

## Opportunity Objections During Sales and Negotiations

**“A desire can overcome all objections and obstacles.”** -Unknown

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Opportunity objections in a sale or negotiation are the gateway to truly understanding what the customer really believes and wants. An opportunity objections is also what is standing between a great proposal sale and a converted customer who is happy with a sales negotiation and the purchase they are about to make.

If there are no objections in a sale or negotiation then we as sales people and negotiators have become nothing more than clerks writing orders that have absolutely no stretch or positive risk associated with them. In other words we are managing transactions of commoditized stuff!

Most sales people do not practice handling objections and so they try to manage this process by thinking on their feet. By doing so they are counter punching with customers, packed with personal anxiety using phrases such as “we’ve already thought of that...” This does not take the customers worries away but rather shelves them and to a degree makes the customer look uneducated for asking a legitimate question with potential personal exposure. Making the customer feel dumb is not a great way to close a sale or build a much needed relationship.

Here is the way to succeed with opportunity objections:

- 1) Listen
- 2) Rephrase
- 3) Empathy
- 4) Query
- 5) Creative Solutions
- 6) Collaboration
- 7) Our POD
- 8) Benefits
- 9) Trial Close

- 1) **Listen:** If a customer raises a concern or worry they are doing so to mitigate risk. Listening intensely to our customers is paramount. Don’t interrupt. As a customer if I get the sense that my salesperson does not care about my risk I will slow down the sales process until I feel the risk is in check or worse yet just walk away.

- 2) **Rephrase:** By rephrasing the customer's concern or worry we as sales people have acknowledged that there is a potential blocker to a sale that must be addressed. It also means we are getting a clearer sense of the customer's objectives.
- 3) **Empathy:** Letting the customer know that we empathize with their worry or concerns brings us closer to them. It's a relationship builder. It's a trust builder. No amount of money in the world can buy trust. It must be earned and protected.
- 4) **Query:** Asking well-crafted high-gain questions will get to the bottom of most concerns. The worry could be safety, financial, past bad experiences. We must uncover the nature of the concern to have any hope of neutralizing it so this blockage opens up again so the sales and negotiation processes can move forward.
- 5) **Creative Solutions:** Now that we have a better understanding of our customer's worry by asking great high-gain questions we can set to work our ability as a sales person to reshape the offer or proposal to fit the customer's eye. Think scale, innovation, service, quality, delivery timelines, payment plans. Leave price as a last resort and only if we are profitable.
- 6) **Collaboration:** Openly problem-solving with a customer is the pinnacle of consultative selling. It signals that customer and sales person are opening up their minds to arrive at a greater good and fulfillment for both. Collaboration is actually the "green shoot" of a future and profitable transaction.
- 7) **Our POD:** Our ability to truly express our "Point of Difference" at this stage of solving opportunity objections is what will separate us from our competitors. Our POD also has the ability to reduce commoditization.
- 8) **Benefits:** When addressing an opportunity objection and having explored the core of the customer's concerns, needs with an array of solutions we are now able to talk about benefits. Not just any benefits. They must connect us emotionally to the customer and make them feel safer, more creative, smarter, more efficient, relaxed and or less exposed. Think of these benefits as benefits on steroids.
- 9) **Trial Close:** If as a top-level sales person you have guided your concerned customer through her/his opportunity objection using the above process you are ready and the customer is primed for a trial close. See if the sale and negotiation can now be closed with a question such as **"valued customer...when and where would you like to begin to enjoy this great program?"**

As a sales manager and mentor said to me many years ago....

**"When a customer says no...they are just asking for more information. Until that point we are all just taking orders." -Bobby Hillier**

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