

2. I need more closing skills.

Sure, it's nice to have a few closing skills in your persuasion toolbox, but shouldn't you spend more time opening up your prospect before you even think about closing a deal with her/him? In fact, great persuaders don't even have to use closing techniques. That's because their consumer is ready to purchase before the end of the conversation is even reached. The only time you really need a closing skill is when you have blown it by not following the proper persuasion process. You need to be able to connect with your prospect, to be sincere and empathic and to show you have her/his best interest in mind. When dealing with a new prospect, you should spend more time on connecting, building rapport, uncovering needs and wants, positioning your product or service and answering questions.

Persuading a customer/prospect occurs throughout the entire persuasion process, not just at the end of the sales presentation. Studies show that how you open a sale is much more important than how you close it. Research shows that hard closes not only offend but that, over time, they have also lost their effectiveness. Hard closes work less than five percent of the time. Of those that did work, over half of the persuaded prospects later had buyer's remorse and wanted to return the product.

It is said that the first and most lasting impression is made in about the first four minutes of interaction. If you want to seal the deal, be sure you demonstrate confidence within those first four minutes because the cement dries fast! Nothing can replace a bad first impression, even if you try to make it up later. Fixing a first impression is like fixing a wrecked car. Even after exhaustive time, effort and expense, you still know it was wrecked, and because you're scrutinizing it so closely, you're more apt to detect anything else that might be wrong with it.

We have all had the experience of meeting someone with whom, after just a few seconds of being in her/his presence, we have felt an instant connection or bond. This is connectivity. Conversely, we have probably all met someone whom we instantly did not like and whom we did not want to be around. This instinctive disassociation is caused by

a lack of connectivity and it usually takes only a few seconds to become apparent. The theory of connectivity states that the more we feel connected to, part of, liked by or attracted to someone, the more persuasive s/he becomes. When you create an instant bond or connection, people feel comfortable around you. They will often feel like they have known you for a long time and that they can easily relate to you. When we feel connected to someone, we feel comfortable, and as a result, a sense of trust evolves.

When someone feels love or unconditional acceptance, s/he will be open to your influence. To be this open, s/he has to know that you empathize with her/his situation.

The word empathy has both Latin and Greek roots. The two parts of the word mean “to see through” and “the eye of the other.” Seeing through the eye of another creates long-term influence. When people know that you can see what they see, feel what they feel and hurt the way they hurt, they will be willing to be influenced by you. The world is full of people who are trying to make us do things for their own reasons. All we need to do is pause and understand with whom we are dealing, what they are thinking and why they are thinking such things. Once we understand these principles, we have empathy and the door of influence swings wide open.

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