

Major Obstacles to Selling

In this next section, I'd like to discuss some of the major obstacles that inhibit a sale from happening. If you are aware of these common offenders, then you won't be caught off guard when they pop up. What's more, when you encounter them, you'll know exactly what's going on. The very first obstacle that many persuaders experience is prejudging a prospect. They set up an appointment, hang up the phone and then immediately say, "Oh, great. This lady's looking for a product we don't even have. She'll never buy." It could be for any number of reasons, but basically the salesperson decides, based on one scrap of information, that the lead isn't going to go anywhere before s/he has even met or spoken with the prospect. This is a common but huge selling mistake.

There are countless numbers of sales that have been made even when it may not have seemed like a good match at the outset. Why? Let's go back to closing psychology again. We talked about how every buying action is an effort to make some improvement or enhancement to an existing situation. The core issue is an emotional need. The actual product itself is just a means to an end; it is not in and of itself *the* solution. The emotional satisfaction that the product provides, however, *is*. It is foolish to ever make a judgment call about a prospect's intentions before you've had a chance to ask her/him all the open-ended questions and to uncover her/his hot buttons (i.e., what's *really* driving the prospect). The potential buyer wants such-and-such product, but *why* does s/he want it? *That* information is really what you need to know. The truth is, you can often offer your prospect a product or service that provides the exact same thing—or better—s/he is seeking, even if it's not exactly what s/he happened to mention to you on the phone.

The next common obstacle that persuaders run into when trying to close a sale is coming across as insincere. We spoke earlier of the infamous hard close approach. Even if you don't resort to such drastic tactics, nothing irritates a prospect more than when you're obviously looking out for a hefty commission. This tendency once again underscores the importance of asking your prospects lots of questions. It is very important that your prospects feel like you are sincerely interested in helping them. How can you best make this clear?

Another obstacle we sometimes run into is when your and your prospect's personalities conflict. If you're on different wavelengths, it's more difficult to build and maintain rapport. There are two key remedies for this type of conflicting situation. The first is to keep in mind the importance of balancing an emotion-dominated approach versus a logic-dominated approach. There will be the occasional person who doesn't want to answer all your questions—"just cut to the chase and give her/him the facts." It is best not to resist these personalities because they already tend to be a bit on edge in the first place. When you encounter this type of prospect, just go with the flow, even if it means making an exception to the "stay in control of the conversation by being the one asking all the questions" rule. Clearly, such prospects want to be in control more than they want to be guided by you, and if you rub them the wrong way, the sale is gone anyway. Instead, adapt to the situation to keep the odds in your favor. Remember, people buy from those they like; they do not buy from people they don't like. A second remedy you can use if you just can't seem to "click" with your prospect is to use a tag-team sales approach. Essentially, this tactic is when you pass off the baton. Don't let your ego get in the way of securing the sale if someone else will have an easier time closing your prospect up for you. You'll be glad you swallowed your pride and passed the baton when your paycheck comes. Besides, what goes around comes around, and that very same colleague will need your help sometime down the road for the exact same reason.

Another major obstacle to closing the deal is making promises you can't keep. You've probably experienced the tremendous frustration that comes when something has been dramatically built up and then turns out to be a bunch of garbage. Imperfections are annoying, but it's much worse when your salesperson has trumped up a product and gotten you all excited about it being something it's not. Building up false hopes and expectations is *never* worth getting a sale. You're rewarded in the moment, but that sales strategy will crash later on when you have an angry client banging on your door with buyer's remorse. Or, even if you never hear from them again, not only do you lose that person's trust and future business, but then s/he will talk to others and you'll have a damaged reputation that's impossible to fix. For these reasons, *never* claim that a product

can do something that it can't. Also be very careful that you don't over-promise or oversell. There is an adage in sales that states, "Under-promise, over-deliver." If you think about what that maxim is saying, you can see how it is going to create very, very happy customers. That's because they're not only getting exactly what they were hoping for, but they're getting even above and beyond their expectations. Inherent in that saying is also a statement that warns of its opposite: "Over-promise, under-deliver." This type of selling strategy is why salespeople often get a bad reputation. All too often, over-promising is the normal course of things. As I've already stated, such a selling strategy may reap sales in the short term, but it will burn you in the end.

This next obstacle to a successful close is fairly obvious, and yet, in spite of this, it is still common enough that it's worth discussing. Sometimes persuaders are so bent on making their point that they actually argue with their prospects. Instead of hearing their prospects out, they are too consumed with their own need to be "right." Obviously, this tactic is a bad idea and will likely defeat the whole point of working with your prospects in the first place. You will not persuade them by demonstrating that they are wrong, misinformed or uneducated. Doing so will just make them angry, embarrassed and defensive. It doesn't matter how "right" you are—if you upset your prospect, you're wrong! It has been said, "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still."

People buy from people they *like*; they *don't* buy from people they don't like. It doesn't have to be arguing, either, that turns your prospects away; it could be anything that arouses negativity. Another common example of negativity arousal includes knocking the competition. Few things cause you to lose credibility as much as this tactic does. The thing that speaks more loudly than what you're actually saying is the strong biases you have. When you exhibit bias toward your competition, your prospects then have to weigh everything coming out of your mouth with even greater caution. A safer bet, if you have to discuss the competition at all, is to present a balanced view of both sides. Mentioning some of the competition's strong points along with the areas in which you feel your company is stronger will not lose your sale but will more likely increase your mileage in

terms of believability. It's just easier for your prospect not to feel suspicious of you if you can answer her/him fairly and directly.

Another obstacle to closing sales is not building up the dream. Remember earlier how we discussed that the product itself is not the ultimate reward as much as what it *does* for the prospect? The product is just a means to an end. That is, there is something the prospect is "dreaming of" that s/he believes this product will help her/him achieve. *This dream* is their hot button; *this* is really what you must uncover. A big mistake salespeople make is not building up the dream enough. Uncovering it is the first step, but the process doesn't stop there. You really have to walk your prospect through the steps of how your product will move them from point A to point B (i.e., from present situation to "dream fulfilled"). The more vividly you can help your prospects visualize their success, the more they will want to invest in the solution you are offering them. Be sure you are speaking to their emotional needs. Highlight how the product answers the fundamental "Why?" and "WIIFM?" (What's in it for me?) motivators. If you can achieve this aim, you're going to have yourself a sale!

The final major obstacle in closing sales is simply giving up too soon. You'd be amazed at how many sales are lost just because the rep was afraid to ask one more time. As a general rule of thumb, I advise utilizing several "trial closes" throughout the sales presentation—at *least* five attempts are recommended. By trial closes, I'm referring to starting your closing strategy earlier in your presentation. In this way, throughout the process, you are "collecting yeses" so that by the end of your exchange, it is the prospect who is itching to close the sale. Trial closes are less overt, yet with them you are in essence asking for the sale. Trial closes are effective because people do not feel put on the defensive by them. They can let their guard down and really be open to acknowledging all the ways in which your product is going to help them. Collecting yeses is when you ask questions of your prospects that simultaneously answer *their* own questions and yield "yes" answers. Consider the following example...

“Now you mentioned earlier that it’s really important to you that you have more time with your family. Do you see how this product is going to save you a lot of time?” (*Oh, yes, I do.*) “Do you think this added spare time will contribute to your goal of having more time together as a family?” (*Yes, it certainly will.*) By putting their questions and concerns first, and walking them through the answers to those questions, you will help your prospects come to the obvious conclusion that your product is exactly what they’re looking for. You won’t have to talk them into it because they’ll already have convinced themselves. If in the unusual circumstance that your prospect still isn’t convinced, then don’t be afraid to present yet another closing question, perhaps this time one that is not a “trial close,” but one that is more direct: “Mrs. Smith, both of us can see clearly how this is going to help you leave your present situation and get to where you want to go. Are you ready to get started?” In an upcoming section of this chapter, I will outline several sample closes so you can see the many different options you have for all the different prospects you will likely encounter in your persuasive efforts. No matter what technique you use, though, don’t be afraid to ask for the sale and to be persistent!

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