

# *Sales Strategy: Customer by Customer*

by Stephanie Bond

Anne Lamott wrote a wonderful book about writing (and life) titled *Bird by Bird*. In it, she tells the story of her brother lamenting a school project that entailed drawing and writing a report on each of the state birds. When he asked his father how he would be able to finish such a daunting project, his father replied simply, “Bird by bird.” Lamott advocates taking the advice of her father when faced with a larger-than-life project or problem—break it down to its simplest parts and tackle one small part at a time.

When foot traffic is down after the holiday season, there are two ways to increase sales: 1) advertise to increase traffic or 2) sell (“close”) or sell more to customers who are already walking through the door. Here are a few tips to close a higher percentage of customers:

***Establish personal contact.*** Speak to each customer as they enter and offer assistance. Be sure to make good eye contact and extend a friendly smile. If the customer says they simply want to browse, respond with something upbeat, such as, “You came to the right place! There’s something here for everyone.”

***Place something in their hand.*** Give each customer something to feel and read—a postcard, a bookmark, a flyer—to engage as many senses as possible during their shopping experience.

***Divulge “insider” information.*** If you let the customer know about bargain tables and discount programs “from one reader to another,” they’ll feel special.

***Remind a customer of his/her shopping list.*** If you say something like, “Or if I can’t help you select a book for someone else as a gift, let me know,” you might jog their memory about an upcoming birthday.

***Make the customer linger.*** Pay attention to ambient details—the more time a customer spends in your store, the more likely they will find something to purchase.

***Go for incremental sales.*** As the customer is checking out, remind them you have gift certificates if they need a gift for an upcoming event.

***Solicit referrals.*** Ask buying customers to help you get the word out about your store or a special sale or event: “Please tell your friends and neighbors that we’re now open late on Saturday.”

(continued)

© Stephanie Bond, Inc. All rights reserved.

Article first appeared in *Romance Sells*, a publication of Romance Writers of America.

## *Sales Strategy: Customer by Customer* (page 2)

by Stephanie Bond

***Give referrals.*** If you don't have a copy of a book and the customer needs it right away, make a couple of phone calls to other bookstores to try to find it for them. You wouldn't have gotten the sale anyway, but now you have a grateful customer!

***Give customers a reason to return.*** Don't simply invite the customer to return to your store—let them know about upcoming events or sales, or ask if you can add them to your mailing list.

If you establish a “customer by customer” sales program, not only will sales improve, but your advertising costs will likely decrease as you build a loyal customer base who will advertise *for* you—by word of mouth! ~**SBond**

© Stephanie Bond, Inc. All rights reserved.

Article first appeared in *Romance Sells*, a publication of Romance Writers of America.