

【Series FUKUBITO】 Eiko Akiyama, Expert of Sales

Episode 6: HERMÈS, the memento of a customer for 40 years

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After 10 years of working as a manager of a flagship store and then as a regional director to develop stores at Tiffany & Co., Eiko Akiyama thought for the first time about becoming

independent. As if guided down that path, she received an offer from Shinsuke Kafuku, CEO of WORLD MODE HOLDINGS, and established BRUSH as one of its group companies to provide store management consulting and training. She became its CEO. Every day, she strives to teach the "winning" method and continues to the present. Akiyama has a customer with whom she has built 40 years of relationship so much that she was given a bag as her memento. How has Akiyama built such a long and deep relationship with her customers? ——

Eiko Akiyama, a store management consultant who knows thoroughly the keys of successful sales and serves as Chairman and CEO of BRUSH, looks back on her half-life. **Episode 6 of Series “FUKUBITO” Eiko Akiyama, Expert of Sales.**

I wonder if God is arranging it well

I was interested in becoming "independent", and at the timing as if God was arranging it well, I had an offer from Mr. Kafuku, CEO of WORLD MODE HOLDINGS. In 2015, as one of its group companies, I established BRUSH and became its CEO. Utilizing my experience in sales and management at imported luxury brands, I started to provide consulting for store management. Then, I received offers one after another from people who had worked with in more than 40 years of my career of sales.

For example, Mr. Tatsuya Yoshimoto, President/Representative Executive Officer of J FRONT RETAILING at the time, with whom I was involved when I was the store manager of

CELINE Daimaru Shinsaibashi store, requested me of a consulting contract for the concept shop "SIXIÈME GINZA" on the second floor of "GINZA SIX". I also received a request from the Italian luxury lingerie brand "LA PERLA", where the person I worked with at CELINE was the president. While working with various brands in this way, BRUSH gradually established its methods and training menu.



Image by: FASHIONSAP

Sales is "a job that sells happiness to customers"

At BRUSH, we believe that what is necessary for successful store management is to manage and develop the three things of "staff, customers, and numbers", and we have a method to make it possible and "win". In addition, we offer a variety of menus and contents according to the characteristics of the brand, such as the products and the price range. Along with this method, I always try to convey how great the job "sales" is and the "soul of a salesperson" that I have experienced in my career of sales life so far.

Sales is "a job that sells happiness to customers." For example, if you go shopping for clothes and wear something that looks good on you, you will be happy. Everyone will be so. What's more, the advice of salesperson makes customers more and more beautiful. I think that sales is a really interesting job that can "help customers be happy" like that. That's why I want to be a stick to support or to be like an oasis for salespeople who are working with worries and suffering, and I want to increase the number of salespeople and store managers with skills. Right now, my job is to provide such services, and I feel very fortunate that I am still involved in the work that I love.



From left to right: CEO of Tiffany & Co. NY headquarters, Akiyama, Parent-child customers, CEO of Tiffany & Co. Japan, Ms. Tokuno (2005)

Image by : Eiko Akiyama

I was once asked, "Why do you have so many customers?" I think it was because I was able to meet good people while responding to the customer in front of me with sincerity every day and I never let go of the hands of the customers who shared a heart with me. When it comes to customer development, there are many salespeople who give up on the relationship with the customer at an early stage because they are too quick to get results. But for example, I have a customer with whom I have built more than 40 years of relationship. It took five years from the time we met for her to purchase from me for the first time.

Today, in our society where a sense of speed and rationality are required, it seems there are many companies having a rule that data of customers no visiting the store must be

deleted in 2~3 years. But I think that the "management" for salespeople really to need to do is different. I have a client I haven't seen in almost 10 years, but I always keep in touch with her at least once a year. Even if you don't contact often your customers, I think it's important to maintain a good relationship.

Especially for customers who you can see each other's faces, you have to face each one and decide when to give up. For example, there may be a period when they have to temporarily stay away from shopping due to family care.

"Bag of HERMÈS" given by a customer as memento

I have family customers with whom I have built a relationship for more than 40 years. When I was working at CELINE. I met the mother and daughter of the family for the first time. They came to the store when they were preparing for the daughter's marriage. Since then, I have been taking care of choice of clothes for four generations, including grandmother, mother, daughter, and children of the daughter. From preparing for the daughter's marriage to clothes for work of the mother who took over the company and became CEO after the grandmother passed away, choice of clothes of the daughter's child for matchmaking, and the engagement ring for the daughter's son when he got married. Furthermore, when the father considered buying a luxury car or watch, I was consulted and researched to introduce them. Thankfully, even now, the daughter says, "I don't want to fail, so when I buy something expensive, I want Ms. Akiyama to come with me."



Family customers (left: the daughter, right: the mother)

Image by: Eiko Akiyama

In this way, I have had a long-term relationship with the family, and in 2015, the mother passed away from cancer. At that time, I received her bag of HERMÈS as her memento. Since the mother had known her important illness, every time I visited her home, she would recommend expensive Persian carpet or paintings by famous artists, saying, "How about as my memento for you?" However, I refused, saying, "Not really, I can't have it." I remember her saying, "Thanks to Ms. Akiyama, I was always able to wear good taste clothes that I liked well, and when I visited business partners as CEO, I was always very complimented and proud of it," and I was deeply moved.



“Bag of HERMÈS” given by a customer as her memento

Image by: FASHIONSNAP

Then, on the night when the mother passed away, I received a phone call and immediately visited to offer my condolences and final greetings. Then she wore a total set of the last clothes of ARMANI that I recommended. That was really emotional. Later, when I visited to offer incense to the deceased after the first seven days, the daughter handed me over a bag of HERMÈS and said “I have this from my mother for you. Ms. Akiyama won't accept this during I'm alive, so when I'm gone, tell her to use this for work.” Therefore, I

decided to take it. Even now, when I have important business negotiations, I carry it with me like a talisman.

There is another customer, who also has already passed away, with whom I had a relationship of 45 years. In this way, I can choose clothes at the milestones of the life of customers and make them happy. It is my great pleasure to be able to meet and talk with them on any special occasion.

The important thing is that no matter how close you get, you will never be on the same field. It is the best compliment when a customer says, "You are like a friend" or "You are like a sister," but they are still important customers. That's why I would like to continue to accompany them as a salesperson. —**To be continued in Episode 7**



A customer with whom she had a relationship for 45 years taught her, "You should also buy a good one for yourself. It is enough for you to buy only one. Even if it is chipped, you can still get Kintsugi," and Akiyama later acquired and cherished this cup and saucer of "MEISSEN".

Image by: Eiko Akiyama



"I learned from customers what true luxury is," says Akiyama. While frequently visiting customers' homes, she contacted with a number of luxury items surrounding their lives, such as living environments, art, and paintings, as well as completely different values. It gave her the opportunity to enhance her own sensitivity. Influenced by this, the garden of Akiyama's home in Ashiya, Hyogo, is colored with beautiful flowers of the four seasons.

Image by: Eiko Akiyama

Text: Erika Sasaki

Planning & Production: FASHIONSAP

【Series FUKUBITO】 7 episodes of “Eiko Akiyama, Expert of Sales”

Episode 1 —” This is the only thing I can do”

Episode 2 —” OK, that's where my life started”

Episode 3 - Intense spartan education at CELINE

Episode 4 – What can only I do?

Episode 5 – Decision in 50s and Transition to Jewelry

Episode 6 – HERMÈS, the memento of a customer for 40 years

Episode 7 – Aiming to improve the status and value of salespeople