



Salesperson Training as an Effective Tool to Increase SME Sales

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History

Received : 06.04.2024

Revised : 20.04.2024

Accepted : 03.05.2024

Article Type: Research

Article

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ABSTRACT

As a salesperson / personal selling / salesperson is the key to success in generating the buying process. Personal selling is an effective tool to build preferences, beliefs, and purchase actions. For this reason, business owners must increase their expertise which can be achieved through sales training in using adequate facilities. As a seller, you must master every product or service that the company sells. The purpose of the activity is to help business owners have a stock of knowledge about salespeople, so that business owners can increase sales of the products produced. The partner chosen in the PKM activity is engaged in a culinary business domiciled in Jambi. The method offered to partners is training/socialization which includes an introduction to salespeople, characteristics, forms, principles and goals and benefits. Presented in the form of PPT and conducted online. The results of the activity show that partners can optimize personal selling skills in offering products to end consumers, as evidenced by the results of the evaluation of the answers to the questionnaires given to partners showing 100% can understand the material presented.

Keywords: Salespeople, SMEs, Training

1. Introduction

Sales are an important element in a company or business entity engaged in various fields of both industry and services, because through sales the company hopes to make a profit. In sales activities, companies need salespeople who are referred to as personal selling. Sales are defined as people's efforts to deliver goods to those who need them at a mutually agreed price in exchange for money.

Firmansyah (2020) defines personal selling as "face to face interaction with one or more potential buyers intending to making presentations, answering question, and obtain reservations". According to Pramita & Manafe (2022), "personal selling is direct communication or interaction between individuals and consumers and potential customers by conducting demonstrations in order to create profits". Direct communication tends to be more adaptive. Personal selling is a promotional tool that is oral in nature, both to one or more prospective buyers with the intention of creating a mutually beneficial purchase transaction for both parties, using humans as a promotional tool. Communication between the two parties is interactive or two-way communication so that the seller can immediately get a response as feedback about the wishes and opinions of the consumer. The delivery of news or the communication process can be done very flexibly because it can be adjusted to the existing situation.

The role of personal selling / salespeople is the key to success in generating the buying process (Hair, 2008). Personal selling is an effective tool for building preferences, beliefs, and purchase actions (Kotler & Keller, 2016). For this reason, business owners must increase their expertise which can be achieved through

salles training in using adequate facilities. With this salles training, it is hoped that it will increase the ability to increase sales.

According to Haryanti (2022) personal selling is a sales promotion that is carried out in two directions and is considered more effective in marketing products, because the ultimate goal in a promotion is to make sales. In addition, personal selling is a communication activity between producers represented by salespeople and potential consumers involving thoughts and emotions, and of course dealing directly.

The partner used as a place of activity is a small business engaged in the culinary field, various variations of food produced by partners, but the products produced have weaknesses, especially in terms of understanding sales techniques. As Hair (2008) explains, salespeople have a very big influence in reducing consumer departure to other customers through proper sales techniques. As an effort to introduce sales techniques to partners, the team of lecturers and students of Untar intends to transfer knowledge to partners, especially focusing on the role of salespeople in offering products to consumers that partners need to have to increase sales and reduce consumer departure to competitors. For this reason, the priority problem of the partners to be solved is how to optimize the partners' knowledge in understanding the role of personal selling so that the products offered to consumers can be done effectively.

2. Methodology

Based on the problems faced by partners, solutions are offered in the form of, making PPT, training or socialization Socialization activities are carried out to provide debriefing on the understanding of the knowledge of salespeople:

- a. PKM chief executive contacts the partner
- b. Make observations related to the problems faced by partners
- c. Partners provide a statement of willingness to work together
- d. Implementers and partners determine the implementation schedule for socialization
- e. PKM implementers prepare materials that will be delivered to partners
- f. PKM implementers ask permission to conduct socialization in accordance with the agreement.
- g. PKM implementers carry out division of tasks with students who help with activities
- h. PKM implementers deliver socialization material through lectures, discussions, and questions and answers. offline socialization
- i. PKM implementers explain what must be done in the implementation of personal selling
- j. The implementer asks partners to ask questions if they do not understand the material presented.
- k. PKM implementers respond to partner responses about the material that has been delivered and conduct an evaluation.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Partner's Business Profile

The partner used as a place of activity is a small business engaged in the culinary field with the Business Name: Rumah Kue Afka Business owner named Rizka Yulia Business address RT.12/002 hamlet kota graha village Mendalo darat kec. Jaluko, kab. Muaro Jambi, Jambi. The afka cake house business selling various traditional cakes and tumpeng is an idea that arose after marriage and Resain work. Initially, she tried to feed herself and her family, then the inspiration arose to sell cakes and was appreciated by her husband. Rizka's mother doubted at first, whether it would sell well or not, but her husband continued to provide support so that I ventured to sell. At that time on 25-10-2018 the first time selling cakes was left at cake stalls, and on the first day the cake was sold out. This made the partners even more enthusiastic about selling. The following products produced by partners are:



Figure 1. Partner Products



Figure 2. Partner location

3.1.2. Model of Science and Technology Transferred to Partners

This community service activity is related to the provision of knowledge about. Some of them include:

a. Characteristics of Personal Selling

According to Haryanti (2022) the characteristics of personal selling are:

a) Direct Personal Confrontation

Direct contact through personal confrontation in the context of personal selling refers to face-to-face interactions between sellers and prospects or customers that allow direct observation of each other's reactions. In personal confrontation, sellers and customers interact directly, facing each other, and can pay attention to each other's facial expressions, body language, and verbal reactions. Personal confrontation allows the salesperson to better understand the customer's needs, preferences and concerns in depth. By seeing and listening directly, sellers can customize their approach, dig deeper into information about the prospect, and respond with more appropriate and relevant solutions (Sorongan & Pandowo, 2020).

b) Cultivation of Close Relationships

It refers to the process of building strong and mutually beneficial relationships between sellers and customers through continuous interaction and ongoing efforts. This method describes the seller's efforts to gradually foster and maintain long-term relationships with customers. In this relationship, the seller focuses on strengthening bonds and deepening connections with customers by means of regular communication, building trust, understanding customer needs, providing additional value, and resolving problems quickly.

c) There is a Response (Response)

A good response from a salesperson can help build a strong relationship between seller and prospect. A friendly, enthusiastic and empathetic response can make the prospect feel valued and cared for. This helps create a positive communication climate and strengthens the relationship.

b. Forms of Personal Selling

Forms of Personal Selling based on Saladin and Oesman in Firmansyah (2020), namely:

a) **Field Selling**

Field selling is a type of selling that involves direct interaction between salespeople and prospects outside of an office or physical sales location. Salespeople in field selling usually make visits to prospects' locations, such as companies or potential customers' homes. They meet directly with prospects, make presentations, explain products or services, and conduct sales negotiations. Field selling often involves a longer and more complex sales cycle, especially in the sale of more expensive or specialized products or services.

b) **Retail Selling**

Retail selling is a type of selling that takes place in a retail environment, such as a store, shopping center, or e-commerce platform. Salespeople in retail selling usually work in-store and meet with customers who visit the store. They help customers find products that suit their needs, provide information about products, give advice, and make sales. Retail selling often focuses on high sales volume, with shorter interactions and quicker transactions.

c) **Executive Selling**

Executive selling, also known as selling to executives or selling at the C-suite level, is a type of selling aimed at top-level executives in an organization. Salespeople involved in executive selling interact directly with executives, such as CEOs, CFOs, or executive directors, with the aim of influencing the organization's buying decisions. This selling involves more complex strategies, as the decision-making process in an executive environment often involves more in-depth consideration, risk analysis, and collaborative decisions.

c. Principles of Personal Selling

According to Haryanti (2022), the principles of personal selling include:

a) **Professionalisme**

Professionalism in personal selling refers to the attitude, behavior, and high standards held by a salesperson when performing their sales duties. Some of the principles of professionalism in personal selling include:

- 1) **Ethics:** Salespeople must act ethically and adhere to business ethical standards. They should be honest, transparent, and respect the needs and rights of prospects.
- 2) **Appearance and behavior:** Salespeople must maintain a neat and professional appearance and behave with courtesy, use appropriate language, and respect the rules and customs that apply in the workplace or when meeting prospects.
- 3) **Skills and knowledge:** Salespeople must have sufficient expertise and knowledge of the product or service they are selling. They should be able to provide accurate and useful information to prospects and answer questions with confidence.
- 4) **Reliability and responsibility:** Salespeople must be reliable in performing their duties, such as keeping promises, providing consistent service, and managing customer information properly. They should also be responsible for sales results and customer satisfaction.

b) **Negotiation**

Negotiation is an interactive process between salespeople and prospects to reach an agreement that benefits both parties. Some principles of negotiation in personal selling include:

- 1) **Preparation:** Salespeople should prepare themselves before entering the negotiation process. They need to gather information about the prospect, understand the prospect's needs and wants, and identify potential push points and barriers.
- 2) **Collaborative approach:** Salespeople should adopt a collaborative approach to negotiations, focusing on reaching a mutually beneficial agreement. They should understand the prospect's perspective and interests and look for solutions that meet the needs of both parties.
- 3) **Active listening:** Salespeople should be able to listen carefully and understand the prospect's arguments or concerns. They should provide space for the prospect to speak and express their views, while asking the right questions to gain a deeper understanding.

- 4) Creativity: Salespeople need to use creativity in finding solutions that are satisfactory to both parties. They can identify new options, look for alternatives, or find added value that can make their offer more attractive to the prospect.

d. Personal Selling Objectives

The purpose of personal selling is to achieve better sales results and build long-term relationships with customers. Here are some of the main objectives of personal selling (Haryanti, 2022):

a) Creating Confidence

Personal selling is an effective way to build personal and mutually beneficial relationships with customers. Salespeople can establish ongoing communication, provide good service, and better meet customer needs. This helps in building trust, loyalty, and long-term relationships with customers (Julitawaty et al., 2020).

b) Improve Product Understanding

Through personal selling, salespeople can provide detailed explanations of products or services to customers. They can better explain the features, benefits, and added value of the product. This helps customers to understand the product more deeply and make a more informed purchase decision (Alwi, 2022).

c) Infrequent Purchases

Personal selling can also assist in one-off or infrequent product purchases by customers. Although personal selling is generally associated with selling products that require deeper consideration and more intense interaction, it still has an important role in facilitating one-off product purchases (Azeez & Abeyratna, 2020).

d) Products That Have a High Value Per Unit (High Unit Value)

Personal selling is important when doing product presentations and demonstrations to customers. Salespeople can use visual aids, product samples, or even live demonstrations to showcase product benefits and features to customers especially for products that need to be presented such as laboratory equipment, cameras, and high-value products such as cars.

e) Products That are Designed According to Needs (Goods Tailored to Needs)

In addition, personal selling also aims to promote products according to consumer demand such as clothing and shoes.

f) Sale by Trade-ins

Companies that offer trade-ins also need personal selling in their marketing process.

e. Personal Selling Factors

Personal selling is chosen as an appropriate marketing strategy by considering three main factors: product, budget, and customer. The following is an explanation of these factors in the context of personal selling selection (Haryanti, 2022):

a) Product Factors

Product Complexity: If the product has complex features or requires in-depth understanding to use, personal selling becomes important. Through personal selling, salespeople can directly explain and provide demonstrations on how to properly use the product to customers. This allows customers to understand the value and benefits of the product better. **Added Value of the Product:** If the product offers significant added value or has advantages that differentiate it from competitors, personal selling can be an effective way to communicate that added value to customers. Salespeople can actively explain the benefits of the product and how it can fulfill the customer's needs or problems.

b) Budget Factors

Importance of Product Value: Personal selling is suitable for products with high value or sales involving significant amounts of money. When customers are faced with a major purchase decision, salespeople can

provide comprehensive information, overcome objections, and give customers the confidence to make the right decision.

Potential Profits: If the product has a high profit margin or has the potential to generate significant sales, companies may be willing to allocate sufficient budget for personal selling. Personal selling has the ability to create personalized interactions with customers and influence them directly, resulting in higher sales conversion rates.

c) Customer Factor

Customer Needs: Personal selling allows salespeople to interact directly with customers, listen to their needs, and deliver solutions accordingly. If products need to be tailored to individual needs or if customers require detailed explanations of products, personal selling can provide an effective platform to meet these needs. The implementation of the activity is presented in PPT form through ZOOM, The sample socialization materials are documented in the following photos:

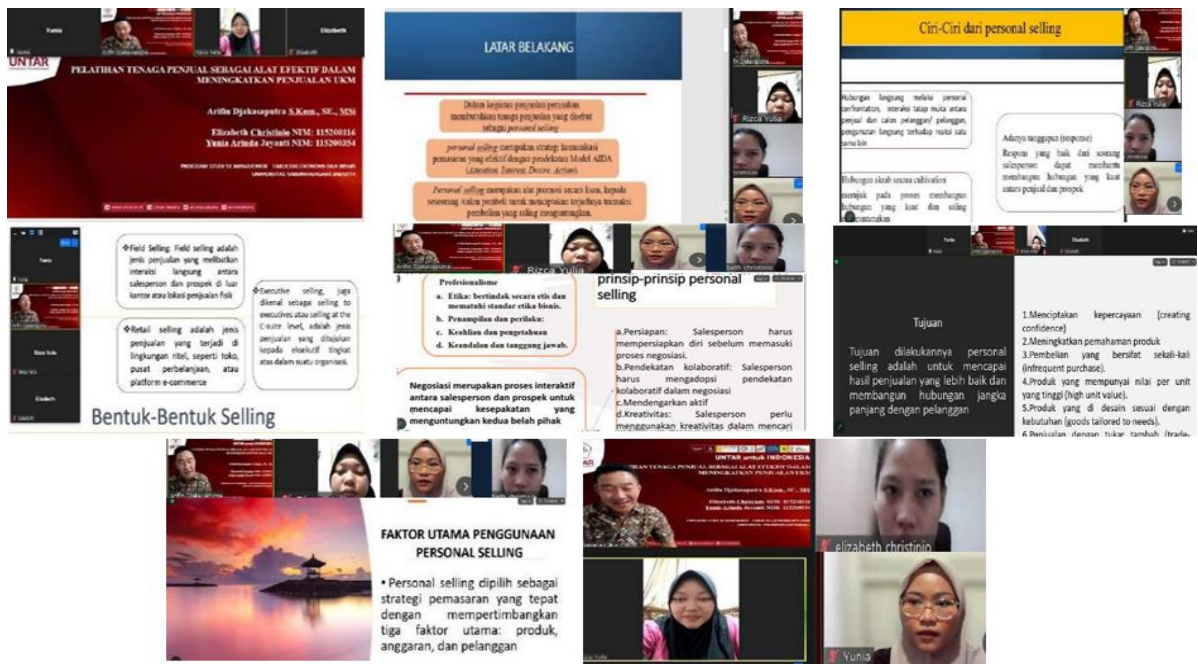


Figure 2. Zoom Activity Photo

At the end of the activity, a pretest and posttest were conducted, regarding the delivery of the activity material that had been carried out. Partners were asked to answer a questionnaire about whether they understood the material that had been delivered after participating in the socialization activities. Using a Likert scale with the provisions: very do not understand (5), very understand (4) understand (3), quite understand (2), do not understand (1). Very do not understand Based on partner answers from filling out the pre-test and post-test in table 1:

Table 1. Recapitulation of Partner Answers

| Indicator | Category | Answer | Percentage (%) |
|--|------------------------|--------|----------------|
| The material on the introduction of personal selling strategies makes mom understand | Very Poorly Understood | 0 | 0 |
| | Do not understand | 0 | 0 |
| | Understand enough | 0 | 0 |
| | Understood | 0 | 0 |
| | Understand very well | 100 | 100% |
| The material about the characteristics of personal selling makes you understand | Very Poorly Understood | 0 | 0 |
| | Do not understand | 0 | 0 |
| | Understand enough | 0 | 0 |
| | Understood | 0 | 0 |
| | Understand very well | 100 | 100% |
| The material about the forms of personal selling makes mom understand | Very Poorly Understood | 0 | 0 |
| | Do not understand | 0 | 0 |
| | Understand enough | 0 | 0 |
| | Understood | 0 | 0 |
| | Understand very well | 100 | 100% |
| The material on the purpose and factors of personal selling makes mom understand | Very Poorly Understood | 0 | 0 |
| | Do not understand | 0 | 0 |
| | Understand enough | 0 | 0 |
| | Understood | 0 | 0 |
| | Understand very well | 100 | 100% |

The results of the evaluation of the partners' answers to the understanding of the material were well understood. Evidenced by the answers of partners who 100% can understand the material presented.

4. Conclusion

Training on product development management strategies is carried out by socializing to partners including background, important things to consider in developing & introducing new products, the key to successful introduction of new products and the five characteristics used to explain the level of acceptance and spread of new products has run smoothly. Partners were eager to receive the material presented by the PKM team. During the socialization process, partners had many discussions and questions and answers with PKM implementers. The results of the evaluation of the partners' answers to the understanding of the material are well understood. It is evident from the answers of partners who 100% can understand the material presented.

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