

Business-to-Business Shadow

Chad Johnson from Interstate Batteries



Megan Thompson
Strategic Sales

Introduction

Company Background

Interstate Batteries began in 1952 after when John Searcy started selling and delivering car batteries to wholesalers in the Dallas/Fort Worth out of his pickup in 1950. He based his business on offering the best-quality product, provide amazing service, and treat the customer with respect. About 15 years ago, smaller Interstate Battery stores were built and are currently located around the United States. Chad Johnson and his manager Joe Anderson explained to me that Interstate Battery bought out Power Patrol which was mainly car batteries. They were able to buy out the competition and continue their success around the nation. The only locale Interstate Batteries is located in Logan, UT but in about a year, there should be another store opening. Right now, the franchise for this market is in the area of Brigham City, UT, to Rexburg, ID, to Jackson Hole, WY and most of southeast Idaho.

Products Sold, and to Whom

Interstate Battery sells a wide variety of batteries to all different types of businesses. Their biggest seller is the car battery. Now with Interstate Battery, they assist customers to find which type of battery is needed based on the vehicle, and are able to install the battery for the customer in the parking lot. The employee's also install batteries for phones, hearing aids, laptops, and key fobs. Although the price of batteries is a bit more at Interstate Batteries, it includes the price of labor and installation.

The types of customers range from retirement homes, to the police department, to farmers. When it comes to retirement homes, their main need is batteries for hearing aids. This

is a genuine service that Interstate Battery offers by visiting the retirement home to replace and/or install new batteries for the customers. Other types of customers include the police department, ambulances, and sheriffs. The product the police department regularly purchases are batteries for safety flares, while sheriff vehicles and ambulances require car batteries. Also, schools are a large customer base for Interstate Batteries because they purchase any time of battery needed. Finally, regular customers are able to purchase batteries from the store for retail products such as laptops, cell phones, and key fobs.

Salesperson—Chad Johnson

Chad Johnson is a portable power consultant at Interstate Batteries. He has been there for a year and a month and has enjoyed every minute of it. Chad has a great sense in what customers need and how to fulfill them and he is genuinely excited to show buyers what he can do for them with products from Interstate Batteries. He also bases his decisions on integrity, which is great, because he understands how customers today can be customers forever if they are provided what they are promised and not betrayed along with that. Chad has been through Professor Bone's sales course and it has really paid off for him. I could tell during his sales calls how he related to the Griffin Hill Sales System and he is doing an amazing job. I do believe he will go far in a sales future because he has a great work ethic.

Product Knowledge

At Interstate Batteries, knowledge of products and how to preserve this is very important. When I talked to Joe and Chad, they explained that even though there are so many different types of batteries and products, Interstate Batteries is mainly there to help customer needs and solve

them. A new employee needs to understand how to change batteries, such as cell phone batteries and car batteries, but also how to rebuild and charge the batteries. Without this knowledge, the employee could incorrectly inform a customer on how to preserve their batteries which could in turn upset the customer and lose their business. Interstate Batteries also teaches new employees battery chemistries. All knowledge on every single battery is not needed, but they need to know the basics on how a battery is built, what it is made of, and how to solve it if a problem arose.

Selling Skills

There are many different types of skills that are needed to be able to sell at Interstate Batteries. An extremely important selling skill is to be willing to learn. If it happens that as a salesperson you need to make a cold call, you need to do it. The worst that can come from it is that you learn from it, and be more prepared for the next sales call. As much as they need to be willing to learn, they also need to be excited to learn. When they meet with businesses to inform them of their products, they need to be excited about the product and excited about helping out the customer. An outgoing and social salesperson will be able to get the attention of a customer enough to educate them on the product and what Interstate Batteries is able to do for them. A salesperson also needs to be a problem-solver. If they get in a tough situation where the customer is stubborn or has an objection, they need to find a way to prove to the customer the benefits they can offer and solve the situation. Finally, an important selling skills is to always be service-minded. As much as each salesperson wants to close each and every deal, it will not happen, but they always need to remember that the customer has a need and they are there to service that need, whatever it be.

Sales Calls

Strengths of Selling Presentation

I had the chance to shadow Chad Johnson on three different types of sales calls. Whether it was a cold call or a scheduled call, his biggest strength was his personality skills. He kept the customer feeling completely comfortable by being personable so it didn't feel like he was selling the business or his product. He did a great job of never coming off too aggressive or pushy which helped the overall sales call. For the first cold call, we visited the Cache County School District, and before we headed over there, he went and bought them a bundle of donuts. As it turned out, the gentleman he wanted to meet with was not working at the moment, so he left them with the secretary whom seemed extremely excited. This gesture showed the thoughtfulness Chad had toward the school district staff in that he was prepared even if the meeting was not able to happen.

With the next sales call, we visited Coca Cola and met with a gentleman who was interested in ordering batteries for delivery trucks and receiving information on how to maintain batteries and know when to routinely monitor them. He was extremely reserved and Chad did an excellent job of maintaining his joyful self to not overwhelm the customer. Also, when the customer made suggestions on what he needed for the company, Chad did a great job of furthering his needs by clarifying and giving a solution to each of his needs. I saw a lot of the Griffin Hill Integrity Sales System in Chad as he clarified the customer's needs. He asked specific questions such as status quo and vision questions to thoroughly examine what they are using now. Then he followed with likes and frustration questions to find out what he currently enjoyed, and what needed changing. This showed a lot to me about Chad, because he wasn't there to sell his product, but instead to find out what Coca Cola needed and wanted.

Finally, the best strength of all was that he took notes and mentioned that he was going to send them data within the next week. This thrilled the man from Coca Cola and I could tell he was excited that Chad took notes and that he was listening. He also did a great job of recapping the meeting with the buyer, and scheduling another appointment to meet. Chad was very prepared for his meeting and it showed towards the buyer.

Weaknesses of Selling Presentation

Chad did an amazing job at each of the three sales calls I shadowed, but there were a few weaknesses I feel are very easy to fix. A main weakness I noticed was his interruptions. During both the cold call to the Cache County School District and with Coca Cola, he would ask a question to the customer, and before they responded, or in the middle of the response, he would interrupt and give feedback. I understand he was extremely excited about the products and services he is able to produce, but coming off as aggressive can diminish customer loyalty and turn them off immediately. Another weakness I noticed was his amount of pen-clicking. I don't know if it bothered just me, but when we visited Coca Cola, I could tell the guy was a little paranoid with it. All customers are different, and some things annoy more than others, and it is great to eliminate the problem all-together.

Nonverbal Communication

When Chad wasn't listening or speaking, his nonverbal communication spoke for him. He used a lot of hand gestures and motions which corresponded to his excitement for the product and Interstate Batteries. Although the buyer from Coca Cola did not use eye contact at all during the sales call, Chad made it a point to talk to him directly, with no physical barriers, and prove to

him that he was listening. Chad also took notes during the meeting which showed to the buyer that he wanted to remember every part of the meeting and to refer back to it later. I wasn't told this, but I do believe it surprised the buyer when he took out his notebook to take notes, because he knew what he was saying was actually being heard. Using nonverbal communication can either make or break a sales call depending on the buyer. No eye contact can discourage a buyer, while intensively listening and taking notes can persuade a buyer to close the deal.

Objection Handling

I didn't witness an objection while on the sales call that came from a buyer themselves, but we did encounter cold calls which can come off as an objection. We visited an apartment complex to speak with the tenant about buying batteries from Interstate Batteries and he was not available. I do believe that that is a nonverbal objection because they simply know you are visiting and do not want to buy, and Chad explained how he will call and set up a schedule appointment to visit with him in person. He said an objection he hears the most is either the price of the product or that most buyers tend to stall. When it comes to objections regarding the price of Interstate Batteries, he explains to them that the labor and installation is put into the price of each product. Once he told that to the buyer from Coca Cola, he immediately perked up a little. Objections like price that need to be explained to customers or they tend to assume the worst.

Closing and Asking for the Order

Chad didn't particularly close and ask for the order at Coca Cola because of the objection of price. He did however schedule the next event to meet again with a price options table for the

buyer to examine. When I asked him about how he closes and asks for the order from a buyer, he said by that point in a meeting, it is assumed and they are usually the ones to partake in closing. He said that once they are shown all of the pricing details and are asking for another meeting to see what products they can install in their company, it is a done deal and paperwork is started. He has never surprised a buyer by suddenly asking them for their business and closing the order because he knows that can turn them off immediately and stop all future business.

Maintaining Relationships with Customers

Interstate Batteries understands that they are not there to turn a profit or to close deals, but more to service people and solve their problems and needs. Chad helped me understand this by showing me his notes he has taken with every customer. Although I believe this would be better typed after each appointment, he enjoys having it written down to refer back to each appointment. He says he maintains customers by being loyal. If he tells them he is going to email a spreadsheet of their options, he will have it done before they are expecting it. He also explained to me that he will never make a promise with knowing he can't fulfill it. Chad does not want to lost trust from a buyer and diminish his credibility and Interstate Batteries.

Buyer Interview

Why Buy from One Company Rather than Another?

The only buyer I had a chance to speak with was the man from Coca Cola. Even though he wasn't the most personable individual, he shed some light on what it meant to buy from a good company. The main reason why he chooses one company over another is mainly price. He

said he cannot afford to lose profits by going with the more expensive company. Service was also very important to him. He gave me the example of having a delivery truck's battery go out and not being able to service it for a few days to a week. He said this doesn't just hurt business, but it hurts his trust. I could tell that this was important to him because he kept mentioning that if he receives a promise from a selling company, he wants a result. Coca Cola does not have time, nor do they have the money to have trucks stalling on deliveries.

What Main Benefits Do You Look For?

When Chad mentioned the on-going service he was going to provide, the buyer from Coca Cola was excited. Then when I interviewed him, he went back to Chad's point and mentioned that that was a benefit he wants to see for his business. He wants the service and value to know that every few months Interstate Batteries will test and re-install batteries if needed. They will also provide Coca Cola a schedule on each delivery truck that they monitor for the battery and when it needs to be tested and/or replaced. This will keep product delivery efficient for Coca Cola and continue the relationship with Interstate Batteries.

How Does the Salesperson Influence Your Decision?

When I asked this question, he referred back to the last question. He mentioned how he wants to work with a salesperson that is ethical, loyal, trustful, and has Coca Cola's best interest at heart. He does not want to work with a salesperson that is there for the commission or sale (which he can normally tell by meeting them), but he wants someone that is there to service the delivery trucks and have them running properly at all times. He also said trust comes from both the buyer and seller, because the buyer has to be able to trust the seller in their product

knowledge, while the seller has to trust that the buyer understands what is needed for properly running vehicles. The buyer knows it will be more work and take extra time to routinely check and maintain the delivery trucks, but it will provide success throughout the entire company when deliveries are made on time.

What Makes a Good, Bad, and Ugly Salesperson?

The buyer mentioned that a salesperson can be all of the above—good, bad, and ugly. Good comes from their heart and if they are truly in for the business for the buyer, or for the money. A bad salesperson continuously will not follow through on promises, leaves the buyer hanging on sales calls, and does not perform to their fullest ability. He said he can normally tell how a salesperson is going to act in the future by their attitude to his objections. He said he regularly throws in an absurd objection to see how they will handle it. Bad salespeople usually become defensive and attack the buyer, while a good salesperson rationally learns to understand their objection and find a way to handle the situation calmly with the buyer.

Summary

Main Takeaways

I learned more than I thought I would from this experience. This sales course has taught me a lot from a book, but putting it into a real-life situation really opened my eyes on what it takes to become a successful salesperson. I understand now that it takes persistence and hard work because not every sales call is successful with an order. I thought it was awkward when I visited a company with Chad that he did not schedule an appointment with prior, but sometimes

it is impossible to connect with a buyer over technology, and meeting with them in person is needed.

I also learned how sales can be exciting because of the different types of buyers. I honestly thought that Interstate Batteries would have a few businesses they could sell batteries to, but as I experienced, everyone uses batteries, and there are so many different types of challenges that come with that. For example, perhaps Coca Cola decides to continue to do business with Interstate Batteries in the future. This means that Chad, or another representative of the business needs to learn how to efficiently remove and re-install delivery truck batteries and how to test them. This could become a tedious job each month or year, but it also expands his overall knowledge because he now knows how to deal with semi-truck batteries.

I can see myself using the skills I learned from Chad and also the Griffin Hill Integrity Sales System. What we learned in the book gives a salesperson every different scenario which then can be broken down to be specific for each buyer. After presenting my midterm and final sales call, I realized what I am good at, and what I need to work on.

My strengths of a salesperson include personable, conformable, and genuine. I am able to talk to a buyer and not be intimidated but also not intimidating. I am able to make a conversation comfortable for a buyer and myself so we are both at ease and ready to agree on solutions for their needs. By conformable, I mean that I am able to change my personality to match and/or sell to a buyer. I am very analytical but I can also be an expressionist. After meeting a buyer for only a few minutes, it is simple to figure them out, but it takes skill to adapt to them. When it comes to genuine, I know I will always put the customer's needs before mine. As a salesperson, buyers can determine when they are being persuaded and when they are being coaxed into a sale. The amount of money, gifts, or commission does not matter to me if a buyer

will not continue business with me after one sale. A relationship needs to be built and continuously respected in order for a buyer to trust me.

Although, I do have a few things to work on when it comes to a career in sales. I know I would have the same issue Chad did when he would start interrupting a customer. It's not that I would want to interfere with their ideas, but it would be because I am so excited about what I am able to do for them. Excitement can be a positive to some buyers, but to others it is a turn-off. I will need to compose myself while in selling situations but still remain enthusiastic about what I can offer.

I look forward to using these skills in my everyday life. Since starting this class, I have already started using tools from the Griffin Hill Integrity Sales System that I first thought wouldn't have an impact on my life. It wasn't in a sales demeanor, it was in a persuasive statement, and the questions I asked made an impact on the other person. Sales are all around me, so I need to be prepared for whatever comes in the future.

Confirmed appointment for shadow project:

shadowing Interstate Battery

↑ ↓ ×



Megan Thompson 9/19/14
To: Chad Johnson ↕

Actions ▾

Perfect! See you on Thursday!

Megan Thompson



Chad Johnson (chad@interstate-batteries.com) Add to contacts 9/19/14 ▶
To: Megan Thompson ↕

Actions ▾

Megan,

Thursday morning should work out best. If you want to meet me at our store around 8:30. I think that should allow us to go see a few different customers in this area, and still get you back in time.

Thanks,

Chad Johnson

portable power consultant

Interstate All Battery

cell: (435) 554 8308

Copy of the thank you I sent to Chad:



Megan Thompson 9/26/14
To: chad@interstate-batteries.com ✉

Actions ▾

Chad,

I would really like to thank you again for allowing me to shadow you on a few sales calls you had.

Thank you,
Megan Thompson

Sales Shadow

↑ ↓ ✕



Chad Johnson (chad@interstate-batteries.com) Add to contacts 9/26/14 ▶ Photo Actions ▾
To: Megan Thompson ✉

Megan,
Thanks for going with me it was my pleasure.

Don't forget to ask about our free battery disposal Program.

Thanks,
Chad Johnson

Portable Power Consultant | cell: 435.554.8308 | chad@interstate-batteries.com
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