



OBJECTIONS ARE BUYING SIGNALS

How to turn customers' hesitation into sales they feel confident about making. BY MARK OKUN

There is an age-old adage in professional selling circles that says, "A customer with no objections is not a buyer." I think it's time we modify this saying to make it more 21st Century:

"A customer with no objections is not buying *from you*."

It seems harsh, but it's the truth. When a client voices no objections as you continue with your sales process, there is a likelihood that they will stop you in your tracks once they have their queries satisfied.

This client action has dumbfounded many a salesperson, as they believe everything is moving along wonderfully. The client is smiling and asking questions;

there is a visible excitement in their speech and body language — yet just when you think you're about to close a beautiful sale, BOOM they say they want to think about it. What could you do? What went wrong? First, don't take it personally; the customer's buying signals were correctly observed, but the most critical buying signal that indicates a sincere client is missing, and that is an objection. A price objection, a delivery objection, a finish objection...any objection at all indicates the customer is ready to buy.

CONDITIONS VS. OBJECTIONS

First, let's look at the differences between a client's objection to buy and a "condition" they may have towards making a purchase.

Conditions are described as valid, fact-based reasons why a client can't move forward in their buyer's journey. The way to prove out an objection from a condition is a simple test. When the client expresses that they want to buy what you're selling, but cannot, ask yourself: "Can the client or I do anything to remove the obstacles placed in the pathway towards a sale?"

I have witnessed way too many people in the sales profession handle common objections and client stalls as if they were conditions that could not be overcome when that is not the case.

True conditions are characteristics that just can't be changed in a timely fashion to facilitate the sale, such as the client has no money or credit. The project's timeframe may be another condition that cannot be changed, but I think with functional problem-solving skills it can be overcome in many cases.

Some less obvious conditions is that the customer is window shopping for the future, or they have no initial intention of buying from you. They are only there to gain information in the trial-and-test phase of selecting an item, or possibly to fill time waiting for something else. I don't know how people have extra time, but so be it.

The worst scenario is when the objection or condition is unspoken, and we can't seem to flush out.

OBJECTIONS ARE OPPORTUNITIES

Objections must become a welcomed part of our sales process, but frequently they are treated as stop signs or dead-end roads that we can't travel down. The first and most powerful way to combat sales objections is to talk about — and eliminate — the most common ones upfront.

Before entering into a sales presentation, be prepared by identifying the objections that are inherent to your business processes. Create a way to present them positively and address them all *before* they come up in the conversation or when trying to close the sale.

For managers — as a group in a sales meeting or individually in a coaching session — list the common objections that are experienced and think about the various solutions that will allow you to address the objection upfront and move forward in the sales process.

Some people feel they should wait to hear an objection and *then* provide the answer. This can often turn into a game of one upmanship Ping Pong: the client serves an objection, the salesperson returns with an answer, the client begins to volley. When we take the objections away early in the sales presentation by just putting it out there with the solution, we will win more often and be less combative.

The reality is that client objections will often foreshadow the exact reasons they want to buy! When the client brings up an objection, you can

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learn to close the sale based on the objection. Let's look at the most commonly spoken and unspoken objection: It costs too much or "It's cheaper on the internet."

PRICE

Given the transparency of pricing policies, the only reason for a price objection is that the sales presentation has not addressed pricing policies or built value in the product or in the showroom. Value built early in the client interaction flushes out any price-related objection. The client will want to buy from you when presented with a great Unique Sales Proposition (USP), then if they have seen a different price anywhere they will tell you this is an opportunity to win. Develop an objection-eliminating story as part of your USP.

As we know, most clients have set a budget based on their internet education in the discovery phase. One way to eliminate the price objection is to express the value and benefits of working with a local showroom, that the showroom's pricing is similar to - if not better than - other competitors, digital or brick and mortar. These proactive statements by the salesperson provide the client with evidence of greater worth than the price placed on the product.

As an example of putting the pricing objection and solution out front, this phrase works well:

"I bet you have been shopping online before you came into our showroom?" (positive response) "We

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"Treat objections as a request for further information."

— Brian Tracy, best-selling author & public speaker

know that there are many companies out there in competition for your business. At My Showroom, we shop the same sites you do to assure we provide our customers with the best total pricing, and when we find what you're looking for here I can guarantee we will have the best total package for you that saves you both money and time."

One of the best responses I had ever heard when a salesperson used that script was, "We know what we want, can you get us pricing and availability on this item?" The client pulls out a phone and the salesperson closes the sale.

TIME

Given that this is a fashion-forward industry, new product releases and popular styles often take additional time to get. That new hot look is in the showroom and on display, but the inventory to back it up is delayed. Many people would overcome the objection to waiting for this item's stock to arrive by taking down the display, but that only satisfies one client and potentially disappoints many others.

The words we use are so important; when there is interest in a back-ordered item, the salesperson's response to the problem can make or break the visit and limit the success of a sought-after style.

After checking availability, the sales response often is, "Sorry, it's back-ordered." The conscientious salesperson may even add the date range, as in, "It will be about six weeks." Our digitally savvy consumer likes to verify everything - they



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are predisposed not to believe you – and if left to this response alone, they will leave the showroom to check for themselves and statistically they will make a purchase elsewhere. If we change the way we respond to the client, the information we have could close the sale.

Set Up: “Let me check the availability of this item. I will tell you this is one of the hottest looks in the nation right now, in some places, people are offering more than the sales price just to get it first.”

Return with a close: “You’re in luck! We can have this for you in about six weeks with no extra charges. Shall we reserve it for you so there is no further delay getting the look you want?” When they say yes, ask for their credit card to start the order.

COACHING AWAY INTERNAL OBJECTIONS

Internal objections are, in my opinion, the worst type of objections – and we all have them. Internal objections have *nothing* to do with the client and *everything* to do with us, the showroom team. The best way to defeat internal objections is with clear and regular back-and-forth communication and coaching to discover and overcome those objections.

When I was coaching a salesperson whose goal was to increase their average sales order, it was through a coaching conversation that it was discovered that they were making sales presentations based on their ability or their desire to buy what they were presenting to the client. They were often selling to the customer with an unexpressed budget based on their own wallet, and styles based on their taste... not the customer’s.

Their internal objection was that they were unable to justify buying the items themselves that they were now presenting to the client. They would just stall when hitting a specific price point or style.

This salesperson also loved fashion and had the wardrobe and accessories to prove it. The way we overcame the internal objection was to have a conversation about fashion accessories and why they are chosen. The discussion identified that people may have different desires and tastes, but need to

be shown all of the available options.

When all of the options are not presented to the customer, the salesperson is doing the client – and themselves – a disservice.

Managers must be on the look-out for the cause of internal objections that are limiting salespeople, and then invest in the time to coach and explain why and how these internal objections can be eliminated.

CLOSING THE OBJECTION

When objections come up, most salespeople fold under pressure – but real pros get excited. One of the best ways to close on an objection or to flush out the true objection is to place the objection front and center ahead of all the other things going on.

One way we do this is with a conditional close, which is based on meeting specific criteria for the sale to move forward. This works best on a single objection and you can lead into it with a summary close.

Sales: “It seems to me that we have the correct items for you. You like the color, the size, and it’s available; your only concern was the pricing?” (wait for a positive response)

Client: “Yes, all is good, but I want to make sure I am not paying too much.” (cheaper on the internet)

Sales: “Mrs. Smith, I understand how you feel about the price. In fact, many people – including myself – have felt the same way; nobody wants to pay too much, but as my other customers have found out I can assure you that you will get the best price today, and every time you come to our showroom. If I can demonstrate this can we move forward?”

It all comes down to having the confidence to push back on the client a little bit with the knowledge that you can satisfy them while asking a well-practiced question.

Be on the look out for objections in face-to-face selling; they are almost always sure signs that there will be a sale ahead.

As Always, Happy Selling! ❖

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