



Market Knowledge

Closing the Sale

Joe Girard, who amassed a world record selling automobiles in the 1970's, frequently said "if you're in sales, closing is your job". While customer service is an important part of every salesperson's duties, ultimate success is measured by how many deals he or she closes.

Recently, many salespeople lost touch with their inner "closer", lulled into complacency by a steady crop of buyers that were ready to buy. In a booming market, some could slide by without following up on leads. They could show products and then pray that the customer bought. It was easy to avoid asking for the order, because the orders seemed to show up anyway.

In 2009, we're all going to need to learn to close more skeptical and uncertain buyers. We can't control the economy, but we can become more effective at every step of the sales process, particularly closing business is harder to get. Instead of giving up on buyers that can't make decisions or seem motionless in a sea of negative news, we need to help them through the process.

When some hear "closing", they immediately think of the negative tactics of used car salespeople or door-to-door reps. It's time to reframe that perspective. Fundamentally, making a sale is matching the buyer with what they seek and need. It's not coercion. It's not forcing someone to take a bad deal. It's a positive event.

Good salespeople see themselves as consultants, providing wise advice, in-depth knowledge and smart recommendations on the best products and solutions for their customers. They take a genuine interest in each client, asking questions about specific needs, wants and desires. They work hard to develop a full understanding of how they can help before they begin offering up specific widgets.

Fear is the enemy in the sales process. If the customer is uncertain, lacks information, or feels pressured, he or she will not buy. By building confidence and credibility, the salesperson can make closing easy.

Sometimes a salesperson is uncomfortable with asking for the order at the end of a presentation. It's quite common for a great meeting to end without mention of the buying step. If you need some help in steering conversations to a successful sale, here's a quick list of closing approaches you can put to work on your next call:

Consultative: Use words like "recommend", "suggest" or "your objectives". Example: "In reviewing your objectives, I would recommend that you...."

Positive: Use words like "results" and "satisfy". Example: "I think this option will best satisfy your needs...."



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Teamwork: Use words like “we”, “collaborate” and “together”. Example: “By collaborating, we can create the backyard of your dreams.”

Repetition is your friend in closing. Research shows only about 50% of salespeople ask for the order once. Less than a quarter of salespeople ask again if the customer is indecisive after the first try. Persistence does pay off, so ask again.

One last tip, from my mentor Chuck Huston: if the customer is ready to buy, be quiet. Resist the urge to oversell. If you’ve got the order, get to work.

About the Author:

Jeff Carowitz is a leading expert on marketing for the green industry. As a consultant with Strategic Force, he works with manufacturers, wholesale distributors and contractors in developing marketing programs for profitable business growth.