

Ethical Selling

Alfonso Triviño, marketing and sales director for Editorial Clie (www.clie.es), in Spain, reflects on the ethics of Christian sales professionals.

The world's economy has not recovered from the nightmare that began with the dot-com bust, followed by the accounting scandals of large corporations, which exacerbated the post-9/11 economic crises of the United States, much of Europe, and some Latin American countries—not to mention the impact of recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

And, the phrase most often used by financial experts worldwide to describe the current uncertainty is that there is a *lack of confidence*—in the market, companies, countries, institutions and people.

Solid foundations for our relationships must be set once again. A basic element to restore consumer confidence is the recovery of *ethics* and moral values.

Ethics and trade

Adam Smith, the father of the study of economics, was above all a moralist. He based his theories about the creation of wealth on the virtue of seeking one's self-interest, which he invariably linked to the Christian virtues of compassion, generosity, and the search for collective benefits via interdependent relationships. The justification of all trade lies in the benefit for all parties involved.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

1. Rom. 13:1-7, Titus 3:1-2 ¶ 2. Prov. 10:14, 11:13, 20:19, 25:9-10 ¶ 3. Gen. 9:20-27, Prov. 12:23 ¶ 4. Ps. 15; 1 Cor. 4:2 ¶ 5. Prov. 12:17-20, 21:6 ¶ 6. Matt. 25:14-30, Luke 12:42-48 ¶ 7. Deut. 1:16-18, Prov. 16:13, 18:13, Eph. 4:25 ¶ 8. Rom. 14, 15:7; Gal. 2:8-9 ¶ 9. Prov. 11:14, Rom. 12:18; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil 4:2 ¶ 10. 1 Cor. 10:31-32; Gal. 2:11-14 ¶ 11. Prov. 17:17 ¶ 12. Gen. 13:1-9; 1 Cor. 3:1-10 ¶ 13. Rom. 12:16, Jas. 2:1-12 ¶ 14. Jer. 9:23-24, 1 Pet. 5:5 ¶ 15. Rom. 15:1-3; Phil. 2:4 ¶ 16. Luke 10:25-37, Jas. 2:15-16.

ONLINE RESOURCES

The Institute for Business, Technology, and Ethics: www.ethix.org
 Council for Ethics in Economics: www.businessethics.org
Electronic Journal of Business Ethics and Organization Studies: www.ejbo.org

But this is not news. “There is nothing new under the sun” (Eccl. 1:9). It is the Bible that provides the foundations needed for establishing healthy trade relations.

The Bible: an ethics manual

The Bible helps professionals to integrate their trade practices with Christian ethics, so they can be the servants they are called to be. Some principles and values are:

- 1) Comply fully with the law and its codes of conduct;
- 2) Maintain confidentiality;
- 3) Do not use privileged information;
- 4) Protect client privacy;
- 5) Use ethical criteria in publicity and marketing;
- 6) Be faithful in ‘small things’ and not just ‘big things;’
- 7) Sincerely promote freedom of expression and dialogue;
- 8) Allow for different views in relationships;
- 9) Look for consensus where differences arise;
- 10) Respect cultural differences in doing business in each country;
- 11) Aim for long-term relationships over short-term ones;
- 12) Switch from competition to co-operation;
- 13) Do not encourage situations of privilege or bias;
- 14) Flee from ostentation;
- 15) Seek others’ benefit and growth;
- 16) Create value and assume responsibility in society.

Christian sales professionals should not only meet modern society’s minimal ethical requirements, but strive for the standards Christ Himself set: “For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses

that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:20).

Christians should remember they are stewards in God’s service. They must remember that in the search for profits, they should also look for their clients to profit. The word *profit*, apart from its technical use in economics and accounting, carries ethical connotations for Christian salespersons. After all, “what *profit* is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” (Matt. 16:26, NKJV)

Sales: value or price?

Early in the Gospels we read Jesus’ answer to Satan: “Man does not live on bread alone” (Luke 4:4). What has true value can neither be bought nor sold—it is priceless.

Books have always had, and will have, value and prestige in society far above their actual price or cost. Therefore, Christians in publishing must ensure their books are worthy of the name *Christian*—from development through printing and sales.

Your name, company, editorial work, clients, suppliers, relationships—everything that makes up your publishing company—do they have value or do they have a price? Do they inspire confidence?

Now, more than ever, Christian sales professionals are needed to sell ethically, to share quality Christian literature around the world. ❖