

Knowing How to Close the Right Way

Persuaders can learn a few things from the world of sales. (Remember we are all in sales) In the previous chapter, I mentioned that closing skills were not the cure-all for persuasion. But the ability to close is a skill that can be learned to be used in the right way and the right time. For the most part, persuaders use closing or call-to-action skills incorrectly. This lack of proper implementation creates uneasiness and tension between a persuader and her audience. The idea of closing has long been regarded as applying pressure to get a person to buy. This definition of closing is complete nonsense, and there is no place for it in today's business environment. In fact, if you show me a person who uses aggressive, high-pressure tactics to close sales, I'll show you a person whose ability to persuade is so poor that she has no choice but to resort to such measures as a substitute for professional skill.

Most of the time, closing is overused and used in the wrong way. When it is used right and sparingly, it can have a powerful effect by helping others make a decision in a timely manner. The key is to use closing in the right way in any aspect of persuasion. This is where you get the yes. It is not a time to beat around the bush or hesitate. I have noticed with many persuaders that it is like watching them ask a beautiful person for a date. They will do anything, talk about anything, instead of getting right to the point. An interesting note is that 95 percent of audiences say that all the small talk and not getting directly to the point during the close bothers them.

Great persuaders know how to read and interpret their audience's buying signals. It is like the gauges in your car. You need to learn how to read the gauges and know what they mean. Similarly, your audience will tell you when and where to ask for their business. Most persuaders are so captivated with their knowledge of their product or service that they become unable to see any buying signals. When you've mastered the art of persuasion, however, you can tell by your audience's body language, their questions, and their eyes when they are ready to buy. When you miss these signals and shoot past the window of opportunity, your audience's eyes glaze over and you've lost the ability to

persuade. Instead of a win–win, you've set up a lose–lose situation. In essence, you have talked them right out of the sale.

Stick with It

Most research shows that a sale is made, on average, after five attempts. This tendency is why great persuaders have thick skins. They must shake off the rejection and forge ahead with great persistence if they are to stay on track. Studies show that most persuaders usually give up after one or two attempts. Great persuaders know when to keep contacting—and when to depart as friends. But you would be surprised by how many sales come through because a persuader approaches the prospect *one more time*. In light of this tendency, it is more surprising that over 80 percent of salespeople still don't approach their prospects again after the initial rejection.

When we get that initial no, we just accept it because we assume the person has thought it through and come to an educated conclusion. Well, the truth is, he or she often hasn't. People forget or they get distracted. That's why repetition and persistence are worthwhile in a persuasion 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.

In the sales industry, even among 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 person falls through, and they are distraught. That just isn't how the game works, however. So the first part of persistence is just realizing how many no's you have to go through before getting a yes.