

SMALL SALES,

BIG WINS:

Rediscovering **the Art of Selling**
in the **Hearth Industry**

BY DAVE ANDERSON



The Small Sales Opportunity

Walk into most hearth showrooms today, and you'll witness a familiar scene: salespeople gravitating toward the big-ticket items while smaller products gather dust. Gas logs sit ignored. Electric fireplaces get brushed off as "entry-level." Service packages are afterthoughts. Meanwhile, a steady stream of revenue walks right out the door.

Here's the hard truth our industry needs to face: Those "small" sales add up to big dollars. While your competition chases only the major installations, the retailers who master the full spectrum of products—from \$200 gas log sets to \$20,000 outdoor kitchens—are building sustainable, profitable businesses that weather any economic storm.

The math is simple, but the execution requires a fundamental shift in how we approach every customer interaction.

If There's Time to Scroll, There's Time to Troll

The biggest missed opportunity in most showrooms isn't product knowledge or pricing—it's follow-up. While your team scrolls through social media during slow afternoons, qualified leads are cooling off, open quotes are aging, and potential customers are visiting your competitors.

Here's the reality: Sales don't fall from the sky (at least not anymore). Every lead that walks through your door represents an investment in marketing, overhead, and opportunity cost. When that lead leaves without buying, you have two choices: Let them disappear into the void or actively work to convert them. The difference between a thriving business and a struggling one often comes down to this single discipline.

If your salespeople have time to check Instagram, they have time to call three open quotes. If they

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can scroll through TikTok, they can follow up with last week’s showroom visitors. This discipline becomes even more critical with smaller sales. After all, the customers considering gas logs or electric fireplaces usually aren’t going to chase you down. They’ll quietly buy elsewhere if you don’t stay engaged. The most successful retailers treat every slow moment as an opportunity to turn yesterday’s browsers into today’s buyers, regardless of purchase size—because follow-through isn’t just good customer service, it’s the foundation of consistent revenue growth.

Don’t Underestimate the “Little” Sales

But even when your follow-up game is strong, there’s another barrier to consistent revenue: the salespeople who dismiss certain products before the conversation even begins. Walk into most showrooms, and you’ll hear gas logs described as “just an accessory” or electric fireplaces dismissed as “entry-level products.” This mindset is costing your business serious money. These “smaller” sales represent some of the fastest-moving, highest-margin opportunities in your showroom—if you know how to position them correctly.

Consider this reality: Gas logs and electric fireplaces move quickly with minimal installation complexity. While your team spends weeks nurturing a complex outdoor kitchen project, they could close multiple gas log sales in the same timeframe. More importantly, these products appeal to a specific customer segment that values simplicity and aesthetics over BTU output, particularly in high-end homes where design trumps everything else.

I learned this lesson the hard way in my previous role. I’d push customers away from gas logs toward inserts or try to convert electric fireplace shoppers to other fuel sources. What I was actually doing was talking myself out of sales. It’s not uncommon to see gas logs or electric fireplaces installed in

million-dollar homes where the homeowner prioritizes convenience and visual appeal over heating capacity. When you ignore these opportunities because they seem “too small,” you’re essentially walking past hundred-dollar bills because you’re waiting for thousands—and missing the steady revenue stream that keeps businesses profitable year-round.

Stop Letting Customers Walk

Beyond product bias, there’s an even more fundamental problem: the customers who leave your showroom without any commitment whatsoever. We’ve all watched it happen—a couple spends 30 minutes looking at fireplaces, asks good questions, seems genuinely interested, then walks out with nothing more than a business card and a “we’ll think about it.”

This scenario represents one of the biggest profit leaks in retail. The assumption that “if they’re serious, they’ll come back” is pure wishful thinking. Most customers who leave without making some form of commitment simply don’t return. Meanwhile, your marketing dollars spent getting them through the door are gone forever, and they’re likely visiting your competitors before the day is over.

The solution isn’t complicated, but it requires discipline. Never let qualified prospects leave empty-handed. Get their contact information—name, phone, email—and put a written quote in their hands. Even better, schedule a site visit on the spot. If they resist a home appointment, use tools like Redfin or Zillow to pull up photos of their home and write a preliminary quote based on what you can see. You’d be amazed how much information these platforms provide. Don’t let “I need to see it first” become your excuse for inaction—because every customer who walks out uncommitted is revenue walking out the door.

The Commission Question

Of course, all of these strategies depend on one critical factor: having salespeople who are actually motivated to execute them. And here's where many showrooms get it backwards—they pay hourly wages and then wonder why their team doesn't sell with urgency.

The math is simple: Hourly employees rarely sell like their income depends on it because it doesn't. Whether they close one sale or five, their paycheck stays the same. But commission-based programs that reward effort and performance can completely transform a showroom's energy. When every interaction has the potential to directly impact a salesperson's income, behaviors change dramatically.

This becomes especially important when you're trying to build a culture that values all sales opportunities. A salesperson earning hourly wages might dismiss a gas log inquiry to focus on "more important" tasks. But that same person on commission will recognize that multiple \$20 commissions throughout the day add up to meaningful money. Sure, everyone loves landing a \$300+ commission on a major installation, but smart salespeople understand that consistent smaller commissions create steady income, and those "little" products often move faster and require less time investment than the big-ticket items.

Passion Sells

But even the most motivated commission structure won't overcome a fundamental sales truth: Customers can sense when you don't believe in what you're selling. And that's because of something that no CRM system or sales script can replicate—genuine passion for your products.

When salespeople have actually cooked on the barbecue they're recommending or have your brand of fireplace heating their own homes, it changes everything. Their enthusiasm becomes authentic instead of manufactured. They speak from experience rather than reading from spec sheets. Customers can feel this difference immediately, and it often becomes the deciding factor in their buying decision.

The solution is straightforward: Get your products into your salespeople's hands. Many manufacturers offer employee purchase programs specifically for this purpose—take advantage of them. Let your team live with the products, use them regularly, and develop genuine relationships with what they're selling. When your gas log salesperson has spent winter evenings enjoying the ambiance of their own gas logs, they're not just selling a product—they're sharing an experience. And that authentic enthusiasm is worth more than any commission structure or sales technique you could implement.

Bring Back the Art of Sales

However, all the motivation and product passion in the world won't help if your team has forgotten the fundamentals of actually selling. Somewhere between the pandemic boom years and today's more cautious consumer climate, many salespeople have lost the art of true connection with customers.

During the easy years, customers walked in ready to buy. "Take my money; I don't care what it costs" was a phrase you'd actually hear in showrooms. But those days are over. Today's consumers are cost-conscious, comparison-shopping, and far more deliberate in their purchasing decisions.

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They're not just browsing—they're evaluating whether your salesperson understands their specific needs and can solve their particular problems.

This shift demands a return to fundamental sales skills that many have let atrophy. Being genuinely personable, asking thoughtful questions, and listening—really listening—to what customers are telling you is more powerful than any product brochure or spec sheet. The goal isn't to pitch features; it's to understand their situation so completely that your recommendations feel inevitable rather than pushy.

Don't be afraid to ask the tough questions: "Have you been working with anyone else on this project?" or "What other products are you considering?" Your job is to make their visit to your showroom their final stop in the decision-making process. But that only happens when you've connected with them as a person, understood their needs better than your competition, and demonstrated that you're genuinely invested in finding them the right solution, whether it's a \$200 accessory or a \$20,000 luxury fireplace.

The Formula That Works

There's no silver bullet for growing sales in today's

market, but there is a proven formula. Disciplined follow-up ensures no opportunity slips through the cracks. Respecting every product in your line-up—from gas logs to major installations—captures revenue others ignore. Proper compensation structures keep your team focused on every sale, while genuine product passion makes their recommendations authentic. And fundamental sales skills tie it all together by creating real connections with customers.

Each element reinforces the others, but they all serve the same purpose: building a business that thrives on consistent revenue from every customer interaction. Small sales might not grab headlines, but they pay the bills month after month. And when you add them up over time, they create the foundation for sustainable growth.

The path forward is straightforward. Start by auditing your current processes this week. Are you capturing every lead? Training your team on your full product line? Compensating for comprehensive sales performance? If not, pick one area and start there. The retailers who embrace the complete sales spectrum—from gas logs to outdoor kitchens—aren't just surviving in today's market, they're building the kind of sustainable, profitable businesses that become industry leaders.



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