

# Stand Up!

10 Things You Need to Do  
When a Customer Walks Through Your Door

# About the Author

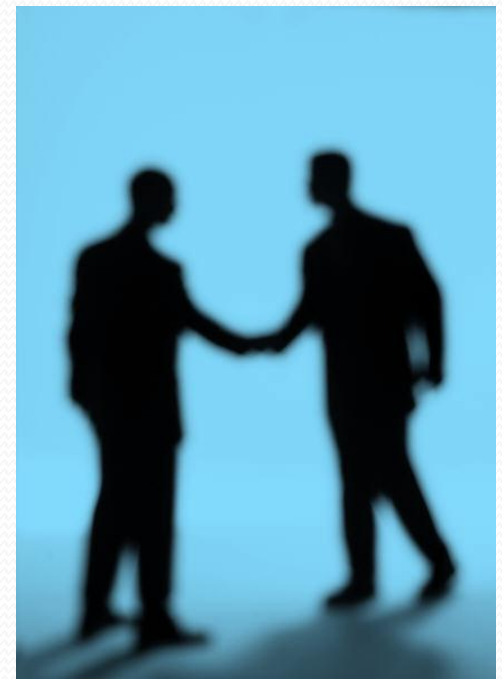


Bob Copper is owner and partner in charge of Self Storage 101, a consulting firm specializing in operational improvement, training, audits, feasibility and market studies, and due diligence. Bob has worked with hundreds of owners and managers to improve sales, collections and operations. As a self-storage owner, he has a unique perspective that relates to working with other operators. He's also a frequent speaker at the Inside Self-Storage World Expo and a product contributor to the [ISS Store](#).

# 1. Stand Up!

There are few more disrespectful or unprofessional things you can do as a self-storage manager than remain sitting behind your desk when a customer walks in. Looking up at customers instead of standing and offering a handshake is silly, and I'm convinced Facebook is partly to blame. Some managers just cannot tear themselves away long enough to stand up and look away from the computer monitor.

I do find it interesting that when I visit a facility with the owner or district manager, the manager always stands up, but not when I visit as a customer. When a manager shows more respect for the owner or district manager than a customer, something is very wrong. Customers should expect at least as much respect.



## 2. Smile



Why don't grouchy people find something else to do? Self-storage is such a manager-centric business, and the manager's ability to build rapport and make the customer comfortable with storing his goods is a critical skill the successful manager must have. Bad-tempered people can't do that. I have quit doing business with particular stores because of the indifference or downright grumpiness of the employees.

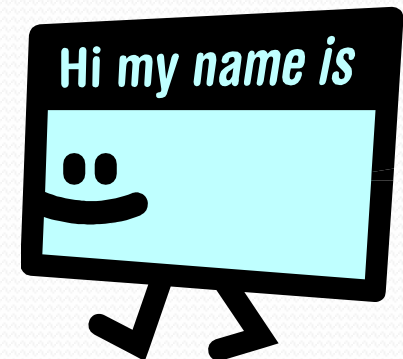
When customers walk in, welcome them and smile! Attempt to "catch" a smile when you say to the customer, "You must really need storage to come in on such a beautiful day!" It costs nothing but is invaluable.

It's also important to smile when you answer the phone. You're only going to get one chance to make a great first impression. Don't blow it with a poor attitude.

### 3. Get the Customer's Name

I still don't understand how a professional self-storage manager can conduct any form or fashion of a sales presentation without ever asking for a person's name or offering his own. When adults have conversations, they exchange names! Yet in almost all instances of phone and in-person mystery shopping, sadly, I find most managers never ask for a name.

In the manager-customer relationship, the customer always initiates. Something has happened in his life, and he contacts the facility to solve his storage problem. In 20 years, I've never had someone say to me, "I'm not telling you who I am!" Never. And even if I had experienced a few of those, I wouldn't quit asking!



## 4. Get the Customer's Phone Number

Every self-storage operation has a marketing budget, and every marketing effort has one consistent component: the facility phone number. All our efforts are geared toward getting the phone to ring because we know a ringing phone gives us a chance to tell our features and benefits story. Such an important two-way communication with prospects means we must ask for and document customer phone numbers.

Most self-storage managers have no idea how much it costs to make the phone ring and how valuable each and every lead is to the success of his facility. A great deal of rentals happen during follow-up calls; but without securing the valuable contact information, there can be no follow-up. Ask for and document the customer's contact number. That's what professionals do.



## 5. Offer to Show Units

If you cannot be bothered with showing a customer storage units, find another job. A manager's primary responsibility and first priority is to rent space. You cannot do that if you don't show units. Customers must see the product you have to offer, and you need to help them decide which unit size best meets their needs.

Be prepared to show at least three units: the one you think the customer needs, one a little bigger and one a little smaller. Take your time. Talk about how the customer can best use the space to effectively store his goods in a safe and convenient manner. Again, you have nothing more important to do all day than to rent space.



## 6. Avoid Asking ‘What Size Do You Need?’



Self-storage isn't supposed to operate like a self-serve gasoline station, yet that's how many managers pitch their services. When you ask the customer what size he needs, you're asking him to solve his own problem and assume he has any idea what the solution is. Both of these are a problem, and professional self-storage managers can do better.



## 7. Show Off Ancillary Goods/Services

It makes no sense to invest in boxes, tape and bubble wrap, or to take up space with rental trucks or put up tenant-insurance posters, if you're not going to mention these items to customers. If you don't talk about these products and services, you risk the chance that one of your competitors will, and you'll lose that customer.



## 8. Use Two Magic Words ...

Mastercard or Visa?

If you stop asking “yes or no” questions and start asking “yes or yes” questions, you’ll truly show how professional you’ve become. Professional salespeople never ask questions that can have a “no” answer.



For example, stop asking, “Do you want to sign up for auto-debit?” Instead say, “Our customers prefer the convenience of our auto-payment plan. Would you prefer to use Visa or Mastercard?” That’s a “yes or yes” question.

## 9. Point Out Secure Features

One of the most common reasons customers choose a particular self-storage facility is their perception of security. They may be leaving everything they own in one of your units, so they need reassurance their goods will be reasonably protected.

Pointing out, however, is not the same as guaranteeing. Never guarantee security. Show off your keypad, door alarms, security cameras and monitors. Please repair or replace those dark monitors behind the counter!



# 10. Rent Him a Storage Unit!

If a customer calls or walks into your office, he's not just shopping. Ninety percent of people looking for storage end up renting. As a manager, your job is to rent him space. Yet far too many managers just cannot bring themselves to close the deal! If you're not there to rent space, and do so assertively, what else is it you do all day? You have to rent space.



If a customer cannot quite bring himself to rent, simply ask “What can I do to get your business today?” What's the worst that can happen? He still might not rent, but he won't shoot you. Close the sale! That's why you have a job.

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