

What a blind date taught me about selling wine



In 2003, I lived in New York City and friends took me to happy hour to celebrate my new job overseas. In typical happy hour fashion, there were plenty of shots, jokes and laughter. I hit it off with the couple next to me. The guy was quiet, and his wife the gregarious one, with a strong New York accent and a Joan Rivers wit.

Within one hour of meeting this couple, the lady said she wanted to set me up with her friend. My first thought was, "No freaking way!" My first blind date experience years before was a nightmare, and I vowed no more blind dates. It puzzled me that someone I had just met wanted to set me up on a date.

To sell wine, make people feel comfortable

How could she feel confident that I would take her recommendation and try a blind date with her friend? She relied on the same confidence you can use to recommend wine: she made me feel good about the decision and earned my trust.

There's much ignorance, intimidation, and many misperceptions surrounding wine, so as salespeople, our first responsibility is providing comfort to customers.

The best way to make people feel comfortable is to engage them in conversation. Ask questions to see what they like to help you sell your wine.

Be a cheerleader



Talk up your wine as if it's the best thing since sliced bread. Make the customer feel excited about the wine before even tasting it, just as I felt comfortable before meeting my blind date. Upon learning my soon-to-be-date and I shared several things in common, I could relate to her, which put me at ease.

Relate your wine to the needs of your customers. Is it the holiday season and your wine is an excellent match for a holiday meal? Is the wine on sale? Perhaps it's summer and you're offering a rose. Asking questions to determine the customer's needs helps as well.

I have read about the power of influence, and based on this experience, I assume it's true. A person I had just met convinced me into going on a blind date.

It's all about the details

Remember the details scene in the film *Reservoir Dogs*? For those who haven't seen it, the scene involves two undercover cops, with the veteran teaching the rookie the importance of using details to sell a story.

Using the holiday example above, avoid general statements like, "This wine is great for holidays." Use details to drive your point. "The ABC Pinot Noir is a perfect holiday wine. The fruit and low tannins in this wine pairs with the light proteins and flavors found in holiday dishes."

The use of personal testimonials is powerful in sales. For example, speak when you brought the ABC Pinot Noir to a holiday gathering, and now it is a staple at your family's holiday gatherings.

Enthusiasm is contagious, and people feed off of your energy



This matchmaker didn't suggest I meet her friend; she treated it like it was a matter of national security. She promoted her friend to the point that I felt like I had no choice but to go on the blind date. If you don't believe in what you are selling, people will notice.

I went on that blind date, and we got along so well that we went on two more dates. A month later, I left the country - go figure.

I always wondered if that matchmaker worked in sales. If not, someone should recruit her.

Cheers

Curt Sassak