

Closing and Authority

Another key component of successful closing psychology is the importance of acting with authority. This does not mean that you are arrogant or condescending toward your prospects. It *does* mean that your prospects have a certain expectation that you will be an expert in your field and that you will have the ability to advise them. Your prospects have a need and they want it fulfilled competently. Think of a time when you were faced with an important buying decision. Do you think that an apologetic and insecure salesperson, one who was constantly wringing his hands, would have made you feel more positive and confident about your purchase? Probably not—in fact, you probably would have found it annoying, maybe even disturbing. With this tendency in mind, when in a persuasive setting, do not be afraid to demonstrate your expertise. You could even look at the seller–buyer relationship as a student–teacher relationship. Think of yourself as a consultant or an advisor. You are the doctor of sales. That is, you are diagnosing your prospects’ condition and recommending a cure. When you look at the selling scenario that way, you are practically under obligation to conduct yourself as an authority figure.

Hand in hand with the need to act with authority is the need to be assumptive. What do I mean by this? Assumption relates especially to the final stage of your close, when you’re waiting to hear your prospect’s final decision. Many salespeople hate this part of the selling transaction. They build rapport and shoot the breeze just fine, but then when it comes down to closing the deal, their whole demeanor changes. They suddenly become tense as they ask their prospect what s/he wants to do. They then cringe as they wait on pins and needles for the prospect’s answer. How do you think this type of demeanor makes your prospects feel? If it hasn’t happened to you before, I can tell you—it freaks them out. They may not be able to pinpoint it exactly, but they sense that something isn’t right and then walk away from the deal based on that one moment alone. Such a backing-down response could be a conscious or subconscious reaction. Everything else could have gone perfectly. Remember, a confused mind says “no.”

If you’re this type of salesperson, you’ve got to talk yourself through the process. Prospective buyers clearly *want* to buy; after all the time and energy they spend on trying

to make a decision, they *want* you to confirm that their decision to purchase is a good one. How do you make them feel that way? You have to *assume the sale*. In other words, in your mind, it's already a done deal. By acting assumptive, you yourself will feel confident and more at ease, and consequently, you'll make your prospect feel much more comfortable, too. As you implement this tool, you'll quickly discover that the more assumptive you are, the easier people close—in fact, they'll often close themselves. You'll just have been the vehicle that assisted them to the obvious conclusion. Conversely, you'll discover that buyer resistance usually only emerges as your own uneasiness is apparent.

There is a story of an old man who goes to a dentist because he has a tooth that is killing him. He has been putting it off for months and finally he has to get the tooth taken care of. Once there, the dentist agrees that the tooth needs to come out. The man asks the dentist how much it will cost. The dentist replies that it will be about \$250. The old man yelps and yells, “Two hundred fifty dollars to pull out a tooth?!” Then he asks how long the procedure will take. He is told that it will take about five minutes. “Two hundred fifty dollars for five minutes of work? That's highway robbery!” the old man protests. He then asks the dentist how he can live with himself charging people that kind of money. The dentist smiles and says, “If it's the time you are worried about, I can take as long as you want.” When planning and preparing your call to action, remember that the process does not have to be long and painful. Be short, be brief and be to the point.

The final component of successful closing psychology that I'm going to discuss here is the need for persistence. Calvin Coolidge said,

Successful people always have high levels of persistence, and don't give up until they have reached their objective. Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not. Nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not. Un-rewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not. The world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence, determination and hard work make the difference.

I love this quote because it's so easy for us to get bogged down in all the "I'm not smart enough, talented enough, experienced enough" mindset. Successful closing comes down to numbers. Plain and simple, it's a numbers game. Only by sifting and sorting through X number of prospects will you secure Y number of deals. There is no other way around it. In the sales industry, even amongst the most seasoned professionals, a 20 percent close rate is considered very successful. The question is, are most people persistent enough to make ten calls to get two winners? Or, if they're not yet "seasoned" in the art of sales and persuasion, are they persistent enough to make one hundred calls to get one winner? The answer is no, most people are not. Their first prospect falls through and they are distraught. That just isn't how the sales game works, however. So, the first part of persistence is just realizing how many "nos" you have to go through before getting a "yes." The second part of persistence is not giving up prematurely.

Another facet of persistence is that many of those very same prospects who told you "no" would have said yes if you just hadn't accepted their first answer as their final one. You would be surprised how many sales come through because a rep approaches the prospect *one more time*. In light of this, it is more surprising still that over 70 percent of salespeople don't re-approach their prospect after the initial rejection. Did you know that the average person has to be asked five to six times before a sale actually takes place? A lot of times when we get that initial "no," we just accept it because we assume the prospect has thought it through and come to an educated conclusion. Well, the truth is, s/he often hasn't. People forget or get distracted. The demands of daily living crowd out even the best of intentions. That's why repetition and persistence are worthwhile in a sales scenario. It's often not that people are putting you off as much as they just haven't taken the time to really sort it all through. As you practice your closing skills, you'll become more and more adept at discerning the fine line between persistence and annoyance. My general rule of thumb is that if you detect even the remotest hint of interest, keep up your persistence.

My last plug along the persistence vein is that, as you sift and sort through what will sometimes feel like an awful lot of “nos,” you should never allow yourself to feel desperate. Prospects can detect this nuance in your behavior, and nothing makes them run faster. It kind of has to do with the confidence issue I was discussing earlier. Anytime a prospect senses your uneasiness, they will become equally uneasy, even if they are not sure why. In the sales industry, desperation showing through in your game is called “selling hungry.” To help you understand exactly how desperation comes across to your prospects, think of the age-old reference to “wolves in sheep’s clothing.” As soon as the wolf is found out, not only do the sheep run, but they bleat and talk to all their other sheep friends. So, even during those times when you are feeling pretty hungry, you’re much better off playing it cool. Natural, positive and assumptive are your best bets in a persuasive situation.

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