandise that everyone has. This customer needs to be handled with kid gloves. The key is to be very humble, very helpful, and very ready to point out similar items that the customer may find appealing. Use the J.C. Penney catalog as a backup since items in the catalog can be delivered in two days. Remember, never lose your cool and never tell the customer she’s wrong.

"The rum raizin customer wants high quality and will pay high prices. Avoid polyester/cotton blends. Focus on the silks, suedes, and linens. Give a lot of personal attention and fashion-conscious advice. Stress add-on sales. If you can win her fashion trust, you can make a big sale.

"The tofu granola sorbet customer needs sturdy fabrics with lots of big pockets for rock-collecting in Montana. Durability and practicality are much more important than fashion. Forget the 24-inch triple-strand pearls and go for the durango khaki outfit. She’ll pay the price for the right clothes.

"The birthday cake customer is a frantic husband, boyfriend, or father who realizes over lunch that today’s the big day, and he hasn’t gotten anything yet. He usually doesn’t know her size, let alone her weight or height. You can try to guess, but the best bet is suggesting a non-form-fitting sweater or coordinating earrings and necklace. You need to take control of the occasion and offer concrete advice. Tell him returns are handled most smoothly if he saves the receipt."

Summary

Salespeople are an important element in the retail mix. They’re responsible for making sales and providing services that produce satisfied, loyal customers.

The sale begins when the salesperson approaches a customer, but the process doesn’t end when the customer decides to buy something. The salesperson needs to encourage and assist the customer in buying complementary merchandise. These add-on sales are important aspects of a store’s profitability, and they increase customers’ satisfaction from their purchases. The sales process ends when a customer is satisfied with the merchandise and decides to return to the store. Making a sale is just one step in developing a loyal customer—the goal salespeople should have every time they interact with customers.
Effective communication skills—listening and questioning—enable salespeople to adapt their presentation to the needs of the customer. Through these skills, salespeople facilitate two-way communication. Adaptive selling also requires extensive knowledge of customer types and the most effective way to sell to each type.

**Key Terms**

adaptive selling, 545  buying signals, 533  nonverbal communication, 543  sales associate, 523  approach, 524  feature, 527  reservation, 529  sales consultant, 523  benefit, 527  goodwill, 525  selling process, 523

**Discussion Questions and Problems**

1. What do you think about the following statement? “Good salespeople need to be aggressive. They need to have a powerful voice and a winning smile.”
2. Assume you’re selling bedding—sheets and pillow cases. What questions might you ask a potential customer?
3. A customer raises the following reservations. How do you respond?  
   a. “I really like all the things this copier does, but I don’t think it’s going to be very reliable. With all those features, something’s got to go wrong.”  
   b. “Your price for this printer is higher than the price I saw advertised in a mail-order catalog.”  
   c. “These suits just never fit me right.”
4. Some retail stores, such as Nordstrom, require salespeople to concentrate a significant amount of their effort on servicing customers. Speaking as a manager in charge of salespeople, discuss whether problems can arise when salespeople concentrate too much on providing service?
5. The sales profession has been accused of having more than its share of unethical people. Some people say the very nature of sales—convincing people to buy something—leaves it open to abuse. How can a salesperson be successful in sales and still maintain high ethical standards?
6. Because of increasing competition among retailers, price can differentiate one retailer from another. A retail salesperson often can’t do much about an objection to price. What counterargument could you give a customer who objects to a price?
7. When handling merchandise return, sometimes retail salespeople treat the customer with little interest and attention. In fact, some salespeople resent the customer’s using up valuable selling time. How can the handling of merchandise returns build customer loyalty?
8. Distinguish between a product’s benefits and features. Why must retail salespeople understand the difference?
9. “All methods for trying to get a customer to buy merchandise are devious and self-serving!” Comment.
10. Should a salesperson handle all complaints so that a customer is completely satisfied?
11. How can a salesperson oversell a customer?

**Notes**

6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 3.

Suggested Readings