



Close the Sale, Not the Door!

Master the science of good closing

The Close doesn't have to be a big event that's intimidating or uncomfortable for the prospect and the sales person. It shouldn't be treated as a major occasion that you approach after overcoming painful hurdles and then confront the prospect in an adversarial way. The Close is actually the opening of a new relationship and should be approached in a natural and positive style. If handled properly it is a pretty easy and simple step in your sales process.

Interestingly enough, statistics show that most sales people don't attempt to close a sale. In fact, a whopping 62% of sales people never go for the close. That's incredible since you spend all that time qualifying the prospect, talking, listening, explaining, demonstrating, and whatever else you need to do to get to this stage of the sales process. And then you don't close the sale. If you weren't going to close, why did you spend all that time to begin with? Well, there are several reasons why this occurs, and all of them can be overcome. It's all a matter of having the proper sales process, and learning and executing the right skills at the right time to be most effective and successful.

Several reasons why sales people don't close include:

- Too shy or timid to ask for the order.
- Unsure who to ask.
- Unsure when to close.
- Fear that the product won't fit the prospect's needs
- Forget to ask for the close
- Afraid of rejection

Obviously, none of these reasons are excusable when trying to succeed in sales. In order to learn the proper closing techniques you cannot let these reasons get in your way. You need to overcome these problems if, in fact, you suffer from any of them. You also need to approach the close in a very positive way. For instance, when you are closing you don't want to manipulate or disrespect the prospect. You have to approach this in a win-win scenario so that the results for both you and your prospect are positive.

You should also be sure to use words that promote a more positive feeling, instead of those that are considered negative words. For instance, try changing the phrase, "If this purchase occurs..." to "When this purchase occurs..." This makes a positive assumption that is based on what previously lead to this point, which is the dialogue you've been

sharing with the prospect and the solutions you presented that matched their requirements. You can even take this statement one step further by saying, “When you make this investment” instead of using the word “purchase”. Investment is a benefits-oriented word, where purchase, sale and cost are words that can be viewed as being negative.

If you are explaining that there is an impending price increase, don’t say, “You need to make this purchase before the price increases...” This has a threatening and negative sound. Instead try, “We need to get this investment made before the price increases” or, “Let’s get this investment made before there’s an increase”. Saying “We” or “Let’s” positions you as a partner in the sale. The word “investment” is better and more positive than “price.” Whenever possible leave off the word “price”, which is another negative word. Simply end the sentence by saying there is an increase. Price is assumed.

These are all subtle touches, but when you combine them in your approach to closing, they add up to make a big difference. Avoiding words that are negative or cause stress, such as price, cost, today, now, and other such threatening words, is a good habit to get into. Also avoid using “Me” and “I” whenever possible and replace them with “You”, “We” and “Us”.

You also have to consider buying signs. When you’re getting ready to close, paying close attention to the prospect’s buying signs will help you determine if the time is right or if more preparatory work needs to be done before attempting to close. There are two types of buying signs -- Direct (or Verbal) and Indirect (or non-Verbal). Let’s first look at Direct signs.

When a prospect asks questions about the product, delivery choices, billing options, or any question that indicates they are envisioning the purchase, use or application of your product, then that’s a very positive buying sign. For instance, if they ask “How much is it if we buy in quantity?” or “What are your payment terms?” they are probably interested in purchasing.

Indirect buying signs are a little harder to recognize, but just as important as Direct signs. With Indirect signs you have to pay attention to the person’s behavior and mannerisms. For instance, if they do things such as make close inspection of your proposal or re-examine the product features you already demonstrated, then that shows an interest in purchasing your product.

Pay attention to non-verbal queues from your prospects to pick up on any indication that they are getting ready to purchase. With buying signs it’s all a matter of reading the signals.

Even Silence can be a positive buying sign. They could be thinking, considering the investment or the impact it will have on their business, or even discussing it amongst themselves. Whether the silence is in your face-to-face meeting or from them not returning your calls, it could mean they are seriously considering your offer and aren’t

ready to respond or answer yet. Part of good listening is recognizing these subtle yet important buying signs, whether Direct or Indirect. Practice listening and looking for these signs, as they will help you with the close.

When you are ready to close and you've successfully performed the prior steps in the sales process, chosen the right words to use, and picked up on your prospect's buying signs, then you simply need a good closing statement. Here's one that might be useful:

“Mr. Customer, our system fulfills all the needs you have listed. It contains all the functions you requested. It meets your budgetary needs and it has the needed expansion capability you require. It appears that it all adds up to satisfy every need that you have listed.”

...and then be Quiet! You see, you have to give the prospect time to process what you just said. You can't keep talking or interrupt their thought process. This is a very challenging thing for many sales professionals to do – to be quite for what could be a full minute or more. You may feel compelled to speak and fill the silence. And when you do, you will usually say something inappropriate or wrong, such as, “I can even throw in a 10% discount!” You'll end up negotiating against yourself and give away things you don't need to because you are nervous about this gap of silence. But you don't need to be nervous or uncomfortable. Just be quite and wait for the prospect to respond. If they disagree with anything in this closing statement, then get clarification, get agreement, and then close again. You can repeat this process several times.

When you get a positive response such as, “Yes, I agree!”, then say, “Good! I can have the paperwork ready in a moment so we can start the process. How does that sound?” See, very positive, up-beat and simple. Remember that if you learned everything you can about their needs and requirements from your earlier qualification phase by asking questions and listening, and you established your credibility, and you positioned yourself as a value-added partner to your prospect, then the close becomes a natural progression to this well executed process.

Always remember these points about closing:

- Don't forget to ask for the close. But make sure it's the right time.
- Don't take no personally, since they aren't rejecting you. They're rejecting your product or company or offer. Get rid of those rejections and you'll get rid of the No's.
- Don't give up after the first several No's. Keep trying. Clear up any misunderstandings or uncertainties, and keep asking for their business.
- Don't forget that the first objection is usually NOT the REAL objection. So don't treat it too seriously. Get to the root of their real objection or concern.
- Don't use words like Now, Today, or Right Away because they apply pressure which turns people away.

- Avoid words like Sign, Cost and Price since they are considered negative words as well. Try saying “Autograph this” instead of “Sign this” and “Investment” instead of “Cost” or “Price”.
- Always make the close a win-win arrangement. If someone loses in the deal, then someone won’t be satisfied and there won’t be a long-term relationship.

These techniques may take you some time to get right, so you’ll have to practice them and refine the approach that you are most comfortable with. But don’t forget to use them and keep trying different versions that works best for you. You should never be reluctant to close as long as you’ve done the proper steps in the process that lead up to the close. After all, you’re helping your customer make a decision and assisting them in fulfilling a need or want that they told you they have when you qualified them.

The close should come naturally and result in a positive successful relationship between you and your client.

Good luck and good selling!

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