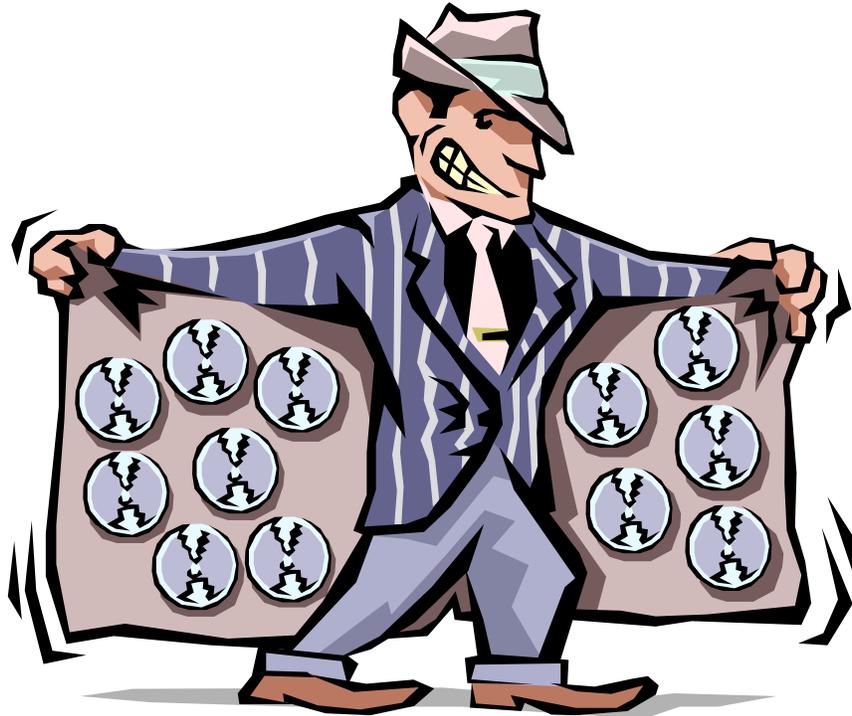


SALES PRO 2001



Hello please allow me to introduce myself. My Name is Keith Startz and I have been in the sales industry for over ten years mostly as a General Manager. I have opened up many Sales Centers and built several sales teams over the years. The one thing I can tell you is if you plan on making a career in the sales industry, you must master the basics & never get bored with fundamentals. *Repetition is the mother of skill.*

"Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness'. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves, too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. The whole stream of events issues from the decision, rising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material his way. I have learned a deep respect for one of Goethe's couplets: 'whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.'"

(from W.H. Murray, *"The Scottish Himalayan Expedition"*)

RAPPORT SKILLS



Building relationship starts when we allow our prospective clients to feel good about themselves and the decisions they have made. Continuing a relationship starts when they know that we truly care about their lives and feelings. It is our hope that we can help you develop the most important selling skill of all. The skill we speak of is referred to as the skill of BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS.

A relationship begins the very first moment we meet someone. The way we look, walk, act and talk are all important factors as to how people relate to us.

Interaction is based on impression. Doesn't it seem true that many people react differently to different people? The same receptionist greets one person in a warm and open fashion and moments later refuses another one access to the decision maker. The receptionist bases that decision on factors of perception.

She may have seen some level of professionalism in one over the other or felt like one person cared about her more than the other. Regardless, there are certain fundamental things we can do to improve our chances for a positive first impression.

IMPROVING OUR CHANCES

Listed below, you will find a few ideas about improving first impressions.

1). Smile...

This warms up the whole room. Nothing affects people like a friendly smile.

Have you ever practiced smiling? Stood in front of the mirror and shown the pearly whites? If not, then you should.

2). Be interested...

Focus your attention on the person in front of you and ask questions about them and their lives. Don't try to be so interesting. Everyone else is trying so hard to be interesting that you can really impress him or her by being interested.

3). Talk about the person you're talking to...

Keep the conversation on the topic at hand, them. Ask questions, lean forward and really listen. Nothing sounds better than the sound of someone listening. If you want to impress someone then let them impress you. We also find that people tend to like people who like them. Treat people as if they are great

people and they will become great people.

4). Smile...

This is still important. People react very well to smiles. It's a fact.

5). Dress very professionally...

But, not arrogantly. Iron your clothes, cut your hair and act like a professional.

Don't worry about having a flashy watch or \$3,000.00 suit. If you are representing a product and the service that stands behind it, you need to be an extension of how you would like your product to be perceived.

6). Think about your posture...

Slouching is not allowed. Our posture is an expression of our confidence and personal power. Take a deep breath, stand up tall and try to feel your own personal energy. Sit up and act like you are someone important.

7). Smile...

Oh yeah, smile. Have we mentioned that people respond well to the showing of teeth in a friendly manner? Well, it's true.

A friend of mine once said that driving in this area is like being on heavy sedatives while simultaneously having an adrenaline rush. For many of us, the traffic patterns in industrialized regions are a lot like how we get things done in corporate America: "hurry up and wait."

The metaphor of highway traffic serves to explain a lot of why working with others produces the desired results only when we move at the right speed, at the right times. This article identifies strategies to build an autopilot communication system for increased rapport with all types of people. The result is that we'll get things done faster, with less effort, and maybe even have more fun along the way.

As we drive around town or try to navigate on the "information highway" upon which so much of our work depends, we may ask ourselves, how is interpersonal communication like highway traffic? When communication works, like patterns of traffic, we flow in ways that get us to where we want to go, and we often don't even notice how we got there. It's when we *must* get somewhere and flow *doesn't* happen that it grabs our attention. Effective communication, just like driving a dangerous and curvy highway, is all about cooperation and managing the flow.

Let's go one step further. What would it be like if every time someone badly misinterpreted what was going on around the office, we saw skid marks on the carpet, coffee spilled everywhere, and smashed desks and chairs piled in the corner? If we could only see our communication breakdowns *before* they occur

....

How to Avoid Bashing Into Things

When we feel pressured or we get uptight, we tend to narrow our peripheral vision, withdraw our senses, and we forget that communication, like traffic, is a

cooperative system. When communication matters most, where do we put our attention? Our peripheral vision, ability to hear subtle cues, and our body acts as an early warning system, and can help us carefully and skillfully avoid bashing into others.

When we put our full attention on the other person (or group), that's Step One in maintaining rapport and flowing with them in collaboration. Of course, before establishing that link, know your goal, know your purpose in being there, know what you want out of the conversation. Then you can fully shift your attention to them, and trust that you'll somehow end up where you need to be.

The Magic of Rapport

Rapport is the condition of being in sync, in tune, on the same wavelength. I've heard it said that with enough rapport, anything is possible; without rapport, practically nothing is possible. In business, rapport is needed to coordinate action and exchange information. Rapport is at the foundation of all our relationships. Ironically, most business decisions are based on rapport, not on technical merit or the best idea. Rapport makes or breaks most aspects of getting what you want.

How much rapport do you need? Depends on your goal.

To maintain an open channel of communication with another person is to align with them, match them, meet them where they are. This doesn't mean you agree with them, necessarily, but rather that you are open and willing to accept their point of view and you let them know you're there with them.

Try this experiment. Think about someone you know who is very much unlike you. (Use a troublesome co-worker if you can't think of anyone better.) Can you imagine yourself matching their basic mood, posture, body language, energy level, tempo, and worldview? How would you look and sound if you were like them? Try this next time you are in a conversation with this person. Pick one or two aspects of their behavior, like their voice tone and tempo, and duplicate it. Say things the way they do. Sit and move as they do. They won't notice that you're being like them — people only notice differences.

After you've done that for a while, practice matching their vocabulary, their apparent mood or underlying values, their posture, or their breathing. Are these more of a challenge? Matching does not have to be direct. Crossover matching (using a different side or other body movement, not to be confused with cross dressing) can be as effective and more subtle. By practicing this periodically for several weeks, it becomes even more automatic, and you will fall into step with others more quickly and easily.

Consumer protection warning: If you match or "pace" people long enough, you'll start to like them!

The purpose of this approach to building rapport (matching and aligning with the other person) is to get fully in step with them, so that the next step you take, they're more likely to follow. When you start by matching and meeting them (not expecting them to come to you), you can take immediate control of the situation and move with greater confidence that they will stay with you. Worst case, matching gives you something to do when you get bored during staff meetings.



A Lead Is A Lead

During the first months of my life insurance career I met a group of experienced agents from other companies who frequently met for coffee in the same place every day.

On one of these days, the general agent from a competing company had just come from his dentist's office and was talking about how the practice was growing and that the dentist was about to buy the building that housed his practice. As I listened to this story I waited to hear him say that he had approached his dentist about a thorough review of his personal and practice insurance. He did not. I thought to myself, "What the heck, it never hurts to try." When we left the coffee shop I drove directly to the dentist's office....and asked the magic question, "Would you have any objection to discussing your insurance program with me?"

Over the next several weeks a complete review of his insurance program was conducted, leading to application for two large life insurance policies, a large personal disability policy, a business overhead expense policy and two small disability policies for the dentist's assistants.

What makes this case special is the fact that the dentist understood and believed in his need. When the policies came back rated 250% because of a newly discovered blood pressure problem, the dentist nodded his approval.

Ever since this happened, my ear is constantly tuned to potential prospecting

situations. I have learned prospecting is a 24 hour a day, 7 day a week activity, and the best sales can come from the most unlikely sources.

All Sales Begin With Prospects

Classic prospecting techniques you can start using today. Creative prospecting often determines the difference between an average salesperson and a sales superstar. Here are seven creative ways you can hit the skins to drum up a parade of leads eager to do business with your company.

1. The Prospect Referral Chain

Start by examining your existing base of satisfied customers. Then ask for referrals. Referrals from happy clients make it easier to get your foot in the door with new prospects. The key lies in how you make the request.

Don't ask current customers, "Do you know anyone else who could use my product?" Clients are rarely eager to judge whether colleagues are prepared to make a purchase. Instead, ask whether your customer knows any other tenants in the building or fellow club or business organization members who might be interested in finding out about your product.

If you sense hesitation from customers to give out referrals it's probably because they are afraid that their associates may not want to be pestered. Say, "Let me tell you what I'm going to do with any names you give me. I will make one phone call to each party, indicate that you were nice enough to give me their names and give them a brief outline of what we do.

"If they express an interest, we will get together and I will give them the same professional service I've given you. If, on the other hand, they express no interest, I will thank

them for their time and never

call again." This approach will put your customers at ease and move solid, new prospects onto your lead list.

2. Orphans

A salesperson who moves into a new position or changes jobs leaves behind a wealth of client and prospect lists that you can turn into a lead-generating goldmine. In addition, if you've been selling for a while you've surely built up a backlog of inactive accounts. Weed out the names who for whatever reason will never buy. The rest are solid prospects.

Call them again and find out why they're not buying from you anymore. What would it take to change that? They may have stopped ordering your type of product altogether, or they may have gone with a competitor because of a special one-time offer, or there may have been a management change and therefore a change in buying patterns. You have to determine why the customer stopped buying from you. After you do that, reestablishing contact and turning

that prospect into a customer again is SSP (standard sales procedure).

3. Get Published

Although you may have to give your

services as a writer away for free, the residual benefits will make your efforts well worth the time. Submit articles about your field or industry to journals, trade magazines and newspapers. Your submissions don't have to be glossy and expensive; just fill them with information that people can genuinely use, then make sure you have no spelling or grammatical mistakes. Instead of getting paid, ask the publication to include your address and telephone number at the end of the article and to write a little blurb about your expertise.

By convincing an editor that you're an expert in your field, you become one. Once prospects think of you as an expert you'll be the first one they contact when they're ready to buy. In addition, prospects who call you for advice can come to depend on you and your product. Thus you attract prospects without having to go out prospecting.

4. Bird Dogs

Like the hunting dogs who flush out game, sales "bird dogs" are people who locate and qualify prospects for you. Bird dogs don't sell, but for a fee or a commission they can scour a market and monitor publications to locate high potential prospects. Anyone can be a bird dog - your mail carrier, the neighbor's kid, service personnel, relatives - as long as they understand the clients you're looking for. And you can use as many bird dogs - in as many locations - as you want, to help build your client list by leaps and bounds.

Try swapping prospecting leads with professionals in your area. Hold meetings for professionals in different fields: lawyers, accountants, dentists, doctors, business consultants, temp bureaus, printers - there are potentially dozens of such occupations, all of which need referrals. By sharing information, you can all benefit.

5. Sales Lead Clubs

Organize a group of salespeople in related but noncompetitive fields to meet twice a month to share leads and prospecting tips. To get started, first write a formal mission statement, charge dues to ensure commitment and grant membership to only one salesperson from each specific field. Next, set up administrative procedures and duties to keep the club on track and committed to its stated mission.

Finally, establish guidelines for what constitutes a good lead and track prospect information and effectiveness. Group leads by effectiveness so members can better understand what leads can help the rest. You may even have every member who closes a lead contribute to a kitty. Each month the winner can be the member who provided the most closed leads.

6. Get Lists

Make a list of what your ideal prospect looks like. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Who are my ideal prospects?
- What economic bracket do they usually fall into?
- What kinds of organizations do they belong to?
- What characteristics do most of my existing customers share?
- Are they married, single, widowed or divorced?
- Do they have children?
- Do they have particular political leanings?
- Do they have similar occupations, education, hobbies, illnesses, transportation needs, family concerns?

And the key question:

- Where am I most likely to find the greatest conglomeration of people who fit my prospect's profile?

List number one - Take the information you have accumulated and apply it. Go to the library and look up the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) code number for your ideal prospects' businesses. Ask a librarian for help if you need it. Every type of business has a specific SIC code. Related industries have similar numbers; scan the directory to locate the numbers that fit the profile. This should provide you with an excellent prospect list. In addition, there are literally hundreds of other business directories that can help you generate lists based on corporate profiles..

List number two - What kinds of publications do your ideal prospects likely read? Find out whether these publications sell lists of subscribers. If the publication's readership matches your prospect profile well enough this list should be well worth the cost.

List number three - Go to the Standard Rate and Data Service's directory of firms that sell lists. These companies offer a variety of criteria that you can use to generate a quality prospect list. Dun & Bradstreet is an example of such a company. For your convenience the information may even be available on computer diskette.

7. Trade Shows

Trade shows provide the ideal environment for salespeople to come face-to-face with large numbers of potential customers. Remember, however, that success at

trade shows stems from preparation.

- Set up an interesting display to get people's attention. A popcorn machine, juggler or expensive giveaways are a few good ideas.
- Write down your message so that it fits on the back of a business card.
- Practice communicating two or three key points that get your message across succinctly. Get it down pat but don't memorize it to make it sound overly canned.
- Make a list of the major buyers at the show you want to pursue for contacts.
- Set up to maximize your display's visibility based on the flow of traffic.
- Be assertive in approaching passers-by. Instead of the common "hello" or "how are you?" try "Do you use [product or service] in your operations?" or "Have you seen [product or service]? If I can show you how to be more profitable, would you be interested?" Next offer them a sample to handle, but not to keep. Don't let them take the item and move on without talking to you.
- Use lead cards to write down prospect information for efficient and effective post-show follow-up.
- Be prepared for rejection. Some buyers will ignore you. Don't take it personally. Be brief but professional. Your time is too valuable to waste on non-prospects.

These are just a few good prospecting ideas; there are probably hundreds more. It doesn't matter how you choose to prospect, just as long as you do it. Because with a solid prospecting effort you can turn a selling slump into a swelling lump - of sales.

Cold Calls, Hot Selling



In a perfect world customers would simply call you up and place large orders. Not only would you have more time to work on your golf game, you'd also avoid the

unpleasantness of cold calls. Until that utopia arrives, however, cold calling will remain a necessary evil of the sales profession. In his book *On Selling* (Dove Books, 1996) author and International Management Group chairman Mark McCormack offers the following suggestions to light the fire under your cold calling fingertips.

1. Excuses, excuses

Cold calls are always easier when you've got a pretext or excuse for your call. A great reason to call potential customers is if they've just begun a new job. Plus, the new executive is often open to new ideas and options. Look for new job announcements in the local paper or a trade journal, and dial away.

2. Let's be realistic

Set modest, achievable goals for your cold-calling efforts. If it's unlikely that you'll make a sale on an individual call, what is a reasonable goal? Maybe it's just getting past the secretary or persuading the customer to let you send some written materials. Downgrade your ambitions and you'll upgrade your spirits when you succeed.

3. Think top down

Begin your efforts at the high end of the chain of command. Top executives may be more difficult to reach, but they're also the ones with the influence to buy. Or, they can at least tell you who is the right person to speak with.

4. Don't lay it on too slick

When you're making dozens of cold calls, your rap can begin to sound like just that. Alter your routine – even if it's something simple like switching hands on the receiver or standing up – to remind you that each customer is unique and deserves your undivided attention.

5. Go anywhere for a yes

Many organizations have people on staff whose job it is to say “no.” They tend to have misleading titles like “purchasing agent.” Try a different department that's not used to cold calls, like public relations, investor relations or human resources, and let them help you find your way through the company's org chart.

Are Your Prospects Worth Your Time and Energy?

You've assembled your list of sales prospects. Now you must also qualify them. The following questions can help you determine if your leads are qualified:

Does the prospect...

have a need for the product?

have the money to make a purchase?

have the authority to purchase?

Prospects may not be consciously aware of their need for a product. A well-planned sales presentation can help your prospect determine his or her needs. If the need is already determined, this will obviously shorten the time you need to close the sale.

Of more importance is the size of the need - or more precisely, the size of the potential sale. Not all prospects who have a need for a product are equal. A good prospecting system will determine this factor. Some method of sorting prospects must be employed when the number is too high for contacts to be made in a reasonable period of time.

Is there money available in the prospect's budget? All too often this matter is not discussed until the sales presentation stage. Whenever possible, you should try to discover financial information. Often salespeople do not think of credit until they attempt to close the sale. Then the credit check kills it.

Does your prospect have the authority to buy? The prospects who have the authority to buy may be either hidden or inaccessible. This is the number one problem in prospecting medium-sized and large firms. To discover who can actually sign the order may be very time-consuming.

You can develop your own strategies for identifying those with the power to buy. For example, you can paint a picture that puts those blocking access to the buyer - the receptionist or lower level executives - in the position of losers. That is, suggest that if the person with authority to buy were to find out that you were denied access, they would be in trouble because the firm would have lost a significant benefit.

You can also consider these other factors when qualifying prospects. Consider the level of service demanded by the prospect. Some prospects ask for special services far in excess of what their purchases justify. Keep a close watch on the sales figures. Some clients are barely profitable or even loss producers. You may choose to concentrate only on prospects with high-volume potential.

Qualified prospects are worth their weight in gold!

PROSPECT QUALIFICATION

It is remarkable how many people misinterpret the purpose of the qualification process. Qualifying your clients shouldn't just be about whether they are prepared to buy now or not. Its purpose is to learn about what values are important and what problems need to be solved. The fundamentals dictate this process. It doesn't matter what sales trainer you listen to, they will all tell you the same thing. Take the time to learn about the client's needs and wants.

Qualifying your client's needs should follow an effective system. The system begins by learning what experiences the client has had pertaining to your product or service.

- What types of goals are they working towards now?
- Have they ever made a investment in a similar program?
- What other decisions or investments have they made recently?
- How did they come to the decision to make that investment?
- What process did they use evaluate the values of one company compared to another?
- What about those decisions were they most satisfied with?
- If there was anything they could change about their experience, what would it be?

The above listed questions are only the surface topics. Each of these questions should open up conversation and an opportunity to learn more about your client's core values. These values are going to be the focus of your presentation. If we give a presentation without asking the above questions, we probably will present the values that are important to us.

To encourage the client to open up with more information we can use a couple of easy conversational techniques...

Open Lead Questioning Technique

This technique asks simple questions to invite subject elaboration. These are always open-ended questions.

REALLY? HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?..WHY?...WHEN?...WHERE?...WHO?

Subject Feedback Technique

This technique requires that you feed back, in a question form, the last major point made by your client. Here's an example...

Client--"And then in 1995 our ship sank 3 days before our cruise...and things like this never seem to work out."

Response--" They never seem to work out?"

Next, we need to learn what the clients goals are in relation to our business areas. This gives us direction about how our services could help them to accomplish their goals.

While we are learning about where they want to go, it is important to find out if there is anyone else that would be involved in this decision process. Be careful not to offend the person you are talking to by not giving them credit for having the ability to make a decision on their own.

Always ask about other decision makers in this form.

"Let me ask you, Mr. Jones. Is there anyone other than yourself that would be involved in deciding which package would be most appropriate for your company?"

This approach let's them have credit for being an important decision maker while opening the doors to the other people who need to authorize your proposal.

More and Better Prospects

With great prospecting habits, new customers are yours for the selling

Customers are the foundation of any salesperson's success, which makes new buyers an important part of a long and profitable selling career. To find the buyers that bring in more sales, you need to start with effective prospecting habits. Once you know how and where

to look for new customers you can make sure you never run out of them. To help maintain your own steady supply of prospects, start with these six tips:

1. Know your customer. Thorough customer knowledge not only helps you serve them more effectively, it can also tell you where to look for good prospects. Make a list of specific criteria your current customers meet, including size and type of their business, amount of income, the markets they serve, market strength and buying power. Let your list tell you where to look for similarly qualified prospects. Ask your customers for referrals and information about their associates that might provide you with more leads.

2. Design a prospect profile form. Before you begin your prospecting efforts, create a form to use as a guideline to search for new opportunities. Your form should contain spaces for all pertinent information on your prospect: company name, address and phone, key contact names and titles, product or service description, definition of primary needs and so on. Leave extra space on the form for notes so it is easy to revise and expand. Develop a rating system to help you assess each prospect's potential quickly and easily.

3. Take advantage of reference information. Business directories and other reference books can provide a wealth of information to help you in your prospect search. Many area Chambers of Commerce provide directories at minimal cost. Your local public library should also own several regional, state and/or national directories. To simplify your search you might also want to consider the Business to Business Yellow Pages or other directories or lists of leads on CD. Use your list of "perfect prospect" criteria to find promising prospects, then complete prospect profile forms for each.

4. Expand your reach. Salespeople prospecting on a national scale should extend their search to one or more major industrial directories. The Thomas Register, U.S. Industrial Directory or Frazier's in Canada are good places to start. For an international search, consult the ABC Directory of European Production. Focus on the product or service categories similar to those of your customer base. Salespeople with a very diverse customer base can select a few key clients, target their markets and research their competitors to either target them as prospects or uncover new applications for their products.

5. Make initial contact. With your new list of prime prospects completed, you're ready to approach some of them. Take a look at each individual company to decide on the best way to approach it. Whatever approach you choose, make sure it contains these four elements: (a) the specific purpose of the contact, (b)

the benefit to the prospect, (c) two or three invitations for the reader to reply to and (d) brief instructions on how the prospect can proceed. To help establish the quality of your product or service offer testimonials from your current customers.

6. Implement sales procedures. After you've established contact and built rapport with your prospects, start turning them into customers. Keep your selling skills fine-tuned so that you can make your prospecting efforts pay off. Be persistent. If you've chosen your prospects carefully they should be a good match to your product or service, even if they don't know it immediately.

Question them carefully and listen closely to the answers to find out how to sell to them.

Great sales and great prospecting go hand-in-hand - you can't have one without the other. And lucrative prospects are out there for the salespeople who are willing to look for them. To make your own prospecting efforts pay off more generously, develop the techniques that will help you target and locate them, then start looking. Remember - the aggressive prospector gets the sale.

Listen For More Sales

Ten tips to help you hear what you've been missing on your sales calls



Solid listening skills are critical to any successful sales call - without them, your prospect's needs and wants go unheard, and you go without a sale. But there's more to good listening than just hearing. Many, if not all customers assess your value as a salesperson by how attentive you are to what they say. To make sure your listening skills help, rather than hurt your chances for a sale, follow these 10 rules of effective listening.

1) Prepare to listen. Your prospect is perhaps your most important selling resource. Prospects tell you how to sell them by sharing their problems, wants and needs with you. If you're talking, you aren't learning anything new about your customer. Prepare yourself for effective listening by momentarily putting your own observations and opinions on the back burner. Keep an open mind and acknowledge that your buyers usually know more about their needs than you do.

2) Develop questions that stimulate listening. Your prospects can tell you everything you need to know to sell to them if you know how to extract the

information. Design thought-provoking, open-ended questions that will keep your prospect talking. Make sure your questions cover a variety of topics, from product preferences and service expectations to business problems and budget limitations. Find out the reasons behind your prospect's wants and needs by asking, "Why is that important to you?"

3) Look for listening opportunities. Your prospect's silence doesn't necessarily mean you should start talking. If your buyer is merely pausing to clear his thoughts or think of a particular point to make, your interruption could cost you some valuable information. Create more listening and learning opportunities by asking your prospect to "Please continue," "Go on" or "Tell me more." These conversation extenders will show the prospect you're listening and give an opportunity to present his needs in greater detail.

4) Raise listening to an art form. Like so many other skills, perfecting your listening takes practice. Hone your skills outside the office - perhaps a family member would welcome the opportunity to have a nice conversation with you. Or help a fellow salesperson who wants to work on her selling skills. Whomever you choose, try to keep the conversation going by asking open-ended questions that leave your partner to do 80 percent of the talking. Within a short time you'll be comfortable enough with your new technique to try it out on a prospect.

5) Concentrate on the prospect. If you're really high on the product you sell, you probably have a million features and benefits you want to share with your prospect. Don't. Instead, impress your buyers with your eagerness to listen to their needs. They'll be much more interested in finding out how much you care than how much you know. Make brief notes to remind you of important points you'd like to make so you don't have to think of what you're going to say while your prospect is talking.

6) Show receptivity. Learn to listen actively. Use body language (uncrossed limbs, facial expressions, eye contact, nodding) to show prospects that you're listening and receptive to what they're saying. Beware of passive listening posture - prospects may mistake it for indifference. Also, showing all the physical signs of listening may keep your brain more actively engaged and focused on your customer.

7) Block out distractions. Exotic meeting locales may tempt your eyes or your mind to wander. Once, after I closed a sale at a hotel swimming pool, my new customer told me I was the only person he'd spoken with that paid more attention to him than to the women at the pool. Distractions can cost you a sale, so don't underestimate their power or the damage they can do. From the moment you arrive at your appointment site, remind yourself why you're meeting with the prospect and what you stand to lose if you don't focus on the business at hand.

8) Focus on feelings, ideas and facts. Reasons for buying vary from person to person and product to product. One customer might walk into an auto showroom with a list of logical reasons for buying a minivan to accommodate a growing family, whereas another might just be looking for a new car that's sleek, red and fast - clearly emotion will motivate the second buyer's decision, whereas the first will choose a vehicle for more practical, logical reasons. It can be dangerous to

assume you know what motivates your customers' buying decision.

9) Listen with empathy. Indifference to your customers' needs is a sure way to lose their business. To better understand your customers and why they buy, put yourself in their shoes. As you listen to their words, try to view circumstances from their perspective. If prospects tell you they need product X to help increase production, try to imagine the pressure that person faces to maintain high productivity, and what consequences they might face if production falls. Try to "feel" for yourself the problems your customers face, so you'll work even harder to solve them.

10) Confirm that you've heard and understood your prospects. Because people interpret what they hear in different ways, it's important to verify that what you heard is what the customer meant. Ask your buyers confirming questions: "Let me know if I really understand your concerns..." Not only do confirming questions clarify your needs analysis, they show the customer that you care enough to make certain you understand their wants and needs. Also, if you've misinterpreted your prospects' words they can correct you immediately to prevent wasted time and lost sales.

Because customers make buying decisions based on your ability to meet their needs, it's vitally important that you understand those needs. Salespeople who learn and practice good listening skills have at least one big advantage over those who don't - a thorough knowledge of customer needs and expectations. Your customers' words are valuable - hone your listening skills carefully to make sure you hear and understand every one.

PRESENTATION FEATURE BENEFITTING



Contrary to popular belief, giving a great presentation is not about the information we give. Great presentations happen when the prospective client is involved.

When they are sharing their experiences, offering input and answering questions you can feel confident that you are giving a great presentation.

We will share with you a few valuable keys to giving an extraordinary presentation....

1). Present to their values...

Use the learned information from your qualification interview. Talk about what is important to them about your product. When presenting the features and benefits of your service use this format:

Feature.... Benefit...Value

Feature represents an aspect of your product or service. Explain what it does

Benefit represents what that feature does. How it works or what action it takes.

Value represents what it means to the client. How that feature and benefit will improve their lives or businesses. The area of the presentation should address the client's key values uncovered in the initial qualification.

2). Turn Everything Into Questions...

Or, maybe we should say..."What do you think about turning statements into questions during the presentation?"

If we are asking questions, the client will have to mentally process the information we give and share their initial conclusion. This gives us a great opportunity to better understand them while presenting our features and benefits to their values. Also, use minor confirmation questions to let the client state that you are satisfying their needs this area. Every time they positively confirm the value of what you're selling, you are one small step closer to the final YES.

Confirmation questions are questions like this...

Isn't it?...Doesn't it?...Wouldn't it?...Couldn't it?...can you see how that works? Wouldn't you agree?...Doesn't that make sense?

There is a rule of sales that states..."If you say it... they doubt it. If they say it...it is true.". Or, Maybe you've heard of this one..."The customer is ALWAYS RIGHT"

3). Try using the third party approach...

Resist using the word "You" in your presentations. Remember, it's fun pointing at holes in someone else boat, but never any fun to see our own boat sinking. This is especially true if you are trying to replace an already existing product or service. When we use the word "You" in our presentations the prospects that we are talking to will be constantly comparing everything we say against their previous experiences and values. It is easy to imagine that someone else may currently have an ineffective system in place. However, we all hate to believe that we have made less than perfect decisions. Does that make sense? (DID YOU SEE THAT CONFIRMATION QUESTION?)

4). Maintain control of the direction of your presentation...

Try to keep your clients on track. Although, sometimes it is easy to get caught up in miscellaneous conversation, it is only professional to keep the focus of conversation on the business at hand. Of course, you don't want to be rude. Try to be polite and consistently redirect the conversation to the proper track.

5). Believe in what you're selling...

It is of the utmost priority to truly believe that what you are selling is what is best for the client. There is no excuse for selling to satisfy your needs instead of your client's. It is nearly impossible to maintain top performance selling if your integrity is wounded every time you give a presentation. Besides it's more fun selling something that you feel to be the best for your customers.

6). Be enthusiastic...

Your client will emotionally decide that he or she wants your product or service before they rationalize the decision with logic. So, you must be somewhat excited about the value they will receive. The true definition of PRESENTATION is... The Transfer of Enthusiasm.

Customers Buy Benefits



People don't buy a car to own a good-looking sculpture made of steel, plastic and glass. They buy cars to get to work safely, to travel in comfort, to impress the world or to express their good taste.

Yet many salespeople focus their presentations on their product features rather than the benefits of owning the product. When salespeople focus on product features, they speak the manufacturer's language which is of little interest to the buyer.

For example, the new Cadillac Seville STS has a V8 Northstar engine that delivers 300 horsepower. A salesperson might be very excited about these advanced technical characteristics, but what do the terms "STS," "V8" or "Northstar" mean to the average buyer? Customers don't buy any of these features, they buy what these features do for them.

Benefits describe how product features will be useful to the customer. When salespeople focus on benefits, they speak the customer's language. Benefits lead people to think "I want this!" The right benefits can justify the purchase.

For example, one feature of the Northstar engine is that it requires a tune-up only

after 100,000 miles. The benefits to the customer? Save time, save on repair costs, enjoy a smooth-running car, and enjoy the security of a high-quality engine...

Good salespeople ask the customer key questions long before they talk about features and customer benefits. Why? Because later in the conversation they will match the benefits to their customer's needs.

For example, a salesperson may ask, "What characteristics are important to you?" or "What do you enjoy most about the product you are using right now?" If the customer says, "I want a safe car," the salesperson may turn the 300 horsepower feature into an active safety benefit like, "with this engine you will have an extra edge where you can quickly pull away from a potentially dangerous situation." If the customer says, "I like convenience," the salesperson can highlight the 100,000 mile tune-up feature saying, "you'll be pleased to know that as an added convenience, you won't have to think about tune-ups for the next 100,000 miles."

Remember that customers won't buy unless they realize that they are receiving more value from owning the product than from keeping their money. Most prospects don't care about product features. They care much more about the benefits they will receive from the product. Good salespeople speak the customer's language. They know that features can only explain the price, while benefits explain the value of the product. Good salespeople learn from the customer what justifies the purchase. What justifies a purchase? The salesperson's ability to match the benefits to the customer's needs.

Customize Benefits

If you try to deliver benefit-laden presentations only to come up empty-handed at closing time, your benefits may not be the ones that get your prospects' attention and move them to buy. To make sure you present the benefits that press your prospects' hot buttons

create a custom-fit pattern of benefits - each part of the pattern will help bring you closer to fitting the prospect's need and closing the sale.

Needs Analysis

Remember that your prospects buy for their own reasons - not necessarily for the benefits you present. You can give your prospects 100 good reasons to buy your product, but to make the sale, at least one reason has to hit the prospect's hot button. Before you start presenting benefits, know where you want to go. Conduct careful needs analysis by asking open-ended questions. Find out what stirs your buyers' emotions - what they really want to get out of your product.

Product Knowledge

Persuasive and tempting benefits start with extensive product knowledge. You never know which benefit will convince your prospect to buy, so make sure you know all of them. Learn all of your product's features thoroughly, and know the benefits behind each feature and the benefits of those benefits. Keep track of new developments and upcoming product improvements. Unlike customer reactions or buying decisions, product knowledge is under your complete control. Prepare yourself by knowing your product and all its uses.

The Benefit Chain

With an extensive knowledge of your prospect's needs and wants and of the product or service you sell, you're prepared to present the benefits your prospects can't refuse.

To learn how to identify the benefits behind your benefits, divide a sheet of paper into several columns. Over the first column write "Features" and list all your product's positive features. Write "Benefits" over the rest of the columns. In the first benefit column, write the benefit of the feature to the left. In the second benefit column write the benefit of the benefit to the left, and so on until you reach the prospect's need or want.

I conduct this exercise in my sales classes using a red marker as the "product." When I ask class members for features, "red cap" is usually at the top of the list. First on the list of benefits is that the person knows the color of the marker ink without removing the cap.

One benefit of knowing the ink color without removing the cap is that it lets you choose an ink color more easily during a presentation. Choosing the ink color easily makes the presentation go more smoothly, which in turn benefits the prospect by creating a more professional image. This benefit list now has four connections starting with the first benefit. You might be able to add to it but you'll often reach the prospect's need or objective after just a few entries.

Most sales professionals know that benefits - not features - make the sale. But there's a big difference between presenting just any benefits and presenting the ones that really persuade prospects to buy. This system makes a strong case for your product by showing your prospects exactly how it will meet their needs. When you present the benefits your prospects find irresistible, you also make your product or service irresistible.

Value-Added Success

How do you build a case for a value-added solution? Point out to your customers the unique factors and value-added services that make you and your company so invaluable to them, advises Bob Butler, president of Butler Learning Systems. Then build a case for a "value investment" to win sales.

Suppose your price is 10 percent higher than your competitor's, Butler explains. Ask your customers, "If I can show you 40 to 60 percent more value, will you consider my 10 percent higher price?" When they ask, "What do you mean?" start placing dollar or percent values on the extras you offer.

Tell them you'll provide start-up or installation, but if they aren't willing to pay for

that, you'll take it out and give them a lower price. But they'll answer, "No, we've got to have that."

Then ask what it's worth to them. Will they give you 3 percent just based on the installation? What about engineering or design? What about service?

"Add it up and demonstrate that you're providing 40 to 60 percent more value even though you're only 10 percent higher," Butler says. "You need to generate cost justification when you're not offering the lowest price in the market. Make that happen by putting a dollar or a percent value on what you're worth and what your value-added services are worth."

Here are six keys to delivering value:

1. Value means something different to every customer. To sell value, determine each customer's specific needs.
2. Promptness and reliability are critical – offer added value by the way you manage time.
3. The differences among products in today's marketplace are minimal. When you and the customer agree that you can deliver value better than the competition, close on that issue.
4. Let customers know you value their input into the product's final design. This builds goodwill.
5. Know who the decision makers are and how each one defines value.
6. Be your customers' source of expertise on your industry. They'll trust you enough to keep coming back for more.

Why is closing so important in sales and selling? Because asking for and getting commitment separate sales from customer service and everything else in business.

Whoever asks for and gets a commitment is in sales. If you can ask for a commitment, you can make a lot of other mistakes in sales and still be successful. And that's leverage.

Closing is not beating somebody over the head with a 2 x 4 until he finally says, "Yes, I'll buy." If you're in a business-to-business sales environment or a consumer sales role in which repeat business and referrals are important, you'd better hold back on the strong-arm stuff, or you'll spend your short sales career always looking for new customers -- a tough road. But you must ask for a commitment once the need, problem, fear or desire has been established because that's what brings things to a head. It's time to demand that a disposition or status be brought out on the table.

Knowing Where You Stand

Because I work with so many salespeople in a mentoring or training mode, people ask me about my experiences with salespeople. One of the most frequent questions I am asked is: "What is the biggest mistake salespeople make that would result in the largest payoff if they could eliminate it from their lives?" The answer is not knowing where you stand after asking your questions, doing your presentation and taking your leave. Not knowing where you stand is another way of saying you don't know where the prospect stands on buying your product. This lack of knowledge comes about because you don't directly ask the prospect where you (and she) stand.

Some salespeople don't ask because they don't want to hear bad news. These salespeople would rather hear no news at all and live on false hopes and desires than face someone saying, "No, thanks." Most salespeople would rather show their managers a fat pipeline (with a lot of "not knowing" in every stage) than be faced with reality, however uninspiring.

The problem is that all of those false hopes and wishes take so much time that there's little energy left in the day for anything else. And that is one of the most significant prices to be paid for not knowing where you stand. It wastes so much time and nourishes false hopes. But perhaps the greatest penalty of all in not asking your prospect where you stand is not finding out what problems or issues she is facing or wrestling with in moving forward. If you don't know about her problems, you can't do much to help ease her through the problems.

"That with ahead go to like you would"

Dennis, who manages a group of about 100 salespeople and managers in the printing industry, came up with the phrase "that with ahead go to like you would" as a way of remembering to ask for commitment. "It's about closing," Dennis said, "my favorite selling topic. And it's what I ask of anybody who sells on my team: Get a good closing question or statement, and practice it until you can say it backward in your sleep," (i.e., "Would you like to go ahead with that?"). "I tell them that if they can say it backward in their sleep, they will be able to say it forward in front of a customer at the right moment. And if they do say it forward every time, I'll pay them \$500,000 a year. And a couple of them actually do it. Everybody else has to settle for less. Some, a lot less."

Dennis continued, "I stopped fooling around with all the minor events that take place in a sales transaction years ago. All I talk to my salespeople about in training and coaching now is closing. It's the topic that almost everyone I've ever known in sales has the most problems with, and the thing that they are most in denial about. So I work with them on closing because it's so leveraged. And one of the most valuable tools for me has been the 'That with ahead go to like you would' exercise. This happens to be the strongest and simplest closing question I've ever heard. It's so powerful because it's so simple. If every one of my salespeople would just come out and ask that exact question every time they get an acknowledgement of value from the customer, they would close three times as many deals, and get rid of the other ones that will never close, anyway."

Closing practice

After every call with a qualified prospect who needs your products or services, ask yourself:

Did I ask for commitment?

Do I really know where I stand?

If the answer to number 1 is no, do so next time. If the answer to number 2 is no, turn around, go back in and say,

"I'm sorry, I forgot to ask. Would you mind telling me where you stand with regard to moving forward with this transaction?"

Selling Price Or Value? Turn The Sale Into A Value-Added Service

In business-to-business selling, it is always important to build and sell value and not allow yourself to compete with the rest of the pack on low price. Salespeople and sales managers who build value for their customers and sell their product packages with that value added in commonly make six-figure incomes for their efforts and have a much greater sense of self-fulfillment.

Playing the low-price selling game can be painful and frustrating for the following reasons:

When you sell on the lowest-price basis, you build little or no customer loyalty.

Face it: Customers buy from you because you are offering them the lowest price on what they need, not because they value what you are doing.

Selling for the lowest price means your margins are razor thin; your profits slim to none and your commission checks small -- a great formula for starving yourself and your company.

When you sell on lowest price instead of best value, you deal with a class of customer that will make your days long and bitter and your nights sleepless.

I don't know about you, but I believe customers should be partners, not adversaries who try to squeeze every penny of profit out of my side of the transaction. When I run into a customer who doesn't want me to make any money on the deal, I shake hands, give him the name of my worst competitor and wish him well. In sales, learning how you want to do business and whom you want to do business with are the most important lessons of all.

Value-added selling practice Look at your accounts, and evaluate them on the basis of price buyers or value buyers. What can you do to upgrade them based on value? Start with the one you think will be most receptive to a value-based solution, and work your plan with that account. Ask your contact they're how you can best contribute value to the company. A good account will tell you. A bad one will move on, giving you more time to work with better customers. So much the better.

Your Price Is Too High -- Not

How many times have you heard that old buyers' complaint: "Your price is too high, and if you don't come down, I'm going to buy from your competition"? Have you told yourself that if only your prices were more competitive, you would sell a lot more? Overcoming a price objection is easy if you know your value.

Differentiate from low-price competitors by adding value to your basic product or service. And then communicate the benefits of the value you're adding to your customers so they can understand and appreciate why yours is the more cost-effective solution. The best value you can add is any service or enhancement that makes the product work more easily or effectively for the buyer, such as:

Implementation guidance and assistance

Extended warranty or support

Performance enhancements or guarantees

A 24-hour user hotline

Extended or special payment terms

Give your buyers something they can use to justify paying you a higher price if someone in their companies questions the transaction.

How do you find out which value-added service will level the "price playing field" for your buyers? Ask them for their thoughts and ideas. They will tell you what is most valuable to them.

More value-added selling practice

Analyze your own product or service, and determine how you can substantively add enough real value so you will never again lose another sale to anybody who understands it. Be specific. Don't just say, "I give the best service." That's what everybody says. Get real. Ask your best customers for help. Good luck. Add value until it hurts.



Definition:

REQUESTING THAT YOUR CLIENT TAKES ACTION TOWARDS THE CONSUMMATION OF A TRANSACTION.

THE MOST IMPORTANT RULE

Always expect client to accept your offering.

If you don't believe in it, your clients won't believe in it either. Take the time to research the details of how your product or service compares to other available plans. If you are still excited then you are in the right business. If you aren't excited, then think about making a career change.

OTHER THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT CLOSING

- 1). Be sure that your client will benefit
- 2). Have respect for your client's values
- 3). Know how to close effectively
- 4). Be prepared to close, at least, 5 times
- 5). Know your paperwork

If we are going to tell you to close at least five times then we should show you a

few techniques for closing, Right? So...

CLASSIC CLOSING TECHNIQUES

Assuming The Sale

The most effective method used to "CLOSE THE SALE" This technique is used when your clients give any strong buying signal. The idea is simple. Act as if they have already decided to say yes and start doing the things you would do to wrap up the deal. In other words this technique is accomplished by assuming that the client has already decided, and taking action towards the finalizing of details or paperwork. If the client is not ready to move forward they will correct you. If the client does stop you to address a concern, then discuss the concern and go back to wrapping things up. This provides a wonderful opportunity to have the client bring out their concerns. Try out these "Assumptive Close" lead in statements.

"I'll need your authorization here, and we'll see if they are ready to let us take the next step."

"Let's finish up with some basic details here, then we'll see if we can make this a reality. How do you spell your last name?"

The Secondary Close

The Secondary Close helps take the pressure off of the BIG DECISION. This is accomplished by asking the clients "how they want it" rather than "if they want it". For example if I asked some one if they want to buy a house or not they might be overwhelmed with all of the supporting decisions. By first confirming the supporting decisions we can help the clients feel more comfortable with the BIG DECISION with out being pushy. This technique involves your client in the decision process of the secondary features, and mentally establishes ownership.

"How much time would you need to move?"

"Would you like me to have someone inspect the home before we put it on the market?"

"Should I ask if they will leave the satellite dish?"

If your client answers "Yes" they have begun to mentally establish ownership.

The Take Away Close.

This technique is used to spur clients into moving forward, instead of over-evaluating the opportunity. When used properly the clients will feel as if there is a key advantage lost if they do not act now. It is important that you position yourself properly and don't over encourage them to act. Maintain your posture and stick to your guns.

"Mr. / Mrs. Jones, a home priced like this one probably won't stay on the market very long. So, if you really do like the area, lets put in an offer to protect our options."

This technique, if not successful, can lead into the fact weighing close (also called the "Ben Franklin Balance Sheet)

Be realistic! You will get Objections!

This is because the client may have either a...

- A). Fear of making the wrong decision,
- B). Satisfaction with a competitive product,
- C). No perceived Need and/or Value,
- D). Other way of meeting their needs,
- E). Lack of trust between you and the client
- F). Had a previous, "negative" experience.

It is important that we pre-plan for possible attitudes and responses. What Are The 4 Main Attitudes?

1). **INDIFFERENCE**

A prospects' expression towards a lack of interest in your product may be negative because of no "perceived need".

"We're not interested."

-OR-

"We are happy with the company we already use."

DEALING WITH INDIFFERENCE

Utilize "open probes" to help the prospect expose unrealized needs and attempt to build a higher level of rapport. Utilize "closed probes" to help maintain direction and control. After proper positioning with directional questions, we should continue to increase the perceived value.

2.) **OBJECTION**

A prospects expression of opposition towards the product / service; usually, perceived as having "drawbacks". Typically, the prospect is dissatisfied with the imagined or perceived features of the proposed transaction.

"There is no way we're going to use your service. It costs too much."

DEALING WITH AN OBJECTION

The first thing to do when dealing with an objection is confirm the question. Feed it back to them and open up dialogue. It is important to understand why your client believes that they have an objection. Then, hear out the objection and continue to ask questions until the root of the objection is revealed. Once we understand the root objection then we can proceed in minimizing the importance of the objection and re-emphasize the values of the transaction to the client. Don't forget to close.

Techniques Include:

Reduction to the ridiculous

"Only 5 cents per day"

Ben Franklin fact weighing approach
"Let's list the reasons why we should on this side..."

Feel, Felt, Found

"I understand how you feel Mr. Jones, In fact many of my most successful clients felt the same way as you when we first met. However, this is what they found when exploring this area further.... (Now you can offer some rationalization for the objection)... Does that make sense?"

3. **CONDITION**

The prospect is not capable of owning the product, or It may not be in the client's best interest to invest in the service.

"We just did that with A.B.C. CO. yesterday"

"We can't get the permits from the city inspectors."

DEALING WITH A CONDITION

- A). Utilize "closed probes" to learn more about the client's situation.
- B). Confirm the client's understanding of his or her situation.
- C). Build more rapport
- D). Use questions to uncover other unrealized needs and opportunities.
- E). Learn what steps would be necessary to obtain the business, if possible.

Beware of "I can't afford it" (this is probably only a stall and not a condition)

4. **ACCEPTANCE**

A prospects expression of approval towards your product / service

"Yes, this sure would help us accomplish our goals"

DEALING WITH ACCEPTANCE

Close the transaction

Techniques Include:

Close on minor values and assume the sale by asking for the information needed to complete the agreement.

Confirm how or when they want it.

Ask a summarizing questions like...

"Now, that feels better, doesn't it?"

"Aren't you excited about using it?"

Closing is not an event; it's a process. If you ask good questions throughout your presentation that cause your prospects to reveal their world to you as it relates to their problems, needs and motivations, and if you ask questions that create somewhat of a "state of agreement" that addresses those needs, then your prospects will, in most cases, close themselves. I call this Closing By Attraction™

because your questioning and listening skills create a connection that attracts potential customers to you.

Because your customers will not always close themselves and because you need to know what to do when it's time for you to close, consider using these old standards and new closing techniques:

"Any questions?"

If you gave a good presentation, then your close should be as simple and automatic as asking, "Do you have any questions?"

When they respond with no, you simply take out your contract and write them up. It's really just that simple.

The assumptive close

This is basic to all closes and has been around forever. You simply assume you have the sale by asking easily answered questions, and write down the answers on your paperwork. Start with easy questions:

"What is today's date?"

"Would you give me the correct spelling of your full name, please?"

"How do you want to take delivery?"

When you finish filling out the paperwork, you hand them the contract with your pen and ask them to "OK the agreement" as you point to where you want them to sign.

The trade-off close

I believe that the sale or close takes place during the questioning stage of the presentation. After your introduction and warm-up questions, you get down to business with well-thought-out questions. This is where the sale and close take place, not at the end.

If you listen carefully to the problems, needs and motivations that customers have revealed to you as a result of your probing questions, you can offer to take care of their needs in exchange for something you want. For example, let's say that during the dialogue exchange, you discover that the three most important things your customer is looking for are a competitive price, a quality product and a guarantee. Assuming you can meet those needs, you ask a trade-off question like:

"Mr. Jones, if I can demonstrate to your total satisfaction that my company can deliver the quality that's important to you at a competitive price and with a 30-day satisfaction guarantee, can we do some business today?"

If he says yes, then you have closed the sale before having to give your demonstration. All you have to do then is prove you can meet those three needs, and your sale is automatic.

The speed-bump close

Use this close at the end of your presentation when the prospect is having some doubts about going forward. It consists of three steps:

You psychologically reverse the selling process by suggesting that the prospect may not want go forward.

You summarize all of the benefits to which he responded, "Yes," "Uh-huh," "Sure," "Absolutely" or "I like that part" (kind of like speed bumps -- one "yes" or bump after another).

Ask your closing question again. Here's how it might sound:

"Mr. Jones, perhaps buying this widget is not a good idea at this time. Let's just run through this thing again. You said you liked the quality, right? (He will say yes.) And you said you like the way it will save you money. Is that also correct? (Another yes.) You also told me this was the kind of technology you were looking for. Isn't that true? Well, based on all of that, doesn't this sound like something you want to get started with?"

The summary close

This is another classic close. When you finish your presentation, summarize the benefits covered (particularly where your product or service meets specific needs), and then ask a test closing question:

"Mr. Jones, do you see how you and your firm will benefit from having this program?"

If he says yes, you go to the assumptive close, and the sale is now a done deal. "Before I can get started . . ."

When you begin to see strong closing signals, you can close on the spot using this key language:

"Well, Mr. Jones, before we can get started, I need just a little more information. What names do you want on the title?"

The answer to this question is written down on the contract (assumptive close). "Is that the way you understood it?"

This is a great little close that takes place after you have explained everything in the contract. In other words, after you use the assumptive close and fill out the paperwork, you will want to go over the agreement with your customer. Once you finish, you look at her and say,

"Mrs. Jones, is this the way you understood everything?" (When she says "Yes," you say), "Fine. Would you sign right here, please?"

Note: Some sales trainers will tell you to ask for an OK, approval or endorsement, but not for a signature. That's a lot of bunk. If you have given a good presentation, the way you ask for the signature will have no bearing on the outcome of your closing strategy.

The future close

If, for whatever reason, you cannot close a sale because the prospect wants to think it over, you can attempt a future close by asking:

"How much time do you need to think it over?"

"A couple of days."

"How do you feel about my program, so far?"

"Pretty good."

"Do I sound as if I understand my business pretty well?"

"Yes."

"Well, if you feel as good in a couple of days as you feel right now, will you buy it?"

"Yes."

"Fine. Why don't we go ahead and fill out the paperwork? That way, you will have something specific to think about. OK?"

The reason you want the prospect to fill out the contract is that there's a psychological commitment when he does. Sometimes, just filling out the agreement will lead to the final, on-the-spot close. Another advantage of getting him to complete the contract while you're there is that it greatly reduces the odds of a competitor taking the sale away from you.

"Go ahead and buy it"

This is one of the simplest but most effective closes I've ever used. It works especially well on high-ticket products and services. When you get to the end of your presentation and the prospect just can't seem to make up her mind, say something like this:

"Mrs. Jones, let's face it, you like this widget, and you can afford it. Why don't you go ahead and buy it, OK?"

(Don't forget that little "OK" tie-down at the end.)

Calendar/combo close

Closing on the calendar is a wonderful close within itself:

"Why don't we get out our calendars and set a date to get started?"

But I like to use this close and others in combination to make it even more irresistible. Here is a combination of several closes already discussed. See how many you can find in this closing dialogue:

"If you will allow me to be your personal business coach, let me summarize my program.

"I will send you assessment tests that will tell us where you are now and what you want to accomplish. I will help you put together a workable business plan.

"We will have a 30-minute coaching call each week by telephone.

"You will be allowed to contact me as often as you wish by e-mail and fax.

"And I will give you a 30-day written satisfaction guarantee.

"If I do all of that for you, do you see the value of being part of such a program?"

(The prospect is likely to say yes.)

"Well, before we can get started, I need just a little more information. By the way, what is today's date? And how do you spell your full name? If you have a calendar handy, we can set a time for our first session that's good for both of us."

(Select the date.)

"Well, I guess I've promised you an awful lot today. I'm sure you want to go over the agreement." (Go over the contract.)

"Is this the way you understood my program? (yes) Good. Do you have any questions? (no) Fine. I need for you to sign right here."

(If you're selling in person, point to the signature line and hand the customer the pen with the contract. If you're selling by telephone, adjust accordingly.)

Important note: At this critical point in the close, it is absolutely imperative that you remain silent as you wait for your prospect to pick up the pen and sign. Don't try to add anything because you feel the anxiety of the signing. Just remain silent (another classic sales behavior) until the agreement is signed or a question is asked.

Quick, what is the one thing you hate most about selling? Odds are you answered either "Cold Calling" or "Closing." Both of these are difficult for the same reason. They have a high incidence of rejection. They are also similar in that the hit rate achieved with both depends very heavily on confidence and the finely-tuned techniques used by the sales person.

Leaving cold calling for another article, we'll share with you here ideas on the most successful ways we have seen for "pulling the trigger."

Assumptive Closing: The Most Powerful Technique

In every successful sale, there is a point in time when you know you are almost home. The prospect appears very interested, the price is no barrier and you have skillfully answered any objections the prospect has raised. You might be tempted to say something like: "Shall I write up the order?" Suddenly it is decision time. The prospect looks you in the eye and says: "I don't know. I'll have to think it over."

With the assumptive close, you avoid this potentially difficult moment by not directly asking for the order. You merely begin acting as if the prospect has already said yes. You can do this in many ways.

Below is an example:

Customer: And what colors are available for this model?

Salesperson: We have a catalog of 82 standard colors of our own, but we can also match any of the PMS colors.

Customer: That's important, because we already use PMS 457 on our other equipment.

Salesperson: Great, then that's the one we will use. What we will do is have our engineers take a sample of the finish you use now, run a colorimetry test and verify that we mix a 457 that exactly matches.

Customer: OK. And what's the lead-time like for spare parts?

Salesperson: We keep most parts in stock in town here for next day delivery. If we have to order in from the warehouse, the maximum is 10 days. Who handles your parts inventory?

Customer: Gloria, our inventory supervisor.

Salesperson: What I will do then, after our meeting today, is sit down with Gloria and find out how her parts inventory and ordering system works. Then I can get back to you and recommend the minimum on-site parts inventory that will ensure continuous operation.

Customer: Fine. Let me call Gloria now and tell her to expect you.

In this conversation, the customer is giving good buying signals by asking small-point questions, but she has not said she will buy. Rather than ask for the order, forcing a yes/no response, the salesperson began to talk about things that "will" happen as if the decision has already been made. The "close" took place when the customer set up a meeting between the salesman and the inventory supervisor.

Rules of the assumptive close:

Wait for customer buying signals, such as positive statements or small-point questions. You can't close until all of the prospect's major issues and question are out of the way.

Begin to talk assumptively, such as using the word "will" instead of "would" or "if" to describe how your product will be installed or used by the customer.

When the customer joins you in using assumptive language or takes affirmative step to implement your product or service, the sale has been closed.

Eight More Closing Tips That Will Deliver For You

1. **Ask Confidently**

Probably the biggest closing error is asking without confidence. Your words, your tone of voice and your posture must say you are certain you have exactly what the prospect needs. Any unplanned pause, any weak body language, any tentative language -- and you give the prospect a reason to say no.

2. **Close By Stating The Action Rather Than Asking**

"Shall we go ahead?" is O.K. It's not great, because it says the salesperson is not sure what the answer will be. "Let's go ahead and schedule your shipment" is stronger.

3. **Ask Choice Questions**

"What size machine do you want?" is a good closing question, but if used too early it might make the prospect feel you are pressuring for a decision. "Which of these three models would have the capacity to meet your need?" puts the prospect under less pressure and is likely to elicit a useful answer. And, whichever one the prospect picks, you can then ask: "How would it fit in with your production goals for next year?"

4. **Offer To Help With The Decision**

"How many do you need?" may result in the prospect saying he'll have to check and get back to you. Instead, try: "Let me help you check your current supply so we can determine how many you will need."

5. **Avoid Abrupt Transitions**

Many a close is killed by the salesperson opening the briefcase, taking out the order form, looking for the pen and other overt closing actions. These actions, as well as changes in body language and verbal tone alert the prospect to raise his or her guard. The ideal close flows seamlessly from the presentation - the order form is already on the table, but perhaps under other papers. The pen is already out. The salesperson's tone flows without interruption from telling the benefits to describing the action the prospect needs to take now.

6. **Include A Benefit In Your Request For The Order**

"Just add your approval here and in less than two weeks you'll have the best looking new driveway on the block."

7. **Avoid Scary Words**

"Signature" is a scary word to many prospects. "Approval" is not. "Order" may be scary to some, but not "Authorize." Instead of "Please sign this and we'll go ahead with your order," try "All I need to get going is your approval right here." Instead of "place your order," try "authorize delivery."

8. **After Closing, Shut Up**

Once you ask for the order, say nothing, even if it takes the prospect a while to respond. This puts the prospect under pressure to either say yes (or sign) or

come up with a good reason not to. If you speak after you ask for the order, you give the prospect a nice opportunity to delay the decision. Even after the prospect agrees to buy, the less said the better. I've seen many deals unsold by a salesperson who raises new issues after the close, which then blossom into major objections.

All closes are not created equal. Top closers realize that every prospect has specific needs and every situation demands its own close. While you may have found a close that works better for you than others, that shouldn't deter you from using a variety of closes depending on the situation. By learning the 22 trial closes, you'll stand a better chance of getting more sales. Knowing how to close many different ways will make you rich.

When someone won't buy, you resell him or her with benefits. Then, ask again with a different close. Constantly use different closes throughout the sale at each buying signal. Most people fail to get an order because they don't ask for it. They give the prospect the facts and figures and wait for the prospect to say, "This is terrific, I'll take it." This just doesn't happen.

If you want the order, you have to ask for it. You have to ask for it many different times and in many different ways during the same call. Since people are afraid of making a decision, they will say "no" several times before they say "yes." This is true even if they want it and are almost ready to buy. If you don't ask several times with many different trial closes, you may stop selling and leave just as the prospect was getting ready to buy. Studies have shown that 70% of all salespeople never ask for the order. If you never ask for the order, you will never get the sale.

Of course, you must first create rapport and trust. Use consultative selling techniques to uncover the prospect's "hot buttons," and add value by selling benefits (telling the prospects what's in it for them). All of this sets you up for the close. You don't sell someone; you make them want it. So the close is the easy, natural ending of a good sales presentation.

Tension at the time of the close is natural. The salesperson fears rejection; the prospect fears making the wrong decision. Using different trial closes helps the prospect get past this moment of tension and gets him closer to a buying decision. Therefore, you shouldn't stop after just one "no," nor should you fail to use a trial close just because of tension between you and the prospect.

Soft trial closes can be used early in the presentation. These closes are not pushy. They don't ask for a decision; they merely ask for an opinion. If the prospect gives a positive answer to a soft trial close, you can then go to a stronger close that does ask for a decision. If they give a negative answer to a trial close, you go back to questioning and reselling benefits to make them want it and make it easy to close.

Here are 11 of 22 different closes and trial closes that will enable you to ask for the order many different ways and eventually find the close that will sell. I'll reveal the final 11 next times. Use different trial closes throughout your presentation.

1. **The commitment close**

This close helps ward off the "I'll think about it" objection by obligating the prospect to make a decision on the spot. Use this close when you are talking to a prospect that you feel will use the excuse that he has to think about it. At the beginning of the appointment, you say:

All I ask is for you to look at what we have to offer, and tell me if it applies to you.

If the prospect later says that he'll think about it, you can respond with:

You said you would give me an answer.

2. **The "hot button" close**

Warm up your prospects by pushing their "hot buttons." Emphasize those benefits you know are the most important to them. People make 80% of their buying decisions on only 20% of the benefits. So hit their "hot button" over and over to get them "warm" enough to close.

For example, the prospect below wants a suit that will travel well, so you must repeat that over and over.

Salesperson: *That red suit looks terrific on you, and it is also very professional looking.*

Prospect: *I like it, but it's pretty expensive.*

Salesperson: *But it looks great, and it won't wrinkle when you are traveling on a business trip. So you will always look professional.*

Prospect: *Maybe I should look at a less expensive suit.*

Salesperson: *Those will wrinkle if you wear them once and will cost you more in dry cleaning charges.*

Prospect: *Well, this suit does look better.*

Salesperson: *Absolutely. You will love it when you're traveling. Since it won't need pressing, you'll save on the high cost of hotel dry cleaning. Also, it will make traveling easier for you.*

Prospect: *Okay. I'll take it.*

3. **The power of suggestion close**

Help your prospects visualize themselves using your product. Speak to them as though they already owned it, and tie in a "hot button" benefit. Remember that enthusiasm is contagious. You should talk as though they were already using your product. Use the word "when" not "if."

When you use these vitamins and herbs, you'll notice that you have more energy and feel healthier after only a few weeks.

When you hear these speakers in your car, you'll notice a tremendous improvement in sound quality.

4. **The "yes, yes" close**

Ask "yes" questions, so that when you close, the prospect is already in the habit of saying "yes." Each time they say "yes," they are closer to buying.

Also, it becomes hypnotic. Eventually, "yes" comes automatically. Look at the following questions, and think about how natural it would be for the prospect to answer "yes" to each one:

Do you want more energy?

Nice day, isn't it?

Would you like to save money on your long-distance calls?

Do you want skin care that will make you look younger?

Would you like to see your child get a head start in school?

May I show you some information?

Do you want a computer that is easy to use?

Great car, isn't it?

5. The "just suppose" close

In this trial close, you have the prospect "just suppose" her objection didn't exist. You then ask if she would buy. This tactic also helps you uncover and tackle hidden objections.

Prospect: *Your prices are too high.*

Salesperson: *Is price your only concern?*

Prospect: *Yes.*

Salesperson: *Just suppose you felt our prices were fair, would you buy then?*

6. The sharp angle close

The sharp angle close uses the prospect's questions and comments to help you get a commitment to buy. Instead of immediately assuring your prospects that you can meet all of their wants and needs, ask them if they'll buy from you if you can.

Use this opportunity to try a trial close by asking the prospect to commit to buying if you can do what he wants. Then, give him what he wants. Never say you can do something extra for the prospect without a commitment that he will buy if you get what he asks for. Without that commitment, he will say "great" when you say you can do what he wants. Then, he will say, "Okay. Let me think about it."

Prospect: *I want a discount.*

Salesperson: *If I could get you a discount, would you buy right now?*

Prospect: *I like red the best.*

Salesperson: *If I can get it in red, would you want it?*

Prospect: *I might be able to buy this model, but I need the attachment.*

Salesperson: *If we can give you this attachment at no charge, would you buy this model now?*

7. The switch place close

When all else fails, ask your prospect to tell you what she would do to make the sale. You might get a quick lesson not only on how to sell this person but also on how to sell more effectively to your other prospects. Use this close when you can't figure out why the prospect won't buy:

Mary, would you put yourself in my shoes? If you were selling to someone, and you didn't know why he wasn't buying, what would you do?

If you get an evasive answer, ask:

Is it the price (me, service, etc.)?

Then, ask:

What would have to happen for you to use us?

8. The puppy dog close

This close gets its name from the pet store closing technique of letting prospects hold the animal they like, so they can't resist buying it. This close lets your prospects see for themselves their need for your product. Make sure your prospects hold, taste, feel, wear and try out your product. Once they have experienced using it, they want it more, and it will be easier to get them to buy. If possible, give them free samples.

Example: Let the prospect use your product for a day or a week, get the prospect to try on the clothes or shoes, or get the prospect to take a test drive.

9. The summary close

To use the summary close, simply reiterate the prospect's needs and wants, and show how your product or service satisfies them. You sum up what the prospect has told you about what he wants, and give him his own reasons back for buying. No one can disagree with his or her own reasons.

From what you told me, you want a house that has four bedrooms, a family room, a large kitchen, a living room with high ceilings and will fit your budget. This house has all that and is perfect for you. Don't you agree?

10. The physical action close

The situation arises where you have to call the office to check on the possibility of accomplishing something that the prospect has asked if you can do. While on the phone, talk as though the prospect has already bought. If the prospect doesn't stop you, she has bought.

Prospect: *This couch is more than I was going to spend, but it would look great in my living room for the party I'm having Friday.*

Salesperson: *Let me call the office and see if I can even do that. (During the call to the office, ask: Can we get the Sedona model couch in black leather delivered by Friday? Great, write it up.)*

When you get off the phone, tell the prospect how lucky she was to have gotten one of the few left. And tell her that you will deliver it by Friday. If she doesn't stop you, she's bought the couch.

11. The hurry up close

This close implies that it's to the prospect's advantage to buy now rather than wait until later.

Prospect: *Maybe I should wait.*

Salesperson: *Buy now before the price goes up. Also, this is the last outfit in this color in your size. If you wait, it will be gone. You better grab it.*

Prospect: *Okay. I'll take it.*

12. The testimonial close

To build credibility and reassure your prospect that he's making a wise decision, tell him about the success other people have had with your product. In this close, the salesperson uses letters or stories from other customers who have used the product or service and have received fantastic results. This eliminates buying anxiety.

Prospect: *I'm not sure it will work for my business.*

Salesperson: *These companies use the R5 computer system, and they have had fabulous results. You will, too.*

This close is good for an insecure prospect that is afraid of making a decision. The fact that others have already tried your product or service and are happy will relieve his anxiety.

13. The qualifying close

This close determines whether or not the person you are talking to is able to make the necessary decision.

If I can find you the house you want, are you in a position to make a decision today?

If I can show you that our exercise program can help you firm up and lose those 20 pounds, are you ready to start with us today?

14. The readiness close

When you can't tell if you're getting through to a poker-faced prospect, use the readiness close to gauge your prospect's interest. This close checks the prospect's "buying temperature." You can also find out if you are on the right path with your presentation or need to change course. The great thing about this close is that it doesn't end your presentation. Instead, it tells you whether you should keep selling or go for a stronger close.

Does this make sense to you?

How do you feel about this so far?

Is this what you wanted?

Is this an improvement for you?

15. The invitational close

If your prospects are waiting for an engraved invitation to buy, give them one. Make a persuasive argument for your product or service, including the reasons why your prospects should buy. Then, invite them to do it. This close is powerful because it is direct. It is especially useful with the no-nonsense prospect. They appreciate its directness.

Why don't you give us a try.

Why don't you take it?

Would you like to get started right away?

16. The ultimatum close

This close is best used with the prospect that has been putting you off and hasn't made a decision in months. He hasn't said "yes" or "no." He just continually procrastinates.

This close should be used only when you have decided that the prospect isn't worth pursuing any further. You want to force a decision. In this close, the salesperson fills out an agreement, looks at the prospect, and says:

Either it's a good idea, or it isn't.

At this point, you give the prospect the agreement, and ask them to sign it.

17. The reverse close

The reverse close turns a prospect's reasons for not buying into reasons for buying. When your prospect voices an objection, think of a benefit to that objection.

Prospect: *Your price is too high.*

Salesperson: *That's the very reason you should use us. Because of the high quality of this copier, it will last longer and have lower maintenance costs. It will end up saving you money.*

18. The take away close

People want things more if they feel that they may not be able to get them. If you suggest that what you are offering may not be available, it can be just enough to help the prospect want to make the decision now.

Let me call the office and see if we can even do that.

19. The signature close

This is a very powerful close. Bring out three or four agreements early in the presentation. Mention that you'll be using them as scratch paper. You are doing this because if you get a strong buying signal later, you'll already have a filled-in agreement with their name, address and the products they want. You can just slide it across the desk for the prospect to sign. If you must hesitate to fill out the contract, the prospect could change his mind.

20. The Ben Franklin close

Since few salespeople can offer prospects the perfect product or service, it's often difficult to overcome every one of their objections. When an unanswered objection stands between you and a sale, make a list of benefits versus objections. Just make sure the benefits far outweigh the objections. Present them to your prospect, and say, "As you can see, the reasons for buying outnumber the reasons against." This is a good close to use when the prospect has some objections that you cannot overcome. Simply list all the pros and cons of the situation. For example, here are some pros and cons of a new car:

Cons

Trunk is small

Pros

Sporty look

Price is right

Like the color

Don't have a large family

Has good pick up

21. The "you'll thank me later" close

Use this close when you know that you're pressuring the prospect.

Prospect: *(Irritated) I'm not ready to buy.*

Salesperson: *I know I'm pressuring you. But you'll thank me after you've joined our health club and lost 15 pounds. You'll look and feel terrific.*

22. The story close

80% of the buying decision is based on emotions. The part of the brain involved

with emotions is the right hemisphere, and this side deals well with stories and pictures.

In order to appeal to the emotional side of the brain (the buying side), build your presentation around stories of others who have hesitated before making a decision but were overjoyed with the results when they did decide to act. You can even use stories that are not business-related.

Whether you're cold calling or closing, successful selling depends on expert preparation. The more closes you know, the better prepared you are to face that moment of truth when the prospect gives you a buying signal. Instead of locking yourself into two or three closes, give yourself more options. This gives you more chances to make the sale. With so many effective ways to close a sale, odds are you'll be able to choose the right one to close your next buyer.

There's the same amount of money out there as ever. There are always people getting rich. Using these trial closes will give you the chance to join them.

TIPS

Use the customer's name and 2) Identify the dominant buyer

When you're asking customers walking onto your lot to spend as much as \$200,000 on a new recreational vehicle, it's absolutely essential to establish trust and credibility quickly. So says Mark Anderson, sales manager with Brand Trailer Sales in Fairmont, WV. Anderson notes that one well-known "trick" for winning prospects over – using the customer's name throughout your presentation – has always worked for him. But sometimes at the start of the sale customers are reluctant to give out any information, even their name.

"One thing I learned from a sales trainer named Grayson Schwepfinger is when you shake the customers' hand the first time, don't let go until they give you a name," Anderson says. "That helps you with the rest of the call, plus it helps you focus by reminding you to pay attention to what the customers have to say."

Besides Schwepfinger, Anderson says he has learned a great deal about selling from some of the top trainers – people like Zig Ziglar, Brian Tracy and Tom Peters. One area they've helped is with tips for determining who the dominant buyer is.

"Sales training is really effective," Anderson says, "but often you have to adapt what you've learned to your specific situation. That's been true with two techniques I use to identify the dominant buyer. One is, before they come into the office, line up your chairs against the back wall. Then as you're talking you slowly drop your voice so it's less audible. The dominant buyer will scoot forward to hear exactly what you're saying.

"The other technique is whenever you hand out the sheet of paper with the price

quote and specifications, the dominant buyer is always the first person to take up the piece of paper. Always.”

An Appetite for Sales



You can memorize dozens of clever closing techniques, ways to handle objections or strategies for getting an appointment, but in the end your sales success depends on only four factors. Whether you're trying to break your sales record for the quarter or just trying to make your quota, the eats method (Education, Activity, Tracking and Sticktoitiveness) can help you maximize your sales potential. If you're hungry for more sales, here's what you have to eats:

Educate yourself

Great selling skill combined with thorough knowledge is a powerful selling combination. If you had to brief a new salesperson right now on each of your product's uses and benefits or on your customers' businesses, how detailed and accurate would your information be? Don't limit your scholarly pursuits to reading and research. Broaden your definition of education to include any mental activity that improves your performance. Attending seminars, watching training videos, studying the methods of other successful sales pros and interviewing customers are all great ways to increase your knowledge. Education is as much a part of your success as closing or prospecting, so schedule time each week to stay in the know.

Actively pursue sales

If you're going to spend all that time educating yourself, put that knowledge to use. Get busy making calls, setting appointments and closing sales. Learn how

to manage your time wisely so you can make the most of every day. Give yourself daily productivity quotas (i.e., 10 cold calls per day) and set selling activity goals (i.e., closing five new customers each week). Take a close look at your current work habits. Brainstorm for ways to work more efficiently. Schedule a "no interruptions" period of one to two hours every day to help maximize your productivity. Install software that automates as many nonselling tasks as possible to leave you more time with prospects and customers.

Track your progress

When your activity produces leads, legitimate prospects or information that could provide you with either, tracking will help you make them pay off. Knowing where you are in the sales cycle with each of your customers and prospects allows you to develop a plan that will help get you the sale. Use a contact management software program to keep careful records of your calls to customers and prospects, and document what is said on each one. Before each call, assess the customer's current status and needs to plan your strategy for that call. Review your files at the beginning of each week and make a list of top priority prospects for that week. Staying on top of your progress with your contacts will help make sure you follow the sales cycle all the way through with each one.

Stick to your plan

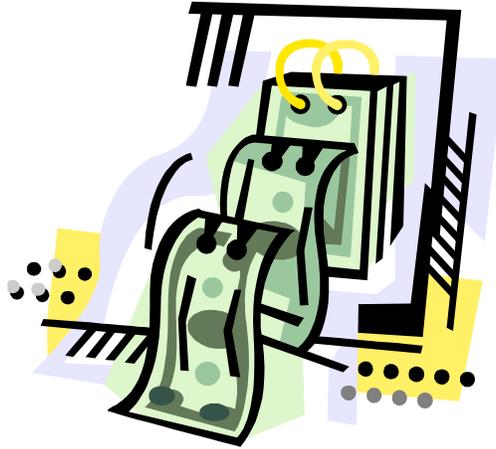
Disappointment and rejection are often the prelude to success. Keep your chin up and keep selling. Make a commitment to your education, activity and tracking strategy and be prepared for the setbacks that may tempt you to abandon it. To help make a habit of the eats plan, schedule each element into your daily or weekly routine. Remind yourself that all four are critical to success and maintain a healthy balance of each. Success takes patience. You may not see drastic improvement overnight, but making a long-term commitment to your plan will help you achieve long-term success.

The eats strategy outlines four of the cornerstones of sales success to help you build a firm foundation for a profitable selling career. Whether you have 10 years of experience or 10 days, the eats plan can help satisfy your appetite for more sales.

We might possess every technological resource . . . but if our language is inadequate, our vision remains formless, our thinking and feeling are still running in the old cycles, our process may be "revolutionary" but not transformative.

-- Andrienne Rich

Closing Time



Five ways to face closing with anticipation instead of anxiety

Closing represents a natural conclusion to a well-handled sales process, yet many salespeople view it as an anxiety-laden moment of truth. When closing nerves sap your confidence, your sales may pay the price. Use these five observations to help you anticipate closing as a logical, reasonable and achievable step in the selling sequence, and to help boost your closing confidence and success.

Closing represents a natural conclusion to a well-handled sales process, yet many salespeople view it as an anxiety-laden moment of truth. When closing nerves sap your confidence, your sales may pay the price. Use these five observations to help you anticipate closing as a logical, reasonable and achievable step in the selling sequence, and to help boost your closing confidence and success.

1. Your closing attitude affects your performance. If you face a close with excessive nervousness or dread, you'll probably have to struggle to conceal your emotions - possibly jeopardizing the sale. Resolve to change your attitude by viewing your close as the golden opportunity it is. Enjoy the chance it offers you to exert a positive influence on your prospect by using your repertoire of selling skills.

2. Closing begins when the selling process does. Consider closing's role throughout the selling cycle instead of regarding it as a separate event tacked on to the end of a presentation or appointment. Closing actually begins with your initial contact with the prospect, so don't associate it exclusively with the end of the sales cycle. To lessen your anxiety-producing perception of the final close, view closing as an integrated part of the entire selling process.

3. Successful sales require many preliminary closes. In order to reach the point at which a buying decision can be made, salespeople must close prospects to set appointments, agree on certain needs the product or service offered should meet or problems it should solve and decide on the right product model or service. If your prospect is prepared to make a buying decision, you must already

have closed successfully on these types of decisions. Remember these successful preliminary closes to help boost your confidence when it's time to ask for the order.

4. Each point of agreement between you and the prospect takes you closer to a favorable buying decision. When you're poised on the brink of a sale, remember that you've not only closed successfully on each point leading to the buying decision, but that each of those closes has helped to simplify the final close for you, and simplify your prospect's last decision - the decision to buy. Take the pressure off yourself by remembering that the sale has actually been made or lost long before it's time to sign the order. If you've handled the rest of the sale effectively, this last step is only a necessary formality.

5. A successful close naturally follows a well-planned presentation. The final close simply represents the last logical step in a long sequence of carefully planned and executed events. Look forward to it as the exciting conclusion and long-awaited payoff of your weeks and months of effort. Let the close happen in its logical selling order, and by closing the sale, allow yourself to enjoy the return on your investment of time and effort.

These observations should help improve your closing attitude, but to help ensure success make sure you've handled the other phases of the selling process effectively. Remember to search for and qualify prospects carefully, and always probe extensively to uncover a prospect's needs and buying motives. Your attention to these elements of the selling cycle will help ensure that your selling agenda and presentation are customized to suit your prospect.

Remember to consider your prospects' buying anxiety, and help allay any buying apprehension they feel by reassuring them of the potential benefits to their businesses. Use the close to make sure you've addressed all objections and concerns, then ask for the order. Don't let prospects' uncertainty cost you their business - it's up to you to help them feel comfortable about their decisions.

Closing doesn't have to be an anxiety-filled obstacle to a sale. Instead, make it an eagerly anticipated opportunity to help you meet a company or personal goal, get a referral, help your customer and increase sales. With the right attitude and attention to detail, you can help reduce closing anxiety while increasing closing success.

He who resolves never to ransack any mind but his own will be soon reduced to the poorest of all imitations; he will be obliged to imitate himself, and to repeat what he has before often repeated. --Joshua Reynolds

At Your Customer's Service

The true test of a salesperson's value comes after the sale



If you sell a top-quality product or service you may feel you've helped your customers just by offering it to them at a reasonable price. True professionals, however, know their customers expect and deserve more. Selling's greatest challenges and greatest rewards often come after the sale - when you have a chance to show your customers that when they sign on the dotted line they'll get what they pay for and then some. To earn your customers' undying loyalty (and their future business and referrals), follow these proven principles of unparalleled service.

1) Take responsibility. If you hold yourself personally responsible for your customer's satisfaction, you'll probably work harder to achieve it. Confirm your customer's order and oversee delivery of your product to ensure that it arrives on schedule. When delivery is delayed for any reason, keep your customers updated on when they can expect their order. A follow-up call shortly after delivery can confirm that the order was correct and that it meets the customer's expectations. Your goal should be to always call on your customers before they call on you.

2) Under promise, over deliver. You might want to impress your customers by promising to fill their every need on a moment's notice - just remember that they'll be a lot more impressed when you promise a little less and deliver a little more. Be honest about your own, your product's and your company's limitations. If your service team always seems understaffed, don't guarantee repair service on three hours' notice. Promise your customers delivery a little later than you're able to provide it to allow for emergencies - if all goes smoothly they'll be impressed with your early service.

3) Design a system to process orders. To provide consistently great service develop a set procedure with a series of steps to lead you from closing to delivery to follow-up. Make sure everyone involved in your procedures (order processors, service and delivery people, etc.) knows their responsibilities and has a schedule for fulfilling them. Stick to your system carefully to reduce the chance of an oversight or omission that may cost you a customer. Whenever possible, review and streamline procedures to save time for you and your clients.

4) Little things mean a lot. Good manners, special occasion cards and other thoughtful gestures don't require much effort but will often convince your customers to stand by you even when your product or service falls short of expectations. Never fail to let your customers know how much you appreciate their business and how much you'll do to keep it. To show your customers you really care about their businesses, clip and send them articles on their industry and keep them informed on topics that may affect their industry or organization.

5) Anticipate your customer's needs. Customers value a salesperson who thinks. Make it your business to look ahead of this week and this month to find out what your customer might need six months from now. What changes are taking place in the customer's industry? In the business world? How might technology change the way your customers do business? If you deal with customers from two or three different industries, consider subscribing to those industry publications and look for coming trends. Salespeople who stay a step ahead of customers and correctly predict their future needs help make themselves indispensable.

6) Maintain an ongoing dialogue. Let your customers know you're there to help - and not just when there's a sale to close. Make periodic calls to gauge your customer's continuing satisfaction, to offer new solutions or just to say hello. Try to build rapport and forge a bond with your customers through conversations that aren't always strictly business.

7) Solicit feedback with better questions. One great question to start with is, "Will we have the opportunity to serve you again?" A "yes" response tells you your hard work is paying off - a "no" gives you the chance to make things right with your customer before it's too late. Even when customers plan to offer you repeat business they probably still have some suggestions on how you can improve your product or service. Enclose a brief questionnaire with each invoice, asking customers to rate your company and to list their ideas for improvement.

8) Return all phone calls and answer all inquiries the same day. It's hard to convince your customers that they're your number-one priority if you don't seem concerned about returning their calls promptly. If you need to conduct some research to answer a question, tell the customer so, then tell them when you'll call back and keep your word even if you haven't found an answer to the question yet. When it comes to proving your concern to your customers, actions speak louder than words.

Your customers know there are plenty of salespeople out there who can serve their needs. To differentiate yourself and form a lasting relationship with a customer you have to offer a little more than the competition - a little faster delivery, a little more prompt repair or maintenance service or a little more care and concern from you. Truly exceptional service is still a rare and valuable commodity - and your customers will recognize that the salesperson who provides it is, too.

Care For Your Customers

These six customer care steps can help you cultivate a healthy customer tree

To give your sales a boost up the professional ladder, go back to the basics: customer care. Assuming that your company manufactures a quality product or delivers a reliable service, sales success comes down to the relationships you maintain with prospects and customers. Follow these six customer care fundamentals to create a strong, lasting and profitable connection to your customer base.

1. Keep learning. Despite your level of expertise, there's always something else to learn about your products, services, customers, techniques, company or competition that will contribute to your selling efforts. Keep your eyes and ears open to new information, ideas and strategies. Make it a sales goal to become a trusted adviser and business resource to your customers. Most of the time, new and repeat customers - and increased sales - will follow. Your customers should regard you as an indispensable adviser - one who gives free, but good, advice.

2. Always listen. To help your customers (and that should be your number-one goal), listen to their needs. You don't know initially how to help them or what will encourage them to buy, but if you listen long enough they'll usually tell you. If you ask the right questions and listen to the answers, your customers will often tell you how to help them and how to sell them. Make it a priority to meet and exceed your customers' needs.

3. Be consistent. Always deliver on your promises. Remember that potential customers are always sizing you up. Your credibility, achievements and outstanding service of the past can be obliterated in a prospect's mind by your failure to keep your promises. Call when you say you will, whether you have the information you need or not. Always monitor your turnaround times because your customers often do. Let your actions match your words.

4. Be personally interested in your customers. Get to know them as people, not just as commodities or business partners. Find out their hobbies and interests. The more you take an interest in your customers, the more impressed they'll be by your selflessness and genuine caring.

5. Be adaptable. Successful salespeople stay flexible and open to change. Follow your clients' lead and adapt to their personalities. If the customer is chatty, be talkative. If the customer is reserved and businesslike, create a sense of unity between you by reflecting that characteristic. Always size up your situation and use your circumstances to your benefit. If you get a potentially lucrative lead from a referral, try to subtly play up the connection with the referral source. Ask for a personal endorsement to help close the sale if necessary.

6. Think resolution and closure. Your constant goal should be to resolve any customer concerns or obstacles to a potential sale. Provide customers with all the information they need and reassure them that a decision to buy is a wise choice. Take every opportunity to get closer to the sale. Don't assume the sale is won or lost once and for all on the day you ask for the order. Just as sporting events are often won before the day of the game, so sales are made or lost in the days leading up to your asking for the order.

In any selling situation, customer service is the backbone of success. Many people will not buy the best or cheapest product or service if they have to pay the higher price of an insensitive, uncaring and unreliable salesperson. Incorporate these customer service basics into your own selling repertoire for more sales, more referrals and more satisfied customers.

More Service, More Sales



It's easy to calculate the value of a customer. Just answer these questions: What's the average sale per customer? How often does the customer buy? How Many years will a customer buy? Take those three answers and multiply. Bingo: You know the customer's value. Right? Well, not entirely.

Never forget the power of referrals. Won't a happy customer refer two or more Customers to you? Take the customer's value and multiply it times the number of Referrals. "Now you will have a better understanding of the value of your customer," Says Shep Hyken, a professional speaker and author who specializes in customer Service and customer relations.

Hyken cites a grocery store as an example. Say a typical patron buys \$50 of Goods per visit. They visit twice weekly for 50 weeks a year. Annually, each Customer's worth rings up at \$5,000. If the typical patron moves every seven years, each happy customer is worth \$35,000 over as many years. But remember the Referral factor. If you do a good job, a happy clientele will refer others to you. Be Conservative – the typical satisfied patron refers a minimum of two new customers. With two new clients worth an extra \$70,000 combined, one happy customer can Result ultimately in more than \$100,000 in sales. "The important point here is to be Able to see the big picture," Hyken says. And what a big, rosy picture it is.

Where's the bottom line on keeping customers happy? Top-notch customer service. The grocery store owner should do more than simply refund money to satisfy a customer's complaint about a steak. How about free steak? While the up-front cost may be \$10, that's virtually nothing compared to the customer's true value. "Every business has Different numbers, but the principle still holds true. There will always be returns, refunds, complaints, etc., and by cheerfully taking care of them you build trust and customer retention. Even the people whose

problems you take care of, yet never do business with again, can be valuable,” Hyken explains. How?

Consider Hyken’s example. He formerly ran highly successful, virtually problem-free public seminars. But once, midway through a seminar’s first day, an attendee said the program wasn’t what he expected and he was willing to fight to get his money back. During a lunch break, the man and Hyken discussed the matter further. To the man’s Amazement, Hyken promptly offered to return the man’s money. Later, Hyken heard separately from two customers referred by the unhappy seminar attendee.

Occasionally, solving problems demands creativity. Others times it calls for common sense. Hyken’s car developed a problem just after the warranty’s expiration. After talking with the dealer, Hyken was charged nothing for the repair. The dealer recognized that Hyken’s value as a lifelong customer easily surpassed the tiny cost of satisfying him. As Hyken sums it up, “Everyone in the organization should know the value of a customer. It will validate the importance of the employee and the decisions they make.”

MEETINGS



When sales meetings become predictable, managers risk losing impact and time. And that’s valuable time away from the field. To turn your regular sales meetings from boring to brilliant follow these tips from meetings experts:

End on time from the get-go. Announce, “This meeting ends in 45 minutes, no ifs, ands or buts” – then stick to it. Participant enthusiasm mounts when they realize you’ve eliminated their number one complaint.

Keep them awake. Establish a set of colored file folders, each designated to hold tidbits on company information – training, inspiration and employee recognition – that you need to communicate during the meeting. Build the agenda from the most interesting of these clippings; fold the rest into memos, suggests Joseph P. Klock, retired dean of Coldwell Banker University. Make sure you order the presentation with the most important items first in case the 45-minute buzzer rings before you reach the bottom.

Enjoy some jazz. Borrow a page from the marketing staff and add splash to your agenda. Corporate management coach Marilyn B. Schwartz, CSP, suggests sprinkling catchy openers and clever subtitles throughout an agenda to entice

participants to read it the minute they pick it up. And don't forget bulleted lists of topics, followed by reasons to care about the information. For example, Schwartz once penned, "Broker predicts housing prices will triple by the year 2025, so we need to plan for that future."

Stage a coup. Marketing, finance, personnel and the public relations folks view sales meetings as a great source of information. Trouble is, few people can sit in without imposing their needs on your time, says Donna Siegel, a senior partner at SalesDoctors Inc. If you desire a sales meeting to powwow strictly on sales matters, politely close the door to all but your department employees. Arrange additional times and venues to swap stories with the rest of the company.

Entertain Your Captives

Annual sales meetings may command attendance from your staff, but the mandate stops there. Generating excitement falls to you. Consider these dos and don'ts in the three months before kick-off:

DO: Pump the meeting's overall theme and related special activities in your correspondence.

DON'T: Get specific about the sales agenda's content, speech titles or other business details.

DO: Mail a trinket or intriguing item with instructions to bring this gadget/toy to the event. Example: An eggbeater that's needed for a scavenger hunt.

DON'T: Bombard salespeople with envelopes that contain messy sparkles, sand, glitter, confetti or other decorative dropouts. The first ruined suit destroys any good thoughts you may have earned to that point.

Getting Past Yes

Sales training almost always focuses on all the steps that go into getting to "yes." But for the sales professional interested in long-term business and repeat customers, what happens after "yes" may be just as important as everything that led to the buying decision. Following are some tips from Thomas J. Leonard, author of *Working Wisdom* (Bard Press, 1997), for keeping you customers happy after all the contracts are signed.

1. Congratulations in order

Of course you're happy for yourself, but what about your customers? Focus on why this is a great deal for them and it will reinforce the messages you expressed during the sales process.

2. Look forward

Offer a suggestion about the product's performance that reinforces the buying decision. Say something like, "With this program in place I think you'll find XYZ becomes much easier for you."

3. What gives?

Now's a good time to find out what motivated the buying decision. Say, "May I ask why you chose this model today?" The answer will help you position future clients as well.

4. Open up the floor

Your previous questions were focused on determining needs. Now you should offer to answer any questions customers have about being customers rather than prospects.

5. Plot a course

Let customers know where the relationship moves from here on and how you will continue to work for them. Say, "Now that this is settled, here are the three things I will do for you in the next week..."

6. Call waiting

Get their OK for you to call within 30 days. This will let them know you will continue to service them, and it also gives you a great opportunity to troll for referrals.

7. Out with doubt

Take a moment to ferret out any lingering doubts about the sale. This will solidify your reputation in the customers' eyes as a problem solver and a caring sales professional. Ask, "Do you have any remaining doubts about the purchase that I can help you with?"

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