

# Anger Can Hurt Your Sales

## *Tips on managing your temper with customers*

As an avid and competitive racquetball player, I get into some very heated matches with opponents from time to time. Racquetball is a very fast-paced and intense game and if you aren't careful, your emotions can get carried away and override your ability to play smartly. How your opponent plays can have a direct affect on your emotional state. For instance, if he consistently gets in the way of your shot, you either have to take an alternate and less effective shot or call a hinder which results in a do over. If this continues throughout the game, it can get very frustrating.

When your opponent hinders you (i.e., blocks your shot and/or the ball), repeatedly calls debatable short serves, unnecessarily keeps bumping into you, yells loudly, or just behaves in a not-so-friendly and unmannerly way, it can easily result in your getting angry. Also, when your game is simply off and you keep making lousy shots, your frustration can lead to anger as well. When these things happen, your game can go right down the tubes. You begin thinking about your emotional state rather than focusing on your next shot, position or strategy. This very thing happened to me just recently when I was playing someone I would consider a discourteous player. I started getting angry and yelled at him and made equally impolite comments. Suddenly I realized something – I have very good selling skills but I'm not applying any of them to this game or my opponent. I wasn't treating my opponent the way I would treat a customer, especially an unreasonable and a discourteous one.



I thought, “Hey, if my opponent was my customer, how would he feel about me?” The answer was simple; he would probably throw me out of his building. This was stupid. So I used this analogy to re-think how I was going to react to my opponent. Not only did I go on to win the game, but I felt better about myself. Most people have heard the expression about winning the battle but losing the war. It's the same thing with this example. After cursing out my opponent or ridiculing his behavior in an unprofessional yet emotional way, I may have felt better at that moment (won the battle), but at the end of the day I would have lowered myself to his level and felt just as discourteous and unmannerly as my opponent (lost the war). In sales, the same scenario exists.

When you're working with a prospect who is being unreasonable or who's just being a plain jerk, how you react can make the difference between winning and losing the sale. Why people act this way is varied. Sometimes it's just their personality and they don't believe they are doing anything wrong. They're just angry, grumpy and bad-tempered

people by their very nature. Other times they may be testing you. They may want to see how far they can push you to gain control over their negotiating position. And other times it's a matter of respect. Purchasers don't always respect sales people, so they treat them accordingly. Unfortunately, some sales people don't earn any respect and therefore deserve to be treated poorly.

When confronted with a situation that makes your blood boil, it's important to act, not react. Sometimes you may have to walk away from a sale because the prospect is being too rude or even unreasonable. However, in cases where they are a serious prospect but just acting like a jerk, you need to handle your behavior properly. Here are some tips on what to do to prevent a battle from ensuing.

- 1. Remember your role.** Don't forget that you are a sales professional and not some hot-headed kid. Your role must include listener, solution-provider and partner. You're there to understand the prospect's problems and requirements so you can propose the right solution as a valued business partner. Focusing on this will help you keep a more even keel when confronted with emotional situations.
- 2. Pause before speaking.** Count to ten, go to your happy place, or do whatever you have to do to give yourself a few seconds to think before speaking. When someone does or says something that angers you, you cannot afford to react without thinking. You'll end up encouraging an argument or debate and behaving in an unprofessional manner. Take your time responding by first thinking about what was said, what he might have actually meant, your role (see previous point), and how to remove the emotion from what was said or done. This will help keep your temper from rising and allow you to respond more maturely and professionally.
- 3. The customer's always right, sort of.** I don't believe that the customer is always right. I do believe that the customer is always right in his mind. This simple truth can help you keep things in perspective by realizing that, although the customer is being unreasonable or discourteous, he may believe that he is right in his mind. We all need to respect other people's opinions, even if we don't agree with them. If someone is behaving in a way that you don't like or agree with, that doesn't necessarily mean they are wrong in their mind. Likewise, your customer may feel the same way about you and your opinion. Keep things in perspective by remembering to respect other people's opinions and feelings, however wrong they may seem.
- 4. Earn respect.** We all want to be respected, but we also have to remember that we need to earn respect in order to be respected. You earn respect by acting as a professional, building trust with your customer and being a good listener. If you behave like the same kind of jerk as your customer, then you'll be treated the same way. Take the high-road and earn respect, regardless of how you are treated. You may still not win the sale, but you'll feel much better about yourself at the end of the day.

5. **Be Patient.** Selling takes patience. When someone is trying your patience by being nasty or rude, it makes selling even more challenging. Each action you take in the sales process requires a level of patience that people outside of sales may not fully appreciate. When a prospect is doing things that could make you angry, that makes it even more important to exercise patience. It's tempting to say, "Hey! I don't need this crap. Take it or leave it." Obviously, you can't actually say this. Instead you have to be patient and tolerant to get through these rough spots and pursue your goal.
6. **Play the game.** Realize that your prospect may just be testing you to see if he can frustrate you enough to give him more concessions than he is entitled. So play the game too. This is part of the negotiating phase and your ability to negotiate successfully will be fully tested with this type of prospect. You should always negotiate from a win-win position. However, your prospect may only care about himself or his company and may try for a win-lose scenario, where it's he that wins at your expense. By understanding that this may be the case and being patient (see previous tip), you can play the game and reposition him for a win-win negotiation.
7. **Different strokes.** Everyone is different. That's what makes the world such an interesting place. Different personality types make selling even more interesting, and I believe more fun. Your perspective on a situation, as well as how to handle it, may very well be different from your customer's. Adapt to his style but, as mentioned previously, don't resort to the same negative and unprofessional behavior. Simply remember that he thinks and behaves differently and that's his style while remaining professional and courteous without showing anger.

In the heat of the moment it is very easy to lose one's temper and show anger. In sales, as well as sports, this can prove to be fatal. Practice controlling your emotions and temper so that you maintain a professional and mannerly style in everything you do.

Good luck and good selling!

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